

## LAY LEADERSHIP AREA OF CONNECTIONAL MINISTRIES – REPORT 1

### **Purpose:**

Lay Leadership has four areas of ministry in the SC UMC Conference Connectional Ministries program. It serves to unite the laity across the Conference and encourages them to be engaged in their local church and active in the district. The importance of every church, regardless of its size, cannot be overstated.

### **Key moments from the previous year:**

#### **Lay Leaders:**

The lay leader functions as the primary representative and role model of Christian discipleship and faith lived out in the district and in daily life. The District Lay Leader works with the District Superintendent to fulfill the mission and vision of the congregations within the district. They are leaders who understand that everyone has spiritual gifts and experiences that are vital to the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 12).

They attend local charge conferences, district connectional ministries meeting, conference meetings and train local church ministries.

We appreciate our District Lay Leaders' (DLL) support for the twelve districts. If you do not know your DLL, take the time to get to know them and invite them to your church. Sandy Trasher, Anderson, Gillis McAllister, Charleston, Michael Jennings, Columbia, Brenda Fleming, Florence, Chandra Dillard, Greenville, Sandy Shafer, Greenwood, Derrick Stanley Hartsville, Michael Toms, Marion, Stephon Void, Orangeburg, Bob James, Rock Hill, Donna Campsen, Spartanburg, Sally LeSage, Walterboro.

**Lay Servant Ministries** continue to be a spiritual and leadership development program. This program is equipping and empowering the laity, providing them with the opportunity to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ and then go and make other disciples.

The 2025 Lay Servant Academy drew more participants than we have seen since COVID interrupted our time together in person. Toni Taylor, a layperson, presented the morning session on leading and teaching adults. Her session was well-received, and folks left wanting more. Therefore, we have invited her to present again at the 2026 Academy on August 1, 2026.

Bishop Kenneth Carder was present for the Academy and helped to lead, along with Sandy Shaffer of the Greenwood District, the afternoon session of Ministry with the Forgotten. Bishop Carder wrote both the textbook and its leader's guide.

Pamela Goodwine-Glover facilitated an introduction to Youth Basic. All afternoon overview sessions were well received.

Many of our districts have seen very successful lay servant schools this past year. One district had around 100 participants, and several others had 50 or more. Again, the numbers are increasing.

Many districts are beginning to offer more diverse Advanced Courses to better meet the needs of our local churches.

Lay Servant Ministries is open to all people. Lay Servant Ministries offers certification at several levels for United Methodist laity. These certification levels include Certified Lay Servant, Certified Lay Speaker, and Certified Lay Minister.

**United Women in Faith.** The South Carolina Conference of the United Women in Faith is a sisterhood acting in faith to tackle the world's hard work without hesitation. We focus on women, children and youth and are called to act for justice for our communities. To meet that goal, we have been busy learning and growing together.

The United Women in Faith have been working hard on our programs. We held our State Meeting in October, elected the 2026 officers, and are working on a plan to reduce our districts from 12 to 10 in accordance with the South Carolina Methodist Conference. We have Legislative Advocacy Day to help us learn about advocating for women, children and the marginalized in our community. Our spiritual growth retreat and our day apart event will take place in April and May. Many of us are going to our National Assembly in May with our keynote speaker, Stacy Abrahms. Then we will host our Mission U in July for all of the ladies of the state to gather and grow in fellowship and faith. Our annual UMC UWFaith meeting is in October, and we will formally install our state and district leaders.

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**MenNMinistry.** This past year, new leadership guided the programming and ministries for the SC Men-N-Ministry, with Dyron V. Anderson elected as President, Bob James as Vice President, and Rolland Fitch as Secretary, also serving as the SC Conference Scouting Coordinator. Charles Shipman continued as Treasurer.

Our goal of having leadership in place for all Districts was met, with several new leaders participating in our planning events. In April 2025, over 50 men participated in the Leadership Training led by Bishop Fairley at Ashland UMC. The Leadership hosted a Conference Staff Appreciation Luncheon in August and presented 3 Susanna Wesley Awards to Jessica Brodie, Lollie Haselden and Tammy Fulmer, and 2 Life Achievement Awards to Jim Crews and Dan O'Mara. During our October Business meeting, we presented Kenny Bingham with a Life Achievement Award. In November, the SC Men-N-Ministry attended the Killingsworth Gala and provided a \$1,600 donation. Our 2026 SC Men-N-Ministry Spiritual Growth Event at Journey UMC in February drew over 225 men and Scouts, making it one of the largest in many years. The theme centered around "Building Bridges across Generations", with Bishop Fairley as our Keynote Speaker, along with presentations from Rev. Tyler Strange and Rev. Martin Quick, and an uplifting intergenerational panel discussion and closing with Communion. During this event, Bishop Fairley and Charles Shipman were presented with John Wesley Awards, and Rev. Fran Elrod and Nelda Canada were presented with Susanna Wesley Awards. Also, recognized were five young men inducted as Eagle Scouts: Sean Nimmons, Khamary Cleckley, Derwin Brailey, Melvin Hart and Willie Townes III. The two-day event also included a Golf Tournament and Cigars and Scriptures event on Friday.

Looking forward into 2026-2027, the SC Men-N-Ministry will be focusing on sponsoring District Men's Events, creating ministry opportunities for "younger" men across South Carolina, and guiding men of all ages to lead churches, families and communities in growing disciples for the transformation of the world. The 2027 Men-N-Ministry event to be held February 19-20, 2027.

**Youth around the Conference:** During 2025-26, South Carolina Ministries with Young People (SCMYP) had a vibrant year filled with growth and engagement. Two major events stood out: Immerse, a fall discipleship retreat at Asbury Hills focused on God-given creativity and connection among youth; and Revolution, a winter gathering that, although delayed until March 2026, still drew a strong turnout, with many youth responding to calls to discipleship and ministry. SCMYP also continued Revolution 365 to promote year-round collaboration among youth groups. Additionally, they hosted leadership development initiatives, including a Collaborative Youth Ministry workshop and a Youth Leader Coaching Cohort. They organized delegations of youth representatives to take part in the 2026 Annual Conference.

**Our objectives for the upcoming year are:**

- We will continue to engage and equip laity across the Annual Conference with information and resources to assist local churches.
- Continue partnering with groups in our local communities and sharing the love of Jesus Christ.
- Continue to embrace our new reality and to work actively to "be the church" wherever we are.
- Identify opportunities to engage churches and local communities in mission, ministry, and the response to racism and homelessness.

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

We should continue to embrace where we are as the United Methodist Church and Conference. The church remains the church. We are called to be disciples and to show the love of Christ to others. We must continue to be diligent in our missions and ministries. There are people around us who need to hear the Gospel. Let us continue to be the disciples God calls us to be.

**Narrative:**

There is no doubt that we are living in extraordinary times in our church and our world. As we navigate the future, let us be a shining example of God's love and light. We are to love each other as Jesus has loved us. May we be seen by the world as people who love and respect one another despite our differences in opinion on many issues. As we live out our faith in Christ, may we positively impact the lives of others and be living examples of His love.

**Respectfully submitted:**

Conference Co-Lay Leader: Betty Void  
Conference Co-Lay Leader: Michael Jennings  
Loving boldly, Serving joyfully, and Leading courageously.