

## THE UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

The year has been an exciting and busy one for us as those seeking to fulfill the purpose of UMW in the South Carolina Conference. Our first celebration of women together was Legislative Day, March 3, at Ashland UMC in Columbia. We took the challenge to become active in contacting our representatives in Congress about Payday Lending, Public Education, Health and Human Services, and the Environment. No Child Left Behind was not changed and will have more time for constructive modifications. The Surface Water Permitting Act would require all major users of water (more than 3,000,000 gal. per year) to have a permit. Working together and letting our voices be heard, we are certain to accomplish much.

On April 3, we traveled by bus to the Southeastern Jurisdiction Meeting held in Hampton, Virginia. It was a great gathering of women called to worship, study and fellowship. Eleven new Women's Directors were elected for the next quadrennium. The theme was "Called By Name." A new format was used where the delegates interviewed each nominee. This method gave the delegates an opportunity to have one-on-one contact with the nominees.

The Spiritual Growth Retreat was another opportunity to be in community with sisters across the State. Seeing Dr. Fowler's dramatization of the lives of biblical sisters made their struggles come alive to us. We imaged their joys and disappointments and felt the connection. The attendance for the two sessions was 1050.

"Come Together, Be Together" was held at Lyttleton Street UMC. We had 166 persons in attendance. Opportunities to become informed about health, personal finances and wills were given with such workshops as: Finance, Healthy Eating, and Asking the Right Questions. There was also a fun part of the day where one could learn how to line dance. The combination of fun, fellowship, and education focused on what we needed as officers and local unit members to fulfill the purpose of UMW. Our speakers, Judge Pierce and Angela Ford Nelson, and the presenters did an excellent job.

"Living the Sacred" was the theme for the School of Christian Mission. We left the school with a deeper understanding of what it means to live in sacred harmony with God and our sisters and brothers. 277 persons were in attendance. Of the 277, 13 were young ladies ages 13-18. Each evening, the plenary focused on one of the study themes for the year: "I Believe in Jesus" was highlighted on Thursday, "Israel/Palestine" on Friday and "Giving Your Heart Away: Native American Survival" on Saturday. Craft sales totaled \$1650.47. Our worship service culminated on Sunday with Rev. Candace Sloan delivering the message. Rev. Sloan stated that we must understand that God has given humanity the gift of life and relationship and we must deepen our understanding of what it means to live in sacred harmony.

Not only do the women of the South Carolina Conference participate in opportunities locally but nationally. We give to our national mission projects through undesignated giving and designated giving. Some of our local mission projects have benefited from our giving to undesignated and designated giving. Locally, we provide school supplies, stock shelves at our mission projects, provide family meals during bereavement, mentor students, visit our sick and shut-ins, and give gift cards and postage stamps to our mission projects. We have just cause to celebrate. We celebrate members' participation in the Reading Program, Mission Today Units and the Charter for Racial Justice Diamond Units in all of the districts. We also celebrate the reorganized units in the Charleston, Florence, Anderson, Marion, and Walterboro districts. You are the foundation upon which all of our hope lies. Thank you to those districts that exceeded your Pledge to Mission. South Carolina looked really good in the report given by Women's Division.

We must continue to fulfill our Purpose to know God and experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ. We must follow his example of caring for the needs of others - especially women, children and youth. We must deepen our understanding of what it means to live in sacred harmony. We must seek new ways of inviting younger women to the organization and keeping them. We must nurture others and ourselves. With over 11,200 women in the organization, we can make a difference.

*Mary Johnson, President, SCCUMW*