

THE TRUSTEES OF *THE UNITED METHODIST ADVOCATE*

CONNECTING METHODIST IN SOUTH CAROLINA SINCE 1837

In this 170th year of the oldest continuous published newspaper in Methodism, the Advocate Board of Trustees wants to ensure that the Advocate will be around to celebrate its Bicentennial in 2037. The 2007 Board commissioned Brodie Media to conduct United Methodist focus groups across the state and ask the question, "How do you want to get your religious news?" The answers to this question are helping the Board to plan, shape, and form a newspaper that will serve our readers in this high tech 21st century. The Advocate has been published since December 2003 without an editor, who has been on Active Duty; therefore, it has not been a possibility to do much else than get a basic paper out once a month with a staff of one full time and one part time employee. The Board is taking advantage of this interim period to evaluate the purpose and the policy of the Advocate. When an editor is back on board full time, the Conference will see the results of the focus groups in the form of a NEW Advocate.

Since the directive of the 2006 Annual Conference for the Commission on Communication and the Advocate Board of Trustees to share designated membership, there has been a renewed right relationship with the Conference. Both groups have benefited from the arrangement.

The Advocate has a rich tradition and history. It has always been an important and strong voice in South Carolina Methodism. It has been a weekly newspaper; it has been a bi-weekly newspaper; it has been a monthly newspaper. It has had a circulation of 35,000; it has had a circulation of 9,000. It was published in various sites until 1918 when the Advocate bought property at 1314 Lady Street, Columbia and is presently in only its second home since then. The Advocate has tenacity. A reader commented many years ago about when she got her Advocate that she opened it with "eagerness and anticipation". The present Board of Trustees is commented to once again producing a newspaper that will indeed be opened with "eagerness and anticipation".

*Marilyn Murphy, Chairperson
Advocate Board of Trustees*