

HINTON RURAL LIFE CENTER Hayesville, NC

Purpose:

As a mission and retreat agency of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, Hinton serves the SEJ annual conferences and beyond through equipping clergy and congregations (particularly small, rural churches) and offering opportunities for individuals and church groups to serve and/or come for retreats and renewal. Our Mission: *Inspired by Jesus Christ, Hinton Center serves individuals, congregations, and rural communities through retreat ministries, educational opportunities, and missional outreach.*

Key moments from the previous year:

- **Retreats:** In addition to hosting groups from 47 churches for missional outreach, Hinton hosted 63 additional retreats, including a Rural Clergy Renewal Retreat in September 2023, which offered worship, meals, free time options, and conversational times with rural ministry and clergy health experts.
- **Confirmation:** Over 280 youth and adults from 23 churches, a majority from South Carolina, participated in Hinton's four Theotokos Confirmation Retreat weekends in the spring of 2023. www.hintontheotokos.org
- **Safe and Healthy Home Assessment and Repair Missions:** In 2023, Hinton hosted 47 churches and facilitated missional engagement in addressing housing in rural Appalachia. These mission teams helped us work on and improve the health and safety of 61 homes and completed 282 projects.
- **Firewood Ministries:** In 2023, Hinton leveraged volunteer labor to gather, process, and distribute 706 loads of firewood to neighbors in our community who cannot afford to heat their homes. This is a value of \$139,455 and a tremendous savings for our neighbors!
- **Volunteers:** Much of Hinton's work is completed by volunteers. In 2023, we had 1,164 unique volunteers who recorded 20,180 hours in service to our community. This is a value of \$602,575.

Objectives for the coming year:

- **Rural Poverty Simulation:** In order to understand more about the individuals we serve and in order to promote a "walk alongside model" of ministry, Hinton developed and offers a rural poverty simulation. This year, 460 individuals participated in the poverty simulation. Beginning in 2024 this simulation is being packaged for use in other locations and will be available online.
- **Educational Tool Barn:** On April 15, 2024, Hinton's new educational tool barn will be dedicated and launched as a new component of Hinton's Safe & Healthy Home Repair ministry. Funded by The Duke Endowment, it will equip our neighbors and mission volunteers with the knowledge and skills to identify and improve the safety and health of homes in Appalachia and in their own communities.
- **Beautiful Feet Go BOOM, Cycle of Christian Faith Formation:** Over the years, Hinton has developed programming for youth through our Summer Mission Outreach ministry, which also includes missional leadership components for high school students and college-age young people. In 2021 we added our *Theotokos Connections* confirmation curriculum and Theotokos

Confirmation Retreats (noted above), which primarily serve middle school youth. We are currently in the process of developing this pathway, so that young disciples can connect with Hinton from the middle school years through high school and into college. We are working to create a network of engagement that strengthens faith formation for our youth, which will support their participation in their local churches and within The UMC. Because an important component of faith formation in young people is the building of relationships and mentorships with adults, particularly those in their local churches, we will launch BOOM, Boomers on Outreach Mission, in 2024 as another engagement opportunity in our “Beautiful Feet” faith formation cycle. BOOM, which has received grant funding, will be held September 8-12 for adults 60 and older and will replicate our summer mission program that’s offered for youth mission teams. The focus of BOOM is to increase adults’ understanding of their call to nurture and support our younger generations as co-disciples through this shared, connectional experience.

If you take away nothing else from this report, know this:

Just as Jesus modeled a life of loving God and neighbor through serving and teaching, Hinton continues to serve in impactful ways in our 3-county area through Safe & Healthy Home Repair, firewood, Christmas Care, and other ministries, as well as focusing on generational equipping through educational ministries, such as our rural poverty simulation and educational tool barn. Also following the life of discipleship modeled by Jesus, Hinton offers ministries for retreat and renewal for all ages, knowing that as we grow in our love for God and ourselves, we are also more able to love our neighbor in transformational ways.

Submitted by:

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Other ministry members: Hinton’s leadership team also includes: Rev. Dawn Martin, Director of Program Ministries; Rev. Karen Kluever, Minister of Church Relations & Development; Kelli Miller, Director of Operations; and John Nicholas, CFO.