



**Strong word**

Dr. Robin Dease, Hartsville District superintendent, led Annual Conference in a Bible study on faith, hope and love, addressing one word each morning of AC. Here, she illuminates a point.

*Photo by Matt Brodie*



**Passing the mantle**

Retiring pastor Rev. Paul Frey passes the literal and figurative mantle of service to newly ordained pastor Rev. Suzanne Walker at the retirement celebration Tuesday. AC honored 31 retirees this year.

*Photo by Allison Trussell*



**DAILY ADVOCATE**

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**“Resolutions,” from “Page 1**

nonpartisan, nonprofit Faith Coalition on Gun Violence.

The resolution encourages the conference to change the focus on guns and gun violence in our society; raise awareness about gun violence, prevention and impact on families and communities; promote responsible gun ownership by providing information about gun safety and security; educate the public about alternatives to violence through conflict resolution; and advocate for civil discourse, cooperation and collaboration for real security and a less violent society and culture.

“The Gospel talks about the vision of the Kingdom, a vision of a different kind of order in society rather than the domination version we’re in,” Dr. John Dickey Evans, retired United Methodist pastor and chair of the coalition. “This document is an effort to put before the conference. ... It’s a local effort to offer an alternative perspective through the lens of nonviolence as taught in the New Testament.”

The resolution also specifies that the conference actively support the aims and purposes of the Faith Coalition on Gun Violence and adopt an official stance against gun violence in all its manifestations in our society, plus promote sustained, reasonable efforts to affect a change in our culture that has allowed such violence to flourish.

Among other things, the resolution cites concerns that gun violence in our society

has reached intolerable levels, with far too many children, young adults and others being killed or injured by guns, and the prevalence of guns in our society has desensitized many people to the effects, both immediate and long term, of gun violence. Further, it says, enactment of consistent and comprehensive regulations regarding licensing of and training for legal gun owners has failed at local, state and federal levels, and state and federal government entities have been unwilling to adequately address the issues of guns and gun violence in our communities.

**Mentally ill inmates**

Clergy and laity will also vote on A Resolution to Support our Neighbors: The Need for Services to Individuals with Mental Illness in the South Carolina Department of Corrections, submitted by two United Methodist pastors, the Rev. John W. Culp and the Rev. Cathy Jamieson-Ogg.

This resolution stems from a major court case involving unconstitutional treatment of mentally ill inmates. In what he called the most troubling of the more than 70,000 cases to come before him in the last 14 years, Circuit Judge Michael Baxley issued an order in January in T.R., P.R., K.W., et al. v. South Carolina Department of Corrections, et al., citing inhumane treatment of the inmates and calling the SCDC mental health program “inherently flawed and systemically deficient in all

major areas.” The mentally ill inmates have in some cases been forced to endure hours of restraint in crucifix positions with no bathroom break; days spent naked in shower stalls, holding cells and interview booths; routine and excessive use of pepper spray and other force; repeated denial of basic psychiatric medications and other treatment plans; inadequate supervision and staffing; multiple deaths.

“This resolution isn’t about politics; it’s about people, namely the ‘least of these,’ who suffer mental illness behind bars without adequate treatment,” Jamieson-Ogg said. “The mentally ill in our nation are on the ‘bottom of the barrel’ in terms of treatment and care. The mentally ill in our prisons are even further at the bottom. It’s way past time for our state and our church to respond to this crisis.”

The resolution specifically instructs the conference to urge the SCDC to take all measures needed to correct long-standing deficiencies in its mental health program; urge the S.C. governor and legislators to appropriate sufficient funds to do this; and call on Bishop Holston to convey this to the SCDC and key S.C. leaders.

**Historic church**

The body will also hear a resolution designating Central UMC, Spartanburg, as a historic church. Central, founded in 1837, continues to operate on its original campus, and its sanctuary was constructed in 1886.

**Today’s Agenda  
June 4, 2014**

- 7-10:30 a.m. Health Screening
- 7:30 a.m. Holy Communion
- 8:30 a.m. Bible Study
- 9 a.m. Consent Calendar Adoption
- Elections—Committee on Nominations
- Committee on Resolution and Appeals
- Committee on Finance and Administration
- Resolutions to Discontinue or Abandon
- Report of Charge Line Changes
- Date of the 2015 Session of Annual Conference
- Recommendation for the Site of the 2015 Annual Conference
- Expression of Appreciation and Omnibus Motion
- 11:30 a.m. Sending Forth and Fixing of the Appointments



*Photo by Matt Brodie*

My Dear Demas rocks the house with “Glory is Yours” to kick off the “In the Beginning Was the Word” worship Tuesday. The service celebrated young adults and service, including the Million Book Effort.

**\$16.71M budget up for vote today**

By Jessica Connor

FLORENCE—Passage of a \$16.71 million budget is key in today’s Annual Conference business as the four-day session wraps to an end.

The budget is an arduous undertaking from the Council on Finance and Administration to enable the S.C. Conference to pay for not only global United Methodist Church funds like

Africa University or General Conference administration, but also S.C. funds such as campus ministries, colleges and retirement homes, camps

**Continued on Page 2**

**AC2014 to vote on resolutions**

By Jessica Connor

FLORENCE—Resolutions on awareness and prevention of gun violence, advocating for humane treatment of mentally ill inmates and designating a local church as historic are up for

final vote by Annual Conference this morning.

Clergy and lay members will vote on A Resolution on Gun Violence, submitted by United Methodists in the ecumenical,

**Continued on Page 4**

**Look for full AC coverage in the July Advocate,  
which will go to press June 6.**

# CM to handle race reconciliation plan

By Jessica Connor

Connectional Ministries will take the reins of a new proposal to cultivate racial reconciliation in S.C. United Methodist churches.

The Rev. John Culp made a motion during the Connectional Ministries report Tuesday that the Emerging Ministry Fund use up to \$10,000 to create a task force and host two one-day conferences in 2015 to address racial prejudice and injustice as a theological and missional imperative in local churches and communities.

Making his motion, Culp told the body he remembered when he came into the conference 45 years ago and witnessed the merger of the two conferences: one predominantly white and the other African-American. While we have

made much progress since then, he said, “Racism still exists in our churches and our society.”

Rather than adopting the motion as-is, the body decided to refer the matter to Connectional Ministries for consideration and action.

The Rev. Gary Phillips, pastor of John Wesley UMC, Charleston, made the motion to refer, noting Connectional Ministries is the proper channel by which to handle a program like this for the conference.

Others felt such a referral would take too long. The Rev. Larry McCutcheon, pastor of Trinity UMC, Orangeburg, agreed referring it would only slow down what needs to happen fast.

“As we look at the (racial) environment in our society and in our state in particular, we need to take some immediate action,” McCutcheon said.

But Connectional Ministries Convener Cynthia Williams said she is confident Connectional Ministries has created an environment where they are able to act capably on things that come before them.

“We are acting on requests. We are moving,” Williams said, urging people to “get on the team, join the game,” and bring proposals and ideas through the District Connectional Ministries.

The original motion calls for two conferences to be held—one at Wofford College and one at Claflin University—and for all clergy and at least one layperson from the local church to attend the conferences. Each pastor would also report at charge conference what is being done in the church and community toward racial reconciliation and justice, or set specific goals.

## DAILY ADVOCATE

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Photos by Matt Brodie

## A million-book labor of love

Volunteers sort, load, box and put stickers on books during the final Million Book Effort processing held at the civic center Tuesday. Organizers estimate United Methodists donated more than 300,000 new elementary and preschool books for children in poverty.

## Conference OKs new ‘blended premium’ plan for churches, tier structure, rate increase

By Jessica Connor

FLORENCE—Next year, churches will pay what the conference is calling a “blended premium” for pastors—one flat rate regardless of the pastor’s insurance tier.

Instead of paying for the pastor’s exact amount—individual, plus-one or family coverage—the church will pay a flat \$823/month cost. The Conference Board of Pensions and Health Benefits believes this will be a fairer, smoother way not only for churches to budget, but for the Cabinet to appoint clergy, as well.

“We recognized from our office when a clergy has a qualifying event, like they move from participant-only to family, that creates a budgetary difficulty, and also we were charged by the Cabinet to look for a way to equalize direct billing across churches, and this is one of the ways we recommend doing it,” said the Rev. David Anderson, conference pensions and health benefits officer.

Anderson said the conference has about the same number of clergy on participant-only coverage as on higher coverage, and the Cabinet had asked the BPHB to explore a way to remove the in-

surance cost out of the equation of making appointments, where they can solely look at the gifts and graces of the clergyperson and not have to factor in their insurance coverage.

“We’ve looked at every way to split this pie,” Anderson said. “But we still think this is the most equitable way.”

Some in the conference opposed the change. The Rev. Steve King, pastor of St. John’s UMC, Batesburg-Leesville, proposed an amendment to the report that, as he noted on the floor, “amounts to returning to our current program.”

“We talked about a blended billing, but from my perspective it’s not an equitable way of handling these charges,” King said.

The amendment was called for a vote but did not pass. After questions from the floor, the body passed the blended premium.

Also approved: an increase of 5.5 percent in health benefit premiums, a shift from a five-tier insurance premium to a three-tier one, covering Participant (\$225/month), Participant Plus One (\$470/month) and Plus Family (\$622/month). For pensions, the past service rate will increase 2 percent for clergy who retired with pre-1982 service; they will now get \$735/year instead of \$720.

### “Budget,” from “Page 1

and retreat ministries and congregational development.

The 2015 budget honors CF&A’s goal of the budget being at or around 15 percent of average net funds by 2015. Those average net funds are now being calculated at a two-year average instead of a four-year average. The \$16.71 million budget for 2015 is a slight increase—0.6 percent—from the \$16.6 million budget passed for 2014.

Also up for vote today is CF&A new proposal regarding direct billing, which is the bill churches receive from the conference for their pastor’s insurance and pension coverage. Sometimes, churches don’t pay their bill, leaving the conference to pay for it—and a balance at the end of the year that must be covered through conference reserve funds.

Today, the body will vote on CF&A’s new Direct Billing Forgiveness Plan and application form, where churches who are behind are able to apply for forgiveness of their past-due direct bills. If approved, it will be a provisional plan in the fall and a permanent plan offered in the first portion of 2015.

Surrett told the body Monday that having direct billing debt “is not healthy financially” for the church or the conference. Currently, the conference has a balance due of nearly \$3 million in past-due direct bills.

“Much work has take place from the Cabinet and conference staff to clear these debts, and this is a simple attempt to (fix this),” Surrett told the body.

In-depth coverage of Annual Conference will be covered in the July edition of the Advocate newspaper, which goes to press June 6.