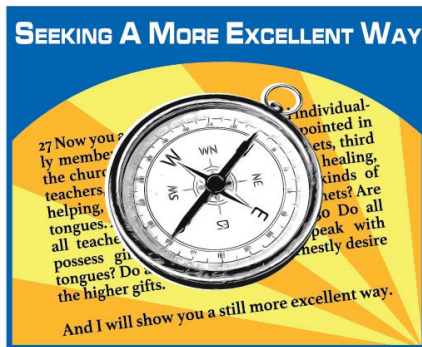
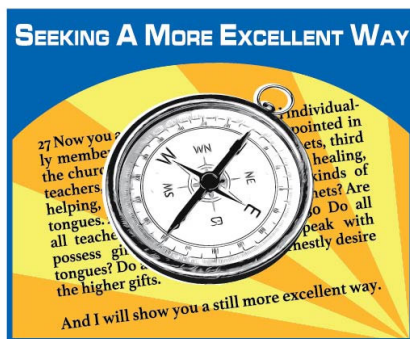


# 2021 South Carolina Annual Conference Awards



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## Barbara Boultinghouse Bridge Builder Award

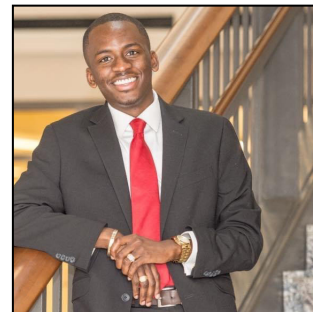
The Commission on Religion and Race recognizes a person or organization in the South Carolina Conference who has built bridges of understanding by promoting equity and inclusiveness without regard to race, gender, age, handicap or economic condition. This year's recipient is:

### Rev. Sh'Kur Francis

*New Hope United Methodist Church, Anderson*

"Sh'Kur is clearly a young man focused on building bridges that promote racial reconciliation, diversity and inclusion," says Rev. Chenita Frierson, pastor of Mount Olive UMC and New Hope UMC in Rock Hill, who nominated Rev. Francis. "This 27-year-old black millennial has already pastored three predominately white congregations in our conference.

"Sh'Kur has an incredible amount of energy and always appears to be channeling that energy in building bridges between churches, communities, people and races."



Rev. Francis' bridge-building started well before his ministry in the church. While serving as an executive intern for Charleston Mayor John Tecklenburg in 2016, he helped form the Mayor's Clergy Advisory Council. That group of 80-plus leaders from different faith traditions builds relationships and serves as liaison between city leadership and faith communities.

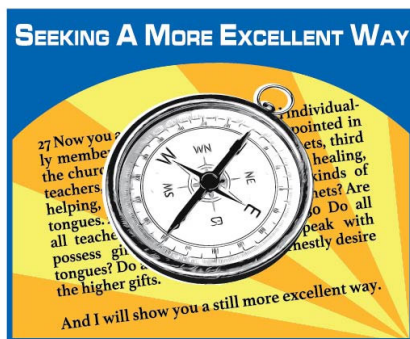
After he was appointed to serve Grace UMC and Lynnwood UMC in Lancaster in 2018, Rev. Francis initiated the formation of the Lancaster County Ministerial Alliance, an organization aimed at racial reconciliation, interfaith dialogue and relationship building.

"When national unrest occurred after George Floyd was murdered in June 2020, Sh'Kur single-handedly organized the Lancaster County Prayer Vigil, in partnership with elected officials, law enforcement and other community leaders," Rev Frierson says. "Clergy from every denomination and race participated in the vigil, including worshipers from a Jewish synagogue and a Muslim mosque.

Since his appointment to New Hope UMC in Anderson in 2020, Rev. Francis has continued to be a moderating voice for peace and reconciliation, both personally in his community and virtually on social media."

*"Sh'Kur played a huge role in humanitarian causes and strengthening racial relations in Lancaster County."*

— **Rev. Chenita Frierson**, pastor,  
Mount Olive & New Hope UMCs



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# Harry Denman Evangelism Award for Laity

The Foundation for Evangelism recognizes one layperson in each conference for responsible evangelism in the local church. This year's recipient is:

## Sandy Thrasher

*New Hope United Methodist Church, Anderson*



"When I first met Sandy in person, the first thing I noted was the positivity she exudes," says the Rev. Sh'Kur Francis, pastor of New Hope UMC, who nominated Thrasher. "It was clear to me that she is a bright light in a world that always needs it, and this positivity reflects so well on our church and the Kingdom of God."

Rev. Francis credits Thrasher with playing a significant role in helping New Hope both establish a virtual presence during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the church's return to in-person services – right about the time Rev. Francis arrived there.

"New Hope had an average attendance of 40 people pre-pandemic, and I expected to see around that same number on my first Sunday," he says. "I was shocked when I left the pastor's study that morning to see a line of dozens of people that stretched from the front door of the church to the parking lot. Sandy had spent weeks inviting coworkers, friends, neighbors, family, friends and even strangers to her church to meet her new pastor."

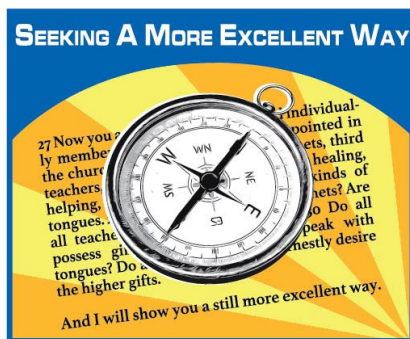
"New Hope's attendance quadrupled its usual size that morning, and because of her invitation, a few of these families have joined, some are still faithfully attending, and many have become frequent visitors."

Marjorie Carithers, chairperson of New Hope's Administrative Council, says the impact of Thrasher's evangelism reaches deep into the Anderson community.

"Sandy's evangelizing efforts in the name of Jesus Christ are unique and far-reaching," she says. "Sandy and her poodle, Maybelline, are local celebrities who volunteer with local nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and hospice homes to bring smiles and cheers to those most desperately in need of love and encouragement."

*"Sandy's bold witness and willingness to joyfully plow new ground sets her apart as a leader in the church and a fruitful evangelist for God."*

– **Stuart Barnes**, lay leader,  
New Hope UMCs



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## Michael C. Watson Volunteer In Mission Award for Clergy

Recognizes clergy who exemplify extraordinary volunteer mission service within the South Carolina Conference.

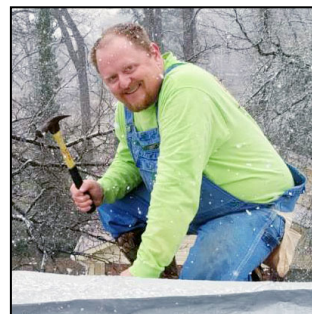
This year's recipient is:

### Rev. John Elmore Jr.

*St. Mark United Methodist Church, Greenwood*

"Rev. John Elmore is committed to service on many levels – giving of his time, talents and energy in amazing ways in the Greenwood District as a member of the Early Response Team," says the Rev. Dr. Stephen Love, the district's superintendent. "His work and ministry extend far beyond the bounds of the district and South Carolina.

"He does not look for accolades for his work; rather, he is passionate about serving and helping others as he lives out his faith in Jesus Christ."



Billy Robinson, disaster response coordinator for the South Carolina United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, cited Rev. Elmore's "real passion for doing God's calling to love our neighbor as ourselves" in nominating him for this award.

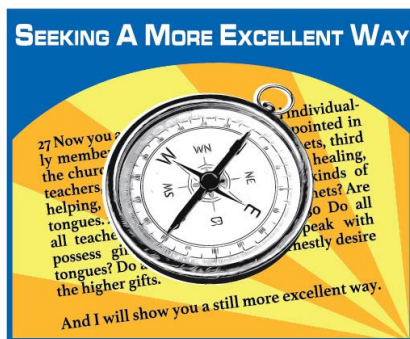
"South Carolina was hit hard with tornados across our state last year, and Rev. Elmore and his son responded to three of the hardest hit areas – Spartanburg, North and Seneca," Robinson says. "They worked hard and fearlessly, helping many families and communities in dire need."

Rev. Elmore – the parish pastor at St. Mark UMC in Greenwood – also was part of a team of South Carolina ERTs who responded in 2020 when multiple hurricanes struck the Gulf coast, centered on Mobile, Alabama, and again in 2021, when a tornado devastated a 100-mile path across four counties near Brent, Alabama.

"Rev. Elmore responded with one of our three Early Response Teams to help those affected by the hurricanes, staying a week and helping suffering people by using chainsaws and tarping roofs – as well as providing spiritual support," Robinson says. "When we returned again to Alabama after the April 2021 tornados, Rev. Elmore was one of the first ones to sign up to go and once again poured his whole self into some very dangerous work."

*"John has a truly strong will and is determined  
to help others in their time of need."*

– **Billy Robinson**, S.C. UMWIM  
ERT disaster response coordinator



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## Michael C. Watson Volunteer In Mission Award for Laity

Recognizes laity who exemplify extraordinary volunteer mission service within the South Carolina Conference.

This year's recipient is:

### Dan Altman

*Bethel United Methodist Church, Charleston*



"Dan does so much for so many with such energy," says Will Felts, a Bethel UMC member and its missions chairperson, who nominated Altman. "He is afraid to tackle nothing. He's our hero."

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when church staff hours were limited, Altman led a volunteer crew to clean the church restrooms and common areas on a daily basis.

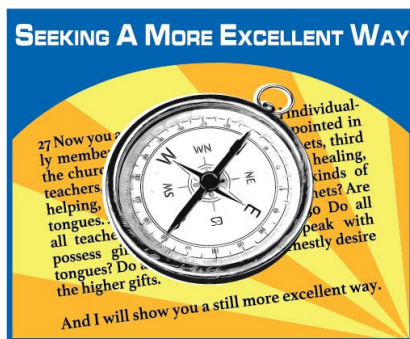
He also is a regular volunteer with Bethel's food pantry, including:

- Installing at no cost to the church shelving and providing rolling carts.
- Donating water, hand sanitizer and masks for both volunteers and clients.
- Helping deliver bagged lunches to 70 seniors homebound by the pandemic.
- Working with monthly vegetable giveaways, including deliveries to low-income clients.
- Delivering excess pantry food to Trinity UMC's soup kitchen.
- Organizing the food pantry storage area.
- Serving as trainer-in-chief for a series of pantry volunteers.

*"Dan looks nothing like Clark Kent, yet we suspect he can leap tall buildings in a single bound!"*

– **Will Felts**, missions chairperson  
Bethel UMC-Charleston





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## One Matters Discipleship Award

Discipleship Ministries lifts up churches that have moved from “zeros” in professions of faith and baptisms to positive numbers in recent years due to renewed focus on intentional discipleship. Recipient receives \$1,000 to continue its efforts.

This year’s recipient is:

### **Advent United Methodist Church (Simpsonville)**

*Rev. Michael Turner, pastor | Rev. Laura-Allen Kerlin, associate pastor*



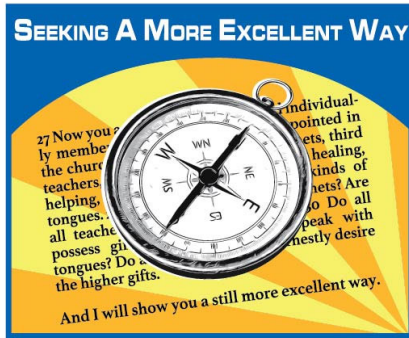
“Advent UMC is connecting in phenomenal ways beyond the walls of the church,” says the Rev. Jim Dennis, superintendent of the Greenville District, who nominated Advent for the recognition. “People see that and want to be a part of a Christian community that is visible and active seven days a week.”

Advent has a motto about making disciples. The Rev. Michael Turner, the senior pastor, asks the congregation, “What is our mission?” And the people answer, “Our mission is fishing!”

“We are humbled to have been nominated by our district superintendent and subsequently selected for this award,” says Rev. Turner. “Over the years, we have tried to structure all of our ministries around the mission of making disciples, and we are happy that this work has been recognized – even among hundreds of other worthy churches.”

In 2020, Advent held 19 baptisms and received 4 members by profession of faith.

The One Matters Discipleship Award, says Jeff Campbell, associate general secretary for strategic programming at Discipleship Ministries, “lifts up the importance of discipleship and helps interpret across the connection what zeros in professions of faith and baptism mean and what moving away from the zeros means. Each ‘one’ in those categories represents a transformed life – a life that matters to God, and a life that should matter to us.”



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## Bishop's Five-Star Award

The Evangelism Committee of the Discipleship Area provides an incentive for churches to embrace new ministries each year geared toward growth and outreach. The award enables small and large churches to receive recognition, for which all of the following criteria must be met:

- Increase in Sunday school attendance or enhancement of Christian education ministry
- A “new work” that impacts growth
- Members received by profession of faith/rededication: 1 for every 100 members
- Emphasis on youth ministries that demonstrate growth
- All apportionments paid in full for 2020, or a 25 percent increase in apportionment payments compared to two years prior

This year’s recipients are:

### **Bethlehem St. James Johns Island Parish**

*Charleston District*

Pastor: Rev. Pattie Gordon

### **Chapin United Methodist Church**

*Columbia District*

Pastor: Rev. Jody Flowers

### **New Hope United Methodist Church**

*Anderson District*

Pastor: Rev. Sh’Kur Francis

### **New Webster UMC-Wadmalaw Island**

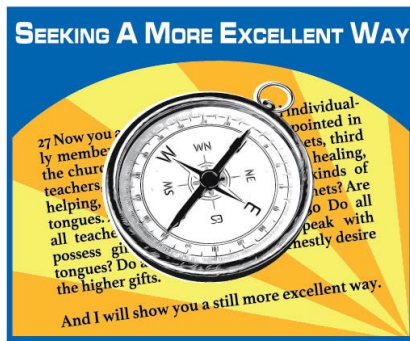
*Charleston District*

Pastor: Rev. Pattie Gordon



**BISHOP'S FIVE-STAR AWARD**





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## Herbert Hucks Award

All churches of the South Carolina Conference are encouraged to celebrate their heritage with this award from the Commission on Archives and History, which recognizes preservation and interpretation of Methodist history in the local church.

This year's recipients are:

### **Tranquil UMC (Greenwood)**

*Rev. Shawn Armstrong, pastor*

*Harriet Creswell, Joe Langley, JoAnn Purkerson  
& Martha Vincent, historians and co-authors*

Tranquil UMC used its bicentennial in 2020 as an opportunity to publish a history of their church and to plan for several celebrations of their church's contributions to Methodism in the Greenwood area. Of course, the pandemic upended many of their plans, but the committee hopes to use their work to create a permanent display on the church's history.

### **Bramlett UMC (Gray Court)**

*Rev. John Fahrney, pastor*

*Judy Riddle, historian*

Bramlett UMC's historian has devoted 40 years to preserving and interpreting the history of the church. In 2020, she produced a book covering 240 years of the church's history, which is a tremendous collection of documents and memories. The church celebrates its history every year and continues to be a resource for other churches in how to preserve and promote history.

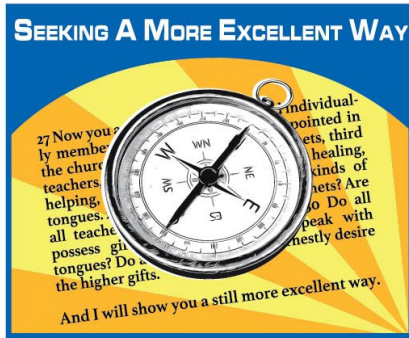
### **Livingston UMC**

*Rev. Graham Bennett, pastor*

*Martha Sligh, historian*

Once again, the members of Livingston UMC have spent the year preserving and promoting Methodist history in their congregation. They continue to collect their history each year, adding new materials as they are available. History is very much a part of the ministry of Livingston UMC.





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# Board of Ordained Ministry Scholarships

## Seminary Students Scholarship

Awarded by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to assist in-state students pursuing a program of study leading to a first professional degree. This year's recipients are:



**Grayson Fallaw** – Fallaw is a native of Union, South Carolina, and a seminary student at Duke Divinity School. His home church is Grace UMC in Union, where he has served for two years as youth director while in undergraduate school. Fallaw will be starting his student pastor job this summer in Smithfield, North Carolina. He earned a bachelor of arts degree in history and Christian education from Presbyterian College.



**Sterling Teunta Harris** – Harris is a native of Greenville, South Carolina, and a seminary student at Gammon Theological Seminary. His home church is St. Mark UMC in Taylors, where he has served as a lay servant for 12 years. Harris attended Claflin University and graduated from North Greenville University. He is a candidate for ordained ministry in the South Carolina Conference and has been licensed as a local pastor.

## T. Dennie Smith Scholarship

This scholarship carries forward the wishes of the late T. Dennie Smith of Greer, whose will created a trust to assist "any young man or woman...who intend to devote their lives to ministry in the Methodist Church." This year's recipients are:

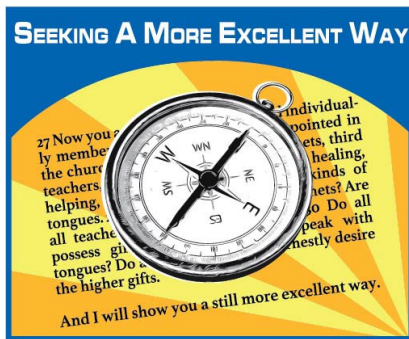


**Kile Antone** – Antone is a native of Ninety-Six, South Carolina, and a seminary student at Asbury Theological Seminary. His home church is Kinard UMC in Ninety-Six. Antone has been licensed as a local pastor and has served part-time as pastor of McKendree UMC in Edgefield, South Carolina. He also has served full-time as a paramedic in Edgefield County. He is married with three children and one grandchild.



**Laura Geloni** – Geloni is a native of Miami, Florida, and a seminary student at Asbury Theological Seminary. Her home church is Covenant UMC in Greer, where she has taught children, led a small group and Sunday school class, worked with the Evangelism Ministry, and served as a lay member to Annual Conference. She is working toward ordination as a deacon in the South Carolina Conference.





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## Bishop's Award of Excellence for Scouting Ministry

Bishop L. Jonathan Holston joins with the United Methodist Men of South Carolina in recognizing Scouting Ministry as an important part of the church's total ministry because of who is involved – all God's children.

Recognizes congregations and units within the United Methodist Church that extend their ministry to children and youth by creating a faith-based environment for children, youth, their families and their leaders who participate in Girl Scouts of the USA and Boy Scouts of America.

This year's recipient is:

### **Trinity United Methodist Church (Spartanburg)**

*Spartanburg District*

BSA Cub Scout Pack 22

Rev. Neal Woods, pastor

Steve Whitaker, scouting ministry coordinator



## It's never too early to start thinking about the 2022 Annual Conference Awards!



## Nominate a worthy S.C. United Methodist now at [umcsc.org/awards](http://umcsc.org/awards)