

CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Sesquicentennial Anniversary

The History of Central United Methodist Church



1870 - 2020

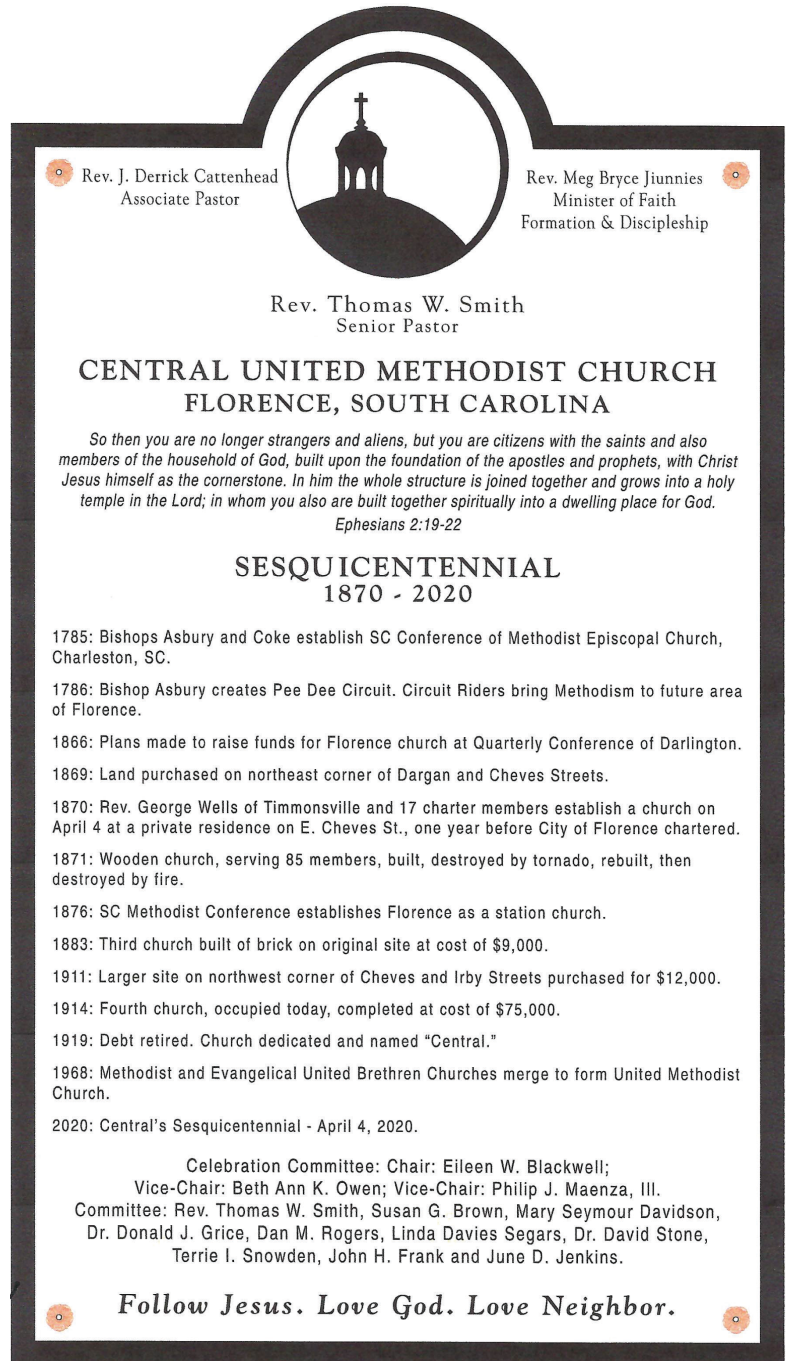
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150th Anniversary Plaque Design

by Philip J. Maenza, III

The design of the 150th Anniversary Plaque was truly a group effort. I was approached by Eileen Blackwell in the early stages of the anniversary planning process and was asked if I would be interested in helping design the plaque. I immediately knew that this was an endeavor that interested. The final version of the 150th Anniversary Plaque is quite similar to the first designs that I initially created. The above photo is a proof of the real plaque that was sent to us by the plaque company, Blackmon Memorial Enterprises, of Darlington, South Carolina. The 150th Anniversary Plaque displays the names of the clergy currently serving at Central UMC at the time of the celebration, Central's full name and physical location, a passage of Scripture chosen by Rev. Thomas W. Smith, "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. Ephesians 2:19-22", a list of major historic events in Central's history, a list of those who were members of Central Sesquicentennial Planning Committee, and lastly, Central's mission statement: Follow Jesus. Love God. Love Neighbor.. The plaque weighs over 100 pounds and will need to be mounted using sleeve anchors in order to be able to be hung onto the wall. The plaque is located in The Sanctuary in the right hand corner when facing the narthex.



150th Anniversary Banner

banner designed by Susan G. Brown



Fanny Suggs began designing and creating the liturgical banners to enhance Central's worship experience. She was a one woman dynamo.

She finally included and inspired Susie and Kathy Brown. They embraced the spirit of "It takes a community to make a banner."

Over the years, many Central members have contributed to continue the liturgical banner tradition.

A Brief History of Central UMC

by Dr. David Stone

In April of 1870, simmering tensions in Europe between Napoleon III and Otto Von Bismarck would soon ignite the Franco-Prussian War. In the United States during the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant, Congress had just passed the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, the Transcontinental Railroad was nearing completion, and much of the northern and western states were entering what would be known as the Gilded Age. In Florence, South Carolina, Central United Methodist Church was born during an era of uncertainty to a people seeking God's healing, reassurance, and strength, in the aftermath of the American Civil War.

Methodism had existed in South Carolina since the pre-Revolutionary visits of John and Charles Wesley and began to take root when Bishop Francis Asbury was sent in February 1785 to establish a church in Charleston. The following year, he created the Pee Dee Circuit, which served the people on either side of the river stretching from Georgetown, S.C., to within ten miles of Salisbury, N.C. As time passed, this circuit was split into smaller circuits and the region between the Lynches River and Black Creek was served by the Darlington Circuit. Eventually, Methodism made its way into the Florence area through the work of a Methodist circuit rider, Reverend A.J. Stafford

At its First Quarterly Conference meeting at Pisgah Church on January 20, 1866, the Darlington Circuit formed a committee to make the necessary arrangements for establishing a church in the village of Florence, the growing commercial hub at the junction of the Wilmington & Manchester, the Northeastern, and the Cheraw & Darlington Railroads. It was not until 1869 that Dr. John James Ellis, Mr. John McSween, and Mr. P.A. Brunson, met in Mr. John W. Husband's store at the junction of Evans Street and the North-eastern (later Atlantic Coast Line) Railroad to formalize plans for the church. Finally, on April 4, 1870, the committee's work came to fruition when the first meeting was held at the home of Captain M.C. Henry on the 100 block of East Cheves Street with seventeen charter members and the Reverend George Wells of the Timmons ville Circuit serving as organizing pastor. The city of Florence was chartered the following year.

Church members met in Mr. Husband's store and in the Baptist Church building while their building was being constructed on the northeast corner of Dargan and Cheves Streets near the town center, but a tornado destroyed the structure before it was completed. Undaunted, church members completed a second building by the end of that year. In 1874 the church became part of the Liberty Chapel charge, and by December of that year, the congregation boasted eighty-five members. Because of their rapid growth, the members requested at the 1876 annual conference to separate from the Liberty Chapel charge to form their own station and pledged to provide twelve families to board the pastor and an annual salary of \$250. Their proposal was approved the following year, and shortly afterward a parsonage was built to house the pastor.

Amid this period of growth, disaster once again struck the church as a fire destroyed the church building and damaged the parsonage in February 1882. In a message to the Advocate it was reported that "Methodism is on rising ground in Florence, and we cannot afford to give up our hold at this point." Plans were immediately underway for a brick structure that would seat four hundred members. Fundraising was slow during this time of difficult economic circumstances, but under the direction of new pastor Reverend William T. Capers, the church was completed at a cost of \$9,000 and dedicated in December 1883. Methodism continued to flourish in Florence as the church prepared to enter the Twentieth Century, and in 1897 the annual conference was held there for the first time. The minister's salary at this time had grown to \$1,150 per year, and the congregation had grown to 374 members.

In the ensuing years, church membership and programs had expanded to the point that a new, larger facility became a necessity. To that end, the church purchased a lot at the corner of Cheves and Irby Streets for \$12,000

in 1911. Construction was begun on the new building and completed in 1914 at a cost of \$75,000. The debt was paid-in-full on the property in 1919 and when the church was dedicated, the congregation officially selected the name of Central for the church. With the boom at the end of World War I, church growth again began to outpace its capabilities, and in 1928 a third story was added and the sanctuary was enlarged. As growth continued despite the Great Depression, the membership added a hut to the rear of the church in 1933 to serve both as a recreation center and as a meeting place for Sunday School classes.

In 1940, Annual Conference again met at Central when Reverend Eben Taylor was pastor. Around this time, Reverend Taylor had written a pamphlet entitled "Florence Methodism Looks to a New Day," in which he urged the construction of more Methodist churches in the city. His writings were the impetus for Central's support for the construction of St. Paul's and Highland Park Methodist Churches. While anticipating this outward expansion, Central continued to enhance its congregational ministries with Sunday Schools, women's circle groups, a growing Young People's Department and ministry to the soldiers from the new military installation established in Florence during World War II. During this time, electric chimes were installed in the church to honor the soldiers who had served in the military and returned home as well as to memorialize those who had sacrificed their all.

Under the tenure of Dr. Wright Spears, a new parsonage was purchased on Winston Street and offices for the staff were set up in the church's old parsonage. Sentiment grew for erecting a new church building on the lot where the old parsonage and hut stood. Plans for construction were begun in 1951 before Dr. Spears left Central to become president of Columbia College. The project, completed in 1954 at a cost of \$150,000, added a kitchen, a fellowship hall, and additional classrooms. In 1960 the church acquired land adjacent to the church through a gift, and purchased an adjoining lot for \$75,000. Additional remodeling and redecorating efforts that decade included the addition of a new pipe organ, stained glass windows replacing the older windows, and completion of the rose window over the choir loft.

In 1968, resulting from the formal union between the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church, the church in Florence officially became known as Central United Methodist Church. The Seventies ushered in additional growth of the church, enabling it to acquire additional property for a new parsonage for the senior minister and a second home to provide a residence for the associate minister. In 1970, Dr. and Mrs. Claude Sexton gifted land near I-95 for the construction of Camp Sexton, which enhanced the church's recreational ministries and would later house Choices Charter School, begun in 2002 under the direction of Chief Ralph Porter. A gift from Mr. Raymond McMillan expanded the church's downtown footprint and gave additional space for the church's growing Sunday School program.

By 1976, the upsurge in growth had exceeded the church's space requirements to the point that a major remodeling and modernization of the entire church was undertaken. During this process, the congregation moved out of the building entirely and held services at West Florence High School for over a year. The completion of this project resulted in the addition of the Charles Nelms Ingram Chapel, the Elizabeth C. Moody Parlor (named for the wife of late Pastor Emeritus, Dr. C. LeGrande Moody), an elevator, and a new kitchen. The church was now much better equipped to serve the needs of its congregation and community as one of the largest United Methodist congregations in South Carolina.

Growth continued through the 1980s and '90s, as Central Place, a gift from the Aiken Foundation, afforded a third expansion of the Sunday School program and other outreach programs of the church. Under the leadership and vision of Reverend Robert Faulkner and Mrs. Mary Alice Ingram, Central took a lead role in the establishment of the Methodist Manor of the Pee Dee, which opened in 1991 to provide a home and variety of programs for senior citizens in a church-centered retirement community. In 1995, a renovation of the sanctuary was undertaken at the bequest of the Kathryn Warren Wilson family, and in 1997 the Creation Window was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Reamer King for the overhead sanctuary dome.

As the end of another century approached, Central again saw itself in need of a major building project. Faced with outgrowing its downtown campus, Reverend Chad Davis encouraged the church to maintain its downtown presence and embark on an ambitious plan that would lead to improved facilities and an expansion of church property. Construction was begun in November 1999 after the arrival of Reverend Thomas C. Pietila, with the demolition of the Florence Morning News building and the McMillan Building. It was completed in April 2001 at a cost of \$4.3 million. This new construction provided the congregation with new space for the youth—Central Place; a new modern kitchen; a multi-purpose room for large church gatherings and sports activities—the Reverend J. Chadwick and Martha Davis Center; a new Sunday School classroom wing; a new parlor; and a bridal room, sacristy, choir room, and commons area. The church also added the Faulkner Board Room in which to hold meetings, as well as the Schofield Media Center, which was established in 1998 by Dr. John W. Schofield in honor of his wife, Ellouise Jones Schofield, to provide reading and reference materials for the congregation. To enhance the church's Scouting Ministry, a new Scout Hut was constructed on Plum Drive in 2006.

The last decade has seen additional changes, including the sale of the church's parsonages, the purchase of the Cartee-Berry building, the completion and dedication of the Reverend Thomas C. and Melinda N. Pietila Columbarium and Memorial Garden, the addition of the United Methodist Women's Prayer Garden, and the completion of the second floor of Central's education building, dedicated as the Reverend William F. and Sally M. Malambri Center in August 2015. Most recently the inside of the church sanctuary was re-painted, which required the church holding its formal worship service at the Francis Marion University Performing Arts Center for the most of the summer of 2019. It was during this renovation that Central welcomed its present pastor, Reverend Thomas Smith.

Throughout its one hundred and fifty year history, Central Church has been a church committed to, and characterized by, growth—growth of its membership, of its congregational, and of its outreach ministries both to the local and global communities. From its humble beginning with seventeen charter members, the church has continued to grow both in numbers and in its ministry. Central offers three worship services: the traditional 11:15 service, as well as a 9:00 traditional service that was added in 1962. With the changing demographics in Florence, an alternative worship service, The Well, was added in 2014 and is held in the Davis Family Life Center. Wednesday night activities are anchored by the Family Night Supper, and include activities and programs for children and adults, Bible studies, Live @ Central, and choir rehearsals. In 2001, the ministers added a Service of Healing and Holy Communion on Thursdays in the Ingram Chapel. Always a caring church, Central members assist our ministerial staff in congregational care through various support groups, prayer ministry, and as Stephen Ministers, a group of laypersons formed in 2001 and trained specifically to assist those who are facing life challenges or other crises.

The Sunday School has always been important for connectivity in the Methodist Church, and Central is no different in that regard. Throughout its history the church's membership has been committed to providing classes to meet the needs of every age group from infants to senior citizens. In 1998, Disciple Bible Study groups were added to the curriculum, followed several years later by Christian Believer. To orient new and prospective members to the opportunities at Central, a Central 101 course was begun in 2012. Christian education does not stop there, however, and Central's children have enjoyed participation in Vacation Bible School, which began in 1934, and its longstanding Mothers' Morning Out program, which began as a three-day program in the early 1980s and expanded to become Central Preschool in 2008. Now licensed by South Carolina DSS, the program is a full-time preschool for children age three months up to 4K. Central has also led the way in ministering to those with special needs through the Sunshine Class, which was begun in 1979 under the direction of Director of Christian Education, Ms. Olene Civils, and is still going strong over forty years later.

Scouting has also been an important part of Central's ministry, and its Cub Scout Pack 475 and Boy Scout Troop 475 are still going strong since their charter in 1943 and 1948, respectively. Girl Scout Troop 110 is also active at

Central offering Daisy Scouts, Brownies, Juniors, and Cadettes. The church further affirmed its commitment to the children of Central when it made the Director of Children's Ministries a full time position in 2001. Central's United Methodist Youth Fellowship has continued to have a strong presence within the church. Central's youth participate in a variety of recreational and discipleship activities on Wednesday and Sunday nights, and are confirmed into membership in the church at the end of their eighth grade year. Our UMYF has participated in the United Methodist Church's Salkehatchie Summer Service program, as well as Central's own Santahatchie Christmas Mission program, which was begun at Central in 2004. They have also participated in various youth conferences, such as Revolution, as well as service projects, such as Trick or Treat for Canned Goods and in past years, have assisted with Central's Halloween Carnival. It is a tribute to our youth and children's ministries that more than two dozen of Central's sons and daughters have entered the ministry or full-time church vocations over the years, including Bishop Marshall L. "Jack" Meadors.

On the other end of the spectrum, Central has a tradition of ministering to its "seasoned citizens," dating back to 1962 when the first gathering of the Young at Hearts group was held. This group has taken many interesting trips and outings over the years. The Junior-Senior group was started in 1997 to add to fellowship opportunities for older individuals who are still working. This group, along with the Joy Seniors and Lunch & Learn group, offers a variety of interesting programs and other fellowship opportunities. Central was also instrumental in the formation of the Shepherd's Center of the Pee Dee in 2002. This is an inter-faith ministry by and for people age fifty and older who meet for sessions each quarter, with programs including exercise, arts and crafts, devotions, computer classes, and even some day excursions. In addition to these opportunities, Central's senior adults maintain an active role in many other overlapping activities within the church.

The Women's Society was organized in 1879 and from that, circle groups were established in 1930 and united under the umbrella of the Women's Missionary Society. This group officially became known as the United Methodist Women in 1973, and is a vital cog in the ministries of the church. Funds raised by the group through their annual BBQ dinner, fashion shows, yard sales, etc., raise money to support agencies such as the Pee Dee Coalition and House of Hope that provide services to women and children, take Meals On Wheels to shut-ins, and minister to bereaved families. The United Methodist Men's fellowship remains active in service to the church, helping shut-ins and undertaking various small building projects, including times when they have worked with our youth on projects such as Rebuilding Together (originally Christmas in April) and Santahatchie. Recreational activities through the church are afforded to the church community through picnics; sports activities such as church league basketball, softball, and golf tournaments; a church talent show; and special events such as the annual ice cream social, the Fall Fair, the Spirit of Central event around the Fourth of July, and the annual Taste of Central.

Ministry through music has been a calling card of Central United Methodist through the years. The church has always offered opportunities for choral music ranging from children's and youth choirs to the Chancel Choir. Revitalization of the program began prior to the 1960s with the addition of chimes and a pipe organ, and took off after the hire of William B. "Bill" Mills as Organist and Music Director in 1969. Mills, an excellent musician in his own right, was instrumental in recruiting talent to lead congregational worship and in the formation of the Masterworks Choir. During his tenure, the program saw the addition of trumpets for special music, a grand piano donated in 2007 by the Aiken Foundation in honor of Peggy McLeod, the emergence of a hand bell choir under the direction of Howard Starks, and upgrades and renovations to the choir room and rehearsal areas. Special music for Easter, Christmas Eve, and the Service of Lessons and Carols have become traditions in the church that are anticipated annually. Mills became a Diaconal Minister in 2003 and the William B. Mills Music Suite was dedicated in his honor in 2008. Upon his passing in 2012, the torch was passed to Dr. Donald Grice, who has kept up Central's tradition of musical excellence. In the past decade, the program has expanded to include The Well Band, which plays a mix of contemporary and folk music at The Well. Dr. Grice also established the Lacy Scholars program, which provides stipends for music students at Coker College and Francis Marion University who participate in the Chancel Choir and youth choir. The church's downtown location also provides a venue for various concerts and recitals throughout the year.

From its beginnings, Central has been a church interested in missions, whether locally in Florence or out in other parts of our state, nation, and the rest of the world. Dating back to the 1950s, the church has supported missionary families in Brazil and in Japan. The last quarter century has seen a tremendous increase in activities of the church as teams have been sent to Cuba, Russia, China, and Africa. In 2004 Central members made their first trip to Peru and over the past decade have made regular trips to Latin America, most notably Costa Rica, where teams of youth and adults have been active in medical, educational, and construction activities. Responding to needs in other areas of our country, Central sent teams to the Gulf Coast of Mississippi to help repair homes in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2006 and to the Red Bird Mission in Kentucky in 2014. In our own state, Central members traveled to Powdersville, South Carolina, to help refurbish homes and our youth continue to participate in the United Methodist Church's Salkehatchie Summer Service, Santahatchie, and Rebuilding Together.

In Florence, Central United Methodist as played a pivotal role in spreading Methodism through its initiative and support for the establishment of St. Paul UMC, Highland Park UMC, Quinby UMC, and Dawsey UMC. Recent outreach efforts have been made, and C-Unity events have been held, to advance community solidarity with her sister church, Cumberland UMC. Staff and laypersons also support students attending Wesley Foundation at Francis Marion University. Central's downtown location places the church in a unique position from which to participate in Florence's downtown revitalization and minister to the community at large. Central members participate in community-wide organizations that seek to address homelessness, restore families, address educational needs, and promote racial diversity such as Helping Florence Flourish, Pee Dee Coalition for Domestic and Sexual Abuse, Lighthouse Ministries, Manna House, House of Hope, and the Courtney Graham Community Shelter. With a focus on children, members also serve and contribute to Help 4 Kids, Shelter and Nutrition for All Children (SNAC), and All for Autism. Central Cross Connections and Sunday School classes have also served as springboards for participating in ministries including the Bread Brigade, Parking Lot Ministry, and Central's own BEDS ministry that was begun in 2015 to provide beds and bedding for local children who lack this basic element that is essential for their emotional educational development.

Through the years, a more mobile and technologically savvy society has required certain adaptations, and Central has continued to adapt, beginning in 2001, when improvements were made to the church's radio broadcast. All of Central's office communication systems and computers were connected to the same network and wireless communication was available throughout the church. The church has a very active internet presence, at www.centralmethodist.net and its members use the Realm application on their smart phones for anything from communicating with committees, to receiving Sunday School class news, to giving of their tithes and offerings. With the outbreak this year of COVID-19, the church quickly adapted and is livestreaming its 11:15 a.m. service. The church now has a full time Director of Communications, Philip Maenza, who coordinates these efforts as well as radio and billboard advertising for the church.

Despite these modern changes, Central United Methodist Church still remains quite the traditional church family, where all members work hard daily to fulfill our mission to follow God, love Jesus, and love neighbor. As Central approaches its one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, the church finds itself on solid footing, and poised for future growth and future challenges under the leadership of Reverend Thomas Smith, senior pastor, who came to Central from First UMC on the Isle of Palms in 2019 after the departure of Reverend Will Malambri. The associate pastor is Reverend Derrick Cattenhead, Central's first African-American minister, who was welcomed to the church in June of 2016. Rounding out the ministerial staff is a child of Central, Reverend Meg Jiunnies, who became the church's Minister of Faith Formation and Discipleship in 2016. The church membership sits at 1946 members, with 749 participating in Christian Formation Groups and 891 engaged in missions. Through gifts of generosity, its endowment fund is grow-ing and its debt, which was retired in 2016, is very manageable. It would appear that the church's decision years ago, to remain in its present location in Downtown Florence and expand where it is, was the correct one. From the days when the golden cross lit atop the dome gave inspiration to patients in the old McLeod Infirmary to the new lighting of the dome itself, Central United Methodist Church will remain a beacon of God's grace to the world—and especially to the people of Florence.

Ministry in the Time of COVID-19

by Rev. Thomas W. Smith, Senior Pastor

Central United Methodist Church continues to be a fruitful and effective community of faith. 2020 began full of promise with new opportunities for mission and ministry. The arrival of COVID-19 at first seemed to be an insurmountable obstacle. The promise and potential of a new year seemed to vanish. Yet, as they say, necessity is the mother of invention. Since March 2020, Central has learned new ways to fulfill our mission to follow Jesus by loving God and loving our neighbors. The going has been at times difficult, but Central remains a fruitful, disciple-making congregation. Throughout the pandemic, we have celebrated as new disciples become part of the family of faith and we have rejoiced as members of our church family grow as disciples. We have celebrated baptisms and celebrated the lives of our brothers and sisters who now rest with God. We have welcomed new members to our ministry staff. Even with all the change, the past year has seen powerful mission and ministry. As we pause to celebrate our 150th year, I am excited to see the new ways God will use Central in the years to come.

My first eight months in Florence and as senior pastor of Central were wonderfully busy. I was busy learning a new church, learning a new community, and getting to know you. Central was a flurry of activity with impactful ministry taking place seven days a week. I loved it. I showed up at Central with a plan to get to know you, the people of Central, and to be part of a collaborative relationship with you as we worked together to develop a vision and plan for the future. Year one was to be filled with neighborhood meetings and meetings with church and community leaders. I wanted to meet with the community ministries with whom we partner. That is what I was doing and I loved it.

But a storm was brewing. In January we started hearing about a virus from China that seemed to have made its way to parts of Europe. By February we started hearing about COVID cases in the USA. As days rolled on it became increasingly obvious that the time would come when we would have to suspend in-person activities, including worship. On March 19, 2020, the governor issued his home-to-work order. Our bishop, Jonathan Holston, asked South Carolina's United Methodists to suspend in-person worship and gatherings. Like so many other ministers around the country, I said to myself, "That's it! There is no way we can survive this." Even when we resumed in-person gatherings and in-person operations in June of 2020, we were not able to be as we were. Then the Holy Spirit led me to Matthew 11:28-30, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." Our mission has not changed, but the methods for fulfilling that mission had to change if we were to be true to our mission.

When we first suspended in person gatherings, I asked our staff and ministry teams to continue planning for in-person Easter worship. But, as we all know, things were no better by Easter. We resumed in-person worship on June 14, 2020, but things were very different. Even though we gathered for in-person worship, people were wearing masks, not singing hymns, and maintaining a six-foot distance from one another. Other activities such as Sunday school, Bible studies, and other mid-week activities were not taking place. On top of COVID there was civil unrest and a contentious election. It was a time people needed their church more than ever!

But then I saw the evidence of Jesus taking those burdens. First, I saw that the church did not close. We did ministry differently, but the church was very much open. Necessity is the mother of invention, resulting in the birth of our virtual campus. Worship, Bible studies, committee meetings, and other gatherings went online and the mission of the church continued. For example, Easter Worship in 2020 had more than 1,200 views on YouTube. It is hard to determine exactly how many individual people worshiped online that Easter, but experts in such things suggest multiplying the number of views by 1.5 to estimate the number of individual people represented. If we multiply 1,200 people by 1.5, we had an estimated Easter worship attendance of 1,800 people.

The average weekly worship views for 2020 was 430 views. Multiplying by 1.5 gives us an online average weekly worship attendance of 645. This is in addition to those who worshiped in-person in the Well and the Sanctuary. In addition to continuing new ways to worship and be in fellowship with one another, people stepped forward to make sure our members who are unable to leave their homes had their needs met. Our outreach team made it a priority to honor financial commitments to local mission agencies to ensure our community's most vulnerable members had their needs met.

As we proceeded through 2021, the number of new COVID cases continued to decline. Central phased in in-person ministries such as Sunday School, ministries with children and youth, Bible studies, and committee meetings. On March 13, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control revised their COVID protocols. Studies showed that it was safe for people vaccinated against COVID-19 to stop wearing face coverings. After consultation with Central's medical professionals, we lifted our remaining protocols and resumed congregational singing on May 23, 2021.

As of the time I write these words, the pandemic is still not over. However, we have come a long way since the spring of 2020. Things have changed, perhaps permanently. Our online presence has become a lifeline for some of our members as well as an avenue for evangelism. In many ways, we now have a second, virtual campus. These new ministry tools offer a great deal of potential as we continue to advance the mission of the church. Central has weathered many storms in its 150 years. We are continuing in unprecedented times, but the people of Central have remained faithful to our mission to follow Jesus by loving God and loving our neighbors. I am confident we will continue to do so in the years to come.

A Year by Year Report *by John Frank and June Jenkins*

John Frank and co-author June Jenkins have compiled a church history as it was reported on an annual basis from 1949 to 2021. The source of information is the church's officially recorded minutes kept in the Archives Room of the Schofield Library. This extensive history may be found in the Library, online, in the church office and the Commons area.

John Wesley: The Founder of Methodism *by Rev. Thomas W. Smith, Senior Pastor*

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism was born June 28, 1703 in Epworth, Lincolnshire, England. After studying at Oxford University, Wesley was ordained a priest in the Church of England. Before founding the Methodist movement, Wesley served as the pastor of a congregation, taught at Oxford, and served as a missionary to the new colony of Georgia. Wesley had a difficult time in Georgia and returned to England depressed, considering himself a failure in every way. On May 24, 1738, Wesley attended a gathering on Aldersgate Street in London. While hearing someone read Martin Luther's preface to Romans, Wesley felt his "heart strangely warmed" and experienced the assurance of salvation in Jesus. From this experience sprang the formation of the Methodist movement.

Early Methodism was a renewal movement within the Church of England. As Methodists emigrated to Britain's colonies, they took Methodism with them and provided the roots of Methodism in the United States. As a result of independence from Britain, American Methodists formed the Methodist Episcopal Church in December of 1784. The United Methodist Church is the direct successor of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Wesley was a tireless worker, traveling Britain to both preach and provide leadership to the Methodist movement. After a season of declining health, Wesley died on March 2, 1791. His last words were reported to be, "The best of all, God is with us." It is said that Wesley left behind a good personal library, a well-worn clerical robe, and the Methodist Church.



Watercolors by Joann Speas grace our Commons and highlight the founder of Methodism, John Wesley. His birthplace in Lincolnshire County, England is depicted as well as John Wesley, the minister, at Oxford University, England.

Joann Speas had a passion for and studied art at the Women's College of UNC-Greensboro. She gained notoriety and experienced great joy with her unique painting style that incorporated graphite drawing on textured papers with impressionistic watercolors. While her works received professional recognition through exhibits in the U.S. and abroad; experiencing, observing and finding beauty in every moment was what gave true meaning to her life.

These paintings were gifts to Central United Methodist Church from the estate of Miss Myrtle Tyner.

Senior Pastors of Central UMC

Thomas W. Smith 2019 -	F. E. Dibble 1936-1939	W. W. Daniel 1894
William F. Malambri III 2012-2019	J. H. Danner 1932-1935	H. B. Browne 1889-1893
Cynthia C. Taylor 2010-2012	D. M. McLeod 1930-1931	J. T. Pate 1886-1889
Stephen P. Taylor 2010-2012	W. V. Dibble 1925-1929	J. W. Humbert 1885
Thomas C. Pietila 1999-2010	G. T. Harmon 1922-1924	W. T. Capers 1883-1884
J. Chadwick Davis 1989-1999	E. L. McCoy 1920-1921	W. S. Martin 1881-1882
Robert C. Faulkner 1979-1989	S. B. Harper 1918-1919	J. W. McRoy 1880
C. LeGrande Moody 1974-1979	T. G. Herbert 1915-1917	W. W. Mood 1879
Paul McWhirter 1968-1974	R. E. Turnipseed 1912-1914	A. H. Lester 1878
R. Bryce Herbert 1964-1968	R. H. Jones 1908-1911	A. J. Stafford 1877
Melvin K. Medlock 1957-1963	T. E. Morris 1907	R. L. Harper 1876
E. E. Glenn 1952-1956	J. G. Beckwith 1903-1906	George T. Harmon 1874-1875
R. Wright Spears 1947-1951	J. T. Pate 1900-1902	Landy Woods 1873
J. E. Clark 1943-1946	P. L. Kirton 1899	George Wells 1870-1872
Eben Taylor 1940-1942	W. I. Herbert 1895-1898	

Associate Pastors of Central UMC

Thomas C. Pietila
2017-2019

Eddie Jones
1973-1974

Meg Bryce Jiunnies
2017-

Mitch Kyllonen
1971-1972

J. Derrick Cattenhead
2016-

Theron Few
1969-1971

Kathy A. Campbell
2016-2017

Iverson Graham, Jr.
Counselor -1957-1968

Joshua L. Blackwelder
2012-2016

Harold Jayroe
1965-1966

Valerie Mireb
2009-2010

Davis Bilberry
1957-1964

Elise Erikson Barrett
2004-2007

Larry Jackson – Counselor
1952-1963

William F. Malambri III
2001-2009

Harry Mayes
1947-1951

Gerald C. Lord
1997-2001

Larry Jackson
1947-1951

Steven L. Brown
1993-1997

James Rogers
1943-1946

Dannye O. Bragdon
1983-1993

J. F. Trammell
1940-1942

Mitchell Houston
1982-1983

Thomas Godbold
1930-1931

Herbert Thomas
1977-1982

R. Bryce Herbert
1925-1929

Charles H. Nicholson
1974-1977

Central Members Called to Ministry

J. T. Brown

John B. Crouch, Jr.

Meg Bryce Jiunnies

Marie Brown

Estelle C. Prince

Ann W. Ayres

Patricia Ginn-Griffeth

David Ward

Eben Taylor, Jr.

Tresco Shannon

David L. McIntosh, Jr.

Louis Barth

Edward Armstrong

Vivia Lawton Fowler

Robert Cannon

Larry Brown

Risher Brabham

Michael C. Bell, Jr.

Thomas G. Rogers

Ted Walter

Allen Hoffmeyer

John C. Snyder

Bishop M. L. (Jack)

Meadors, Jr.

Ted Morton, Jr.

Julian Lazar

Larry A. Jackson

William T. Haselden

Alonzo Heape Haselden

Robert N. DuBose

Bishop Edward J. Pendergrass

A History of Missions

by *Mary Davidson*

Many of us who grew up in the Methodist Church remember participating in the collection of old clothes, toys and other discards to be sent to missionaries in China and other faraway places. Missions were not that up close and personal. Missions meant people far away leading Christlike lives in reduced circumstances. This is not to say that Christians at home were not about doing good, but missions as such were more or less akin to present day distance learning, the giver and the recipient separated by many miles.

On this momentous occasion of our 150th anniversary, let us take a look at the many and varied ways in which the members of Central United Methodist Church have taken up the call of Christ to personal ministry since 1887. Volunteers in the Schofield Library & Archives have, for several years, combed through many realms of committee records, bulletins, financial records and personal papers to present to our congregation the extraordinary level of commitment demonstrated by members young and old and in between. Some were in cooperation with other churches or groups but many originated within our walls.

We begin first with undated, then by date and eventually turn to more detail on our most enduring efforts. We report here exactly what we have found in the records, which many times are quite sketchy. And let it be emphasized that further exploration will reveal more rich and meaningful details as well as the names of many more Central United Methodist members in ministry.

- The Strunk family served as missionaries in Brazil.
- Larry Jackson, a staff member, went to Chile as missionary for a time.
- Marie Brown went out from CUMC to start Marie Brown Ministries which eventually led to service in 35 countries over 25 years.
- The Randolph Jones family served in Japan.
- Numerous notes in the bulletin, regarding the compassion for and commitment of our people to the people of those countries in Europe so devastated by World War II, give proof that our families here made great sacrifices for those families there.

****Note:** There are several gaps in our records. Most of our relevant information comes from the church bulletins- we have only one single Sunday bulletin from the founding up until 1948, no sixties at all and sporadic holes in bulletins to date. We continue to pursue our history through what we have of Quarterly Conference, Trustee, personal and other pieces of paper from here or there.

1905:

The earliest reference we could find regarding missions appears in a photocopy of a church bulletin dated January 29, 1905. The church conference voted to continue “our special pledge of support of our worker in Brazil, Rev. Hippolito, in addition whatever surplus is raised, to go the very same way”.

1950's: Ladies from the church established CHILDREN'S CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CAMP FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN in the sixties to be held at the American Legion Hut and a local motel. After the church acquired Camp Sexton and a pool was built, the CCFC moved to that location and children's programs such as Vacation Bible School, scouting events, Sunday School picnics, and swimming lessons by ours and other churches were conducted there. The Day Camp program replaced CCFC in the 1990's.

1989: Paul Rung and others assisted in the recovery from HURRICANE HUGO in devastated MCCLELLANVILLE.

1993: Ben Ward and Ralph Porter went to KAZAKISTAN with CAMPUS CRUSADE.

1994: Between 1994 and 1998 Paul Rung and Robert Christopher went to HAITI several times. During that same year there was a November FOOD DRIVE for MANNA HOUSE and the AREA RESCUE MISSION; in fact, food drives have become customary at Central, often several times a year, for various charitable efforts. Some

70 pounds of CLOTHING were sent to CHILDREN IN SOUTH AMERICA. \$500 was designated to SPONSOR A YOUTH from the former Soviet Union to a WORLDWIDE YOUTH CONFERENCE.

1996: A GENERATOR, GLASSES AND MIDWIFERY KITS were sent TO HAITI. ST. CROIX became the next focus for Paul Rung, who along with 12 volunteers, built a HOUSE in 7 days. Church records reflect the fact that \$40,000 was raised to support a CLINIC in HONDURAS, where Paul also volunteered. CUMC donated \$2600 to help REBUILD EFFINGHAM BAPTIST CHURCH after an unidentified disaster, most probably a tornado or hurricane.

1997: Another GENERATOR as well as OPHTHALMOLOGY SUPPLIES and TEAMS were sent to HAITI. Marlene Porter, along with Lucy Davis, Bill Brown and Mike Grady went to CHINA. A member of Central donated two MOBILE HOMES to meet the NEEDS OF ELDERLY PEOPLE in KINGSTREE.

1998: Paul Rung delivered 228 more MIDWIFERY KITS to HAITI. Paul Rung worked with UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS IN MINISTRY on several projects in places like JAMAICA. His fellow UMVIM volunteers provided LUNCH MONEY for local children while there. Paul also traveled to MEXICO to assist in BUILDING a CHURCH. Mike Christopher accompanied Paul on several of these humanitarian efforts.

2000: Again with UMVIM, Paul went to AFRICA. Ralph Porter served in Vietnam and later became police chief in Florence. The plight of boys who had burned out any and all educational and vocational opportunities really spoke to his heart and he achieved the extraordinary- a CHARTER SCHOOL FOR BOYS AND GIRLS who had no place left to go. CHOICES became a camp/Christian love environment manned by enthusiastic and professional volunteers at Camp Sexton. This commitment changed the lives of many otherwise doomed young people. Ralph Porter, shortly before his death, was presented with CUMC's first Mission Award.

2001: Dr. Ben Ward, Harvey Senseney, Robin Myers and Wick Jackson traveled to CHINA.

2005 - 2007: Central sent large teams to PERU to help BUILD and ESTABLISH a SCHOOL.

2010. When HURRICANE KATRINA devastated the GULF COAST, two teams from Central went to help with REBUILDING.

2011: Jim Harris reported that he, Chris Taylor, Renee Chadwick, Karen Hill, Cynthia Taylor, Lenny Boatwright and Mary Falcone worked in HAITI .

2012 - 2013: THE RED BIRD MISSION in Kentucky was served by Ann McCants, Rev. Josh Blackwelder, Hank Leeke, Rick Knight, Vicki Leeke, Rene Chadwick, Mike Wright, Libby Parker and Joanne Anderson.

2015: CUMC committed along with other area churches to host HOMELESS FAMILIES for a week at a time with Dody Phillips serving as coordinator of FAMILY PROMISE. This program is now in a restructuring phase.

The following service projects need to be mentioned in detail, for they have been proven to be of such value that they endure from year to year.

The **ANGEL TREE PROJECT** grants a Christmas wish list to scores of those living with special needs challenges.

DIGGING DEEPER came out of The Well by way of Sharon Tanner. Representatives from various nonprofit organizations are invited to come and speak about their organization and their mission. Twice a year church members choose a Sunday where they either work off campus or work on a project at the church. Hopefully, Sharon feels that with this emphasis on getting involved, families will become accustomed to giving not only through monetary donations but also as the actual hands and feet of Christ. In the spring of 2020 Natalie Merziak and Til Morrisey took over due to Sharon's retirement.

The September 6, 2016 bulletin announced that CUMC had partnered with Briggs Elementary to provide **MENTORING and TUTORING** to elementary students. Ann McCants heads up the volunteers who seek to

make a difference in the lives of children needing encouragement and guidance.

In 2011 Highland Park United Methodist conceived the idea of a **MISSION CAMP**, called at one time **SERVEFLO**, intended to introduce children to the idea of reaching outside themselves to the benefit of others. Central joined in the effort along with First Presbyterian. Since that time children have provided blankets for an Ethiopian orphanage, filled boxes for Operation Christmas Child, donated cookies for hospice patients, volunteered at OM Ships, and even pulled weeds.

June Jenkins has donated not only her craftsmanship but also her thoughtful service to veterans through **QUILTS OF VALOR**, which to date has awarded over 20 quilts to our older former military. She also maintains a registry of our vets dating back to World War II.

For over twenty-five years, young people and adults from Central have participated in **REBUILDING TOGETHER**, formerly called **CHRISTMAS IN APRIL**. Once again, students and adults go out into the community to bring homes up to standard. An eye-opening project.

The **RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVES**, thanks to the organizational skills of staff member Linda Segars, Rick Thomas and the enthusiastic assistance of people like Woody Jones and Murray Jordan, bring in large numbers of volunteers and donors to support the Red Cross.

It is quite evident that the name of Paul Rung appears over and over again throughout our mission history. A prisoner of war during WWII and a man of great compassion, Paul modestly built a 40 year history of mission work as he represented Central United Methodist Church repeatedly throughout the world. His record of service with **UNITED METHODIST VOLUNTEERS IN MINISTRY** is stellar- most definitely including extensive hurricane relief in devastated McClellanville, yet another facet of his personal call to ministry. It is most appropriate that Paul received the Mission Award.

The **UNITED METHODIST WOMEN AND UNITED METHODIST MEN**. Their histories and many good works add up to such an enormous record of constant giving that they merit histories of their own, which are forthcoming.

Many names appear over and over in the documentation of Christians in service at Central. Dr. Gilliam Skinner undertaking several **MEDICAL MISSION** trips to Uganda; his wife, Katri, similarly on trips to Central America. In addition, Dr. Hunter Stokes making several trips overseas **TREATING EYE PATIENTS**. Jim Canup serving a vital role with others in recovery efforts from disastrous **FLOODING** in the small town of Nichols, as practically every structure was damaged to a terrific degree. John Frank heavily involved in **REBUILDING IN APRIL** from its conception as well as participation in a huge number of other comprehensive projects. Harvey Senseney, Ralph Porter, Ben Ward and others serving by way of **PROMISE KEEPERS**. Ann McCants, **VOLUNTEERING** for virtually every mission trip the church has undertaken. People like Tom and Jeanette Whiteley, always willing, **going wherever the call**, in foreign places as well as locally. Hank Leeke seems to be always around whenever good works are on the agenda, particularly where the **YOUTH** are concerned. And we cannot forget our young people, who find the time to demonstrate their willingness to pitch in virtually **any-time and anywhere**.

Central United Methodist Church and its members continue to show God's love to our broader Florence community and the world beyond our community through volunteer efforts and financial contributions that reflect Social Principles of United Methodist Church.

The church budget as well as volunteer donations offer financial support and/or physical labor to a virtually constant agenda of needs. As this report is being finalized Jim Harris and his group of hardy volunteers are completing a project involving both major roof repair and other damages to the home of an elderly stroke victim, who by the way, is not a member of Central. These people give real meaning to the word **OUTREACH**. Below are some details outlining the vast umbrella of options and opportunities just waiting for giving hearts to step up.

Beginning in 2015, Art Justice gathered a team of volunteers to construct **BEDS** for students from the Pee Dee

area that lack proper sleeping accommodations. Various school districts submit the names of students in need and this energetic group shows up several times a year to craft not only a wooden bed but also provide sheets and other linens, a book, a stuffed animal and the all important pajamas.

The **BLISS BALL** provides an opportunity for special needs children to have their own “Prom”, since they would not necessarily be included in school functions. Ages for attendees range from sixth grade on up.

Pastor Will Malambri recruited a team in 2010 to provide what would become continuing support for the **CHURCH MISSION in COSTA RICA**, which is led by Will Bailey. Teams have gone every year since to help with the building project, conduct Vacation Bible School and offer support classes for mothers. Our Schofield Library donates Bible stories and Bibles for preschool and elementary children. The **COSTA RICA MISSION SALARY SUPPORT** augments the pastor’s salary and the **SCHOLARSHIP FUND** supports youth participation in the mission.

CONNIE MAXWELL CHILDREN’S HOME/PEE DEE GIRLS’ HOME is supported by Central with provision of cleaning supplies, paper products, toiletries and food as well as repairs. Barbara Holladay and Dody Phillips have undertaken a mentoring role with teenage girls from the shelter.

The name of Courtney Graham will stand out forever for her personal commitment to those in need, particularly children. A mother and business woman, she first started **SNAC (SHELTER AND NUTRITION FOR ALL CHILDREN)** over ten years ago. Her family remembers her leaving home late at night to take cash money to the motel strip on Highway 52 to provide lodging for families with no place to go. This led to soliciting **MEALS for the HOMELESS** attending the newly started **WHOSOEVER CHURCH**. Compassion for a sick friend inspired Courtney to organize the **SYMPHONY/MASTERWORKS LOVE NOTES BENEFIT** resulting in \$45,000 toward medical treatment. After Courtney’s unexpected death in 2015, her family, along with community love and support, established the **COURTNEY MCGINNIS GRAHAM COMMUNITY SHELTER**, which emphasizes job counseling, appropriate living accommodations and life skills. The shelter now falls under the umbrella of the **HOUSE OF HOPE**- both provide vital services to the unfortunate among us. Residents of the House of Hope are encouraged to focus on spiritual growth, education, employment, life management and recovery from substance abuse. Ground-breaking will soon result in a community of tiny houses behind the House of Hope to further reach out into the community of the homeless.

HELP 4 KIDS recognizes the fact that there are children in our area who go to bed hungry and does something about it. This ministry fills the weekend hunger gap for children in Florence County elementary schools receiving free or reduced breakfast/lunch during the week and who are identified as “food insecure” on the weekend. Volunteers fill book bags with Vienna sausages and treats.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY is a Christian-based global nonprofit housing organization conceived by Millard Fulmore, working across fifty states and seventy countries. Their main vision affirms that everyone should have a decent place to live, this vision being accomplished by building strength, stability and self-reliance in a partnership with families in need of decent and affordable housing. Potential homeowners work alongside volunteers to construct their home and accept responsibility for an affordable mortgage.

HELPING FLORENCE FLOURISH is A Christian initiative that seeks to improve life in our community by addressing education, homelessness, restoration of the family and bridging the racial divide.

JOHN WESLEY FELLOWSHIP AT FRANCIS MARION UNIVERSITY supports a campus ministry that seeks to extend the Gospel of Jesus Christ to young adults in an academic environment through spiritual formation, intellectual inquiry and social involvement. CUMC has provided meals for fellowship meetings, packaged personal hygiene items, and extended financial aid.

JUMPSTART MINISTRY is a faith based program designed to break the back of recidivism by discipling men inside and outside prison. On the inside, CUMC-Florence volunteers facilitate discussion of the best selling book [The Purpose Driven Life](#) to approximately 20 inmates at the Turbeville Correctional Institute. Graduates of the program have the opportunity to live at the JUMPSTART home in Spartanburg. While there, the staff helps the new residents manage such challenges as dental care, health care and transportation while simultaneously

surrendering daily to Christ, finding and keeping a job, setting and keeping a budget, developing and keeping a support system and having fun God's way. Steve Liebenrood heads up this ambitious mission, assisted by BethAnn Owen, Hank Leeke and Tom Moore.

In 1996, visionary minister Chad Davis and Ralph Porter met with neighboring churches to establish a central clearing house for answering the needs of the indigent- **LIGHTHOUSE** became an answer to prayer. Services include emergency food assistance, fans and blankets for senior citizens, diapers and wipes for small children, hygiene kits and referrals as well as guidance for additional services in the area. Lighthouse also provides financial assistance for past due rents and deposits, life-sustaining prescription medicines and travelers' aid for those stranded in the Florence County. Those seeking assistance must have a referral from Lighthouse to approach member churches for additional assistance. Ryan Poston became the first director and Lighthouse now serves thousands of people each year.

MANNA HOUSE feeds the hungry. One of the oldest benevolent operations in Florence, the Manna House has provided meals to the community of the needy for many years. Support is extended by a large group of volunteers from the wider Florence community.

MERCY MEDICINE is a free Christian clinic designed to assist patients in Florence and Williamsburg counties that do not receive Medicaid, Medicare or VA benefits and cannot afford to pay for private insurance or treatment. Central became a Covenant Church with Mercy Medicine some years ago.

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER has emerged relatively recently in the Florence community. Originating out of Trinity Baptist Church, volunteers from a multi-denominational group prepare meals for hundreds of people per day. Meals are prepared and delivered to distribution sites seven days a week.

PARKING LOT MINISTRY specifically targets the homeless population of Florence. A weekly event providing spiritual direction, provision of essentials and a hearty breakfast mark the participation of over 150 volunteers from area churches who make it happen. Susan McGrath, who exemplifies a totally unselfish spirit, has opened her heart and home to the homeless on many occasions and is a driving force behind this outreach. Barbara Holladay, Gloria Coldren, Gail Onley and Betty Hineline coordinate with some fifty volunteers from our **HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE** who get up at 5:30 AM on 6:00 AM Saturday mornings per year to prepare the hot and nourishing breakfast of casseroles, muffins and fruit.

As a supplementary arm of this ministry, **BREAD BRIGADE** not only collects bread from area stores on Friday afternoons but also hands out toilet paper, toiletries and other life essentials. Joanne and Dave Anderson and Joe and Elvie Eaddy are among the many regular supporters who deliver these supplies to the crowd on Saturday mornings.

PEE DEE COALITION FOR DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL ABUSE/DURANT CHILDREN'S CENTER together form an organization that provides services to victims of child abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence in the Pee Dee. The Durant Center specifically addresses children who may have been abused, neglected or witness to domestic violence and also provides forensic interviews, medical exams and therapy. Our church supports through gift books for children, volunteerism and donations.

As an active arm of the Outreach Team and **CENTRAL CROSS CONNECTION**, Joe Eaddy, Ivan Eaddy, Jim Harris & friends have constructed a number of ramps as well as pull-up bars for the homes of many locals with a handicap situation. They show up wherever there is a physical need of some sort.

The Salkehatchie River flows from its source in the coastal plains of South Carolina to the ocean. Like the river, **SALKAHATCHIE SUMMER SERVICE** follows a course through time that is influenced by location, people, circumstances, and historical events. It was started in Fairfield, South Carolina by Rev. John Wesley Culp in 1978. Volunteers spread out over the deep South and other states for seven days with the express purpose of updating/repairing homes in severe disrepair. Central has been sending teams of youth since 2010 and this opportunity for service to the poorest among us remains evidence of faith in action.

Pastor Tom Pietila approached the Outreach Committee in 2003 about starting a **SANTAHATCHIE PROJECT** under the leadership of Hank Leeke, recruiting high school students who not only pay to participate but dedicate the five days after Christmas to work repairing homes in the local area. Large numbers of teenagers from various churches board at Central and spread out daily in work teams. Barbara Holladay and the **CUMC HOSPITALITY TEAM** prepare their meals, beginning with a very early call to breakfast.

It is painfully evident that the Covid 19 epidemic of 2020-21 has brought a screeching halt to many of our benevolent programs that have delivered hope and comfort to so many. As it now appears, a good portion of 2021 may possibly bring a return to outreach. Plans to send another team in the summer of 2021 to assist Will Bailey and his congregation in COSTA RICA have unfortunately recently been dropped due to the Covid situation there. However, other good works are resurfacing one by one. There is absolutely no doubt that the good people affiliated with Central United Methodist Church, other churches and the Florence community will continue their long record of concern, care and action as the hands and feet of Jesus.

Adult and Family Ministry Report

by Linda Segars

The staff position of a director of adult and family ministries was created in 1992 at the recommendation of Rev. Chad Davis and was approved by the administrative board. Linda Davies Segars was hired October 1st of that year. Initially, the focus was to plan meals and programs for Central's Wednesday Evening Fellowship and aid and provide resources for adult Sunday school classes. The responsibilities of the job grew and changed to keep pace with evolving ministry opportunities at Central.

Recreational ministries were cultivated to provide opportunities for fellowship and outreach. We began having semi-annual golf tournaments (at the suggestion of Rev. Davis), men's softball, women's softball, co-ed softball, and continued to participate in the youth church basketball league. After the Davis Christian Life Center was built, we began a men's open basketball night every Monday. John Jacobs has been instrumental in this community outreach. This year we added girls' volleyball to the mix and are looking to offer pickleball this fall.

Central's scouting program was included in the family ministry team scope in 1994 although Scout pack 475 has existed since 1943! Tim Fisher was the cubmaster in 1994 and has continued to this day to be involved in and nurture this ministry area. Currently, we have cub scout opportunities for boys in 5K - 5th grade, and a boy scout program for ages 6th grade through high school. They hold monthly meetings at Central's own Scout Hut located on Plum Drive. Central has sponsored girl scout troop 110 for many years helping girls earn their Silver, Gold, God and Country and God and Family Awards since 1993.

A senior adult program called, "Young at Hearts," was already established under the leadership of Enid Derrick. Later, the name was changed to "Lunch and Learn," led by Joe Ann Whitaker. Many other programs evolved such as the senior afternoon social (mostly card playing for weekly fellowship), the Joy Singles (especially for single seniors), the Shepherd's Center led by Rebecca Smith and later Gloria Coldren and Gale Onley, and the Jr./Sr. group, established around 2000 by Barbara and Earl Dawkins. Each group provides unique programs and the opportunity for trips. The Jr./Sr. group has even taken cruises to Europe and the Mediterranean area. At our 125th anniversary celebration, we recognized our first Heritage Sunday to honor those who had been members of Central 50 plus years. Several years later, we decided to also celebrate those who had been members 25-49 years and named it Legacy Sunday. Both continue to occur.

The church family ministry team began large churchwide events with activities for all age groups that now take place annually like the church family picnic, the Spirit of Central, the ice cream and dessert social, the fall fair, and a talent show. For several years, we held a Polar Bear 5K walk/run at Camp Sexton organized by Marvin Owen. That stopped when we put the camp up for sale. The Taste of Central is a most popular occasion which features food sampling stations from many local restaurants as well as Central "chefs" and includes a silent auction with goodies provided by vendors all around town. The proceeds from this event are used to make improvements to Central's campus that are not in the budget. This activity was begun by Barbara Dawkins and continues under the leadership of Patsy Stokes.

Wednesday night fellowship suppers and programs are planned from the Wednesday after Labor Day to the Wednesday of Holy week. We have a fabulous chef, George Hicks, and offer a delicious meal for the best price in town - currently \$6 per adult and \$3 per child. Afterwards, there are programs and activities for all age groups. A recent addition to our offerings includes Live @ Central created by Murray Jordan. L@C presents a variety of interesting, stand-alone programs and provides a wonderful opportunity to invite a friend! Short- and long-term Bible studies are also main stay options. We are fortunate to have participation from approximately 200 people from all age group ranges each week.

Central's adult ministry team coordinates blood drives every 56 days. We have partnered with the American Red Cross for approximately 20 years. We are the largest church contributor in the Florence District. This year, we have averaged 60 pints per drive and will collect almost 400 units for 2021! In addition to blood drives and senior ministries, the committee sends college care packages to our college students twice a year and offers a young adult Sunday school option during college breaks. We also help with women ministry events, single ministry events, adult Sunday school events such as teacher appreciation, and Lenten lunches.

As you can see, there are numerous opportunities to enjoy at Central! We have been blessed by many individuals, ministry team leaders and members who have had the vision, given of their time and resources, and worked hard to create experiences and an environment dedicated to the Glory of God and our Lord Jesus Christ and to further His kingdom.

A History of the United Methodist Women

by Peggy Knight

The Women's Society of Central Church was organized March 16, 1879 while Central Methodist Church was still a circuit. This was merely ten years after the Boston meeting in March 1869, when the first Women's Foreign Missionary Society was formed.

In 1895, the Central women became involved in foreign mission work and began to make monetary contributions to the cause.

In the fall of 1930, Women's Missionary Society consisted of nine circles, including a business women's circle, called the Wesleyan Service Guild. Circles adopted names of South Carolina missionaries; other circles have been named for ministers' wives or special teachers of circles.

In 1940, the name changed once again to Women's Society of Christian Service, called WSCS.

In 1952, another Wesleyan Service Guild #2 was organized. These two business women's guilds continued until they became circles.

In 1968, the new Women's Society of Christian Service of The United Methodist Church was born. To this organization, the Woman's Society of Christian Service and the Wesleyan Service Guild of the former Methodist Church merged. We would serve with this name until 1972, at which time a new inclusive women's organization, with a new name, United Methodist Women, came into being.

A statement of Purpose was written for the newly named United Methodist Women. The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

Central's UMW goal has been Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth.

Fundraisers have always been an important part of our yearly planning as a means to be able to financially support our mission programs. In 1973, Central UMW began having a Country Store as the annual fundraiser, a very popular event locally. This was a year-long time of wonderful fellowship as they met regularly, handcrafting a variety of unique items such as needlework, soups, pies and cakes. This fundraiser would continue for many years

until other means of raising funds were used. Cutlery sales, bake sales, casserole sales, as well as yard sales, tote bag, apron, and note card sales have allowed more opportunities to support more mission work.

Along with these short term fundraisers, an annual BBQ began in 2003 and continues to be our main fundraiser. The UMW is devoted to supporting our efforts which extend beyond the UMW world, from national and state missions to many mission groups in our own community, the goal always to make life better for women, children and youth. We also have supported several of the outreach programs within Central UMC. In 2015, 2017 and 2019, yard sales were held which made it possible to increase our contributions considerably.

For more documentation and detail, the Schofield Library Archives houses years and years of extensive records kept by the women of the UMW, demonstrating their vital and enduring commitment to mission.

In 1982, the UMW had 14 circles meeting regularly for fellowship and study. In 2021, many of the circles have combined and a couple have gone inactive. There are now five circles meeting regularly. Although we are fewer in number than in years past, we remain strong in our goal to be a “community of women committed to mission”.

Throughout our history, United Methodist Women and its predecessor organizations have brought women together in small groups to grow in faith and be involved in ministry and mission. The world has changed since the night of our founding on March 23, 1869. In some ways, the needs of women, children and youth have changed; in other ways, they remain the same. What hasn't changed is the need for United Methodist Women.

God has called United Methodist Women to be in mission with women, children, and youth, the most vulnerable among us, “the least of these”.

Our hope is for the next generation of women to pick up the goal and purpose of United Methodist Women and continue the legacy of Central UMW.

If we don't turn faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth.....who will?

May we answer God's call to put our faith, hope and love into action, with glad and generous hearts, giving to those in need and working to create a world in which no one has need

A History of the United Methodist Men

by Eileen Blackwell

The mission of the United Methodist Men (UMM) is to promote constructive Christian fellowship and support all men of Central Methodist Church as they search to know Jesus Christ, to serve Him, to grow spiritually and to daily do His will. The exact date of the beginning of Central's UMM is not known; however, the first president was Mr. H. G. (Sec) Senseney, Jr, who arrived in Florence in 1927. The group went out of existence in the 1950's but was revived to serve local missions by the late Rev. J. Chadwick Davis on May 13, 1991. Their first endeavor was providing two meals a day for the Habitat Project. All men of Central are considered members and need only to attend a meeting to have their name added to the roster. UMM participate in Central Church programs as well as those of the community. Meetings are held on the third Monday of each month during the school year at 6:30 PM in the Spears Fellowship Hall where a meal is frequently cooked by a UMM member. Programs may include inspirational messages, current event topics, musical entertainment and talks by community leaders. The UMM of Cumberland UMC are invited to a program at least annually. Ladies' Night is held in December to honor wives and friends with Christmas music, a dinner and possibly entertainment.

Funds have been raised by selling Florence Collectors' Christmas ornaments, hosting the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on the day before Ash Wednesday and collecting money gained in excess of the cost of the monthly meals. Some proceeds are directed toward The Francis Marion University Wesley Organization, Epworth Children's Home and previously to Choices Charter School, a charter school that was located at Camp Sexton. Other entities receiving donations include Central's Boy Scout Troop, Epworth Methodist Children's Home, SNAC program ("Shelter and Nutrition for All Children") and the House of Hope/Courtney McGinnis Graham Community Shelter, named in memory of a young mother who was a Central church member.

The UMM participate in projects such as Rebuilding Together, a home repair project (formerly Christmas in April), and Greater Florence Habitat for Humanity (a nonprofit, ecumenical Christian housing organization for those in need). The men also serve at Wednesday Night Suppers, work alongside youth and provide meals during Santahatchie Youth Mission Week (home repair project held during school Christmas break), and participate in the Beds Ministry ("Better Education Demands Sleep") that finances and constructs beds for needy children in the Florence School District One. Choices Charter School was supported by UMM for many years with funds, staff members, teachers and mentors. UMM also serve as church ushers for church services and assist the United Methodist Women with yard sales.

Brick pavers for the Parlor Garden are purchased to memorialize deceased members.

The UMM aims to continue to be a vital part of the overall internal and outreach ministry of Central Church:
FOLLOW JESUS, LOVE GOD, LOVE NEIGHBOR.



GENTRAL
METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
SOUTH
MCMXIII

The fourth and present Central Methodist Church building was constructed between 1913 and 1914 on the northeast corner of Cheves and Irby Streets at a cost of \$75,000. In 1919 the church was dedicated, the debt retired and the church was named “Central.” The membership of the church numbered 85 when the first church was built on the corner of Dargan and Cheves Streets in 1871. Current membership stands at approximately 2,000 today.

