From The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2008, paragraph 629, subsections 3, 4 and 5 are cited as follows: (3) “The conference Board of Church and Society and the conference council of ministries, shall develop and promote programs on church and society within the bounds of the conference that include prison ministry and reform concerns. To this end, it may divide its membership into committees of approximately equal size patterned after the organization of the General Board of Church and Society. Committees of the board shall have responsibility to cooperate with one another to advance the respective and mutual concerns of their respective areas in social, education, service, witness, and action. (4) The conference board of church and society shall serve to connect the General Board of Church and Society and the district and local churches in relating the gospel of Jesus Christ to the members of the church and to the persons and structures of the communities, nation, and world in which they live. Program shall be developed that provides education and action on issues confronting the church consistent with the Social Principles and policies adopted by the General Conference. (5) The board shall estimate annually the amount necessary for support of its work and shall report this amount according to the procedure of the annual conference. The work of the board may be considered a benevolence interest of the church within the conference.” Thus, these selected subsections of the indicated paragraph are concluded. They will serve as a framework for further development of this report.

It is imperative that Jesus The Christ maintains a prominent presence in his church. Too often it is suspected, Jesus has been excluded. When included, it is sometimes around “proof texting” and “special selection” in keeping with political correctness. But in support of the mission, goals and objectives of the Board of Church and Society, there is Biblical precedence. In Matthew 25:40 (NRSV) Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Our work over the past year has represented the voice of the voiceless and a flicker of light on behalf of the hopeless amidst despair.

We expect to realize approximately eighty (80) percent of our budget for the year. A significant portion of it has been awarded to the South Carolina Christian Action Council in support of its work. The SCCAC is an ecumenical religious organization that advocates on behalf of the oppressed. In addition, we have supported the conference on HIV and AIDS, which was held on March 3, 4 and 5, 2011 in Columbia, South Carolina. We also supported the resolution on racism at the 2010 South Carolina Annual Conference. With further regard to this specific item, we await direction from Connectional Ministries regarding appropriate measures that would allow action on said resolution.

Our efforts to more specifically address issues relative to the plight of the poor in South Carolina are still in process. There has been considerable discussion regarding the possibility of a statewide conference on poverty and its related social welfare issues. A plan and program has yet to be finalized.

If there is a matter for concern, perhaps it would be related to the often heard expression that the Board of Church and Society is an activist entity. For that reason, many local congregations have no interest in such a committee in their organizational structure. However, it might be noted that an action agenda must not necessarily be activist oriented, even though some might argue that Jesus was and is an activist. In view of such concerns, our Board among its members are available to help dispel fears and light torches in the pathways of opportunities to help the poor and advance God’s kingdom on Earth. Your invitations to speak are encouraged.

In summary, this report offered a brief description in part regarding the mission and function of The Board of Church and Society. A general statement was made regarding program initiatives supported by our budget. The resolution on racism was noted indicating we eagerly await direction relative to the possibility for a programmatic response. Noted was discussion had about the possibility of a statewide conference on poverty and related issues. Finally, there was some conjecture regarding possible lack of enthusiasm among local congregations for the inclusion of Church and Society committees in their organizational structure. As this Board continues its work on behalf of the South Annual Conference, we solicit your prayers. Thank you.

Augustus Rodgers, Chair