

South Carolina United Methodist Advocate

Purpose:

The *Advocate* fosters discipleship within South Carolina United Methodism by providing relevant news in various formats to unite followers in Christ. We strive to be the premier independent news source and voice for South Carolina United Methodists by building relationships through strategic partnerships.

Key moments from the previous year:

- Produced 12 strong editions of the *Advocate*, each designed to inform, inspire, encourage, or connect United Methodists across the state
- Launched new website (<https://advocatesc.org>)
- Produced six more titles in 2025 and early 2026 by the Advocate Press (total 39), available via the Advocate website and on Amazon, achieving our best year in sales yet:
 - Having Coffee with God, Mark Barnette
 - Stories from My Journey, Arthur Holt
 - Can Lizzy Help? Kathy Hart
 - A Moment to Breathe, Amenti Sujai and Daniel Hembree
 - Silver Linings, Leonard Fairley
 - Purple Book Hymns, Amiri Hooker
- Producing five more books in 2026
- Earned eight awards: six for journalism, two for video/promotion
- Held listening sessions in every district in the state to improve the *Advocate* and understand readers' needs
- Continued a survey of reader wants and needs to gauge feedback and improve
- Offered three college scholarships to students attending United Methodist colleges in SC
- Adopted new mission, vision and diversity/equity/inclusion statements
- Joined several new organizations in an effort to learn more, grow and improve
- Hosted book signings
- Planned a branding campaign with geofencing and targeted ads to reach laity who might not have heard about the Advocate
- Developed enhanced marketing materials
- Produced a Daily Advocate every day of business during Annual Conference
- Launched a new media kit with new pricing and opportunities
- Increased subscription and ad rates to meet rising print/postage costs
- Started frequent emails and social media campaigns to share information more widely
- Planning to launch video-based news coverage

Objectives for the coming year:

- Continue with 12 more strong, encouraging and informative editions of the *Advocate*, with continued focus on connectionalism and shining the light of Christ in a difficult world
- Launch new app
- Release several more books this year and increase book sales over last year
- Launch video news segments
- Offer enhanced email communication updates

Action(s) required from the 2026 Annual Conference:

Approve our Board of Trustees nominations

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

The award-winning *Advocate* is a rarity in Methodism—an independent print and digital news publication that has been in existence since 1836 and is still going strong. The *Advocate* is free to all South Carolina clergy and available by subscription to anyone. Individual rates are \$30/year (\$20 online only). Group plans are \$15/person per year. Online-only church plans also available for \$1.50/member. The *Advocate* helps United Methodist churches in South Carolina stay connected and helps church members become stronger disciples. All news is welcome. Advocatesc.org or info@advocatesc.org.

Narrative:

The *Advocate* affirms its affiliation, allegiance and bias to United Methodism while welcoming all views of interest to South Carolina United Methodists and to the advancement of knowledge, faith and discipleship.

The *Advocate* is the voice of the people of The United Methodist Church in South Carolina, transparently sharing news of relevance to people of faith around advancing knowledge, spiritual growth and discipleship. Our future will focus on

heavier emphasis on digital growth, expanding and growing the Advocate Press, and establishing new and improved communication with the conference as we work to tell the stories of the church at work in the world. Our mission is to foster discipleship within South Carolina United Methodism by providing relevant news in various formats to unite followers in Christ. Our vision is to be the premier independent news source and voice for South Carolina United Methodists by building relationships through strategic partnerships. We aim to prioritize digital expansion, grow the Advocate Press and enhance communication strategies as we continue to share the impactful stories of the church at work in the world.

Respectfully submitted

Jessica Brodie, Editor

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Other ministry members:

2025-2026 members of the Board of Trustees:

Rev. Michael Henderson, chair

Rev. Rebecca Rowell, vice chair Jeff Wallace, secretary

David Bryant, treasurer

Rev. Eleanora Coaxum Ellington

Rev. Sharon Spann Gamble

Rev. Darlene Kelley

Henrietta McCollough

Sadie Moss

Beth Padgett

Licita Rogers

Rev. Ed Stallworth III

Rev. Paula Stover

Diane Wilson

2026 REPORT OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The primary work of the Board of Trustees (“Board”) as set forth in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church ¶ 2512 (2020/2024, ed.), the Trustees shall receive, collect, and hold in trust for and on behalf of the South Carolina Annual Conference, investment of assets, proceeds from the real or personal properties from closed churches, and oversee the maintenance of closed church properties that are listed for sale. The Trustees are also responsible for reviewing the insurance coverage for the Annual Conference.

In 2025, six closed church properties were sold: Ebenezer/Moncks Corner (Charleston), Woods Chapel (Greenville), Friendship (Hartsville), Old Galilee (Marion), Asbury Park (Spartanburg), and Good Samaritan (Rock Hill). After expenses were paid, 10% of the remaining proceeds were retained for the Trustees' legal fund and 20% for the Trustees' operating fund. The remainder of the proceeds from the sale of these properties was distributed to the districts in which they were sold. (Attachment: Trustees of the Annual Conference Accounting by Property). Furthermore, as reported last year at the Annual Conference, after distributing the “benevolent act” funds, the Trustees invested \$10,000,000 (ten million) with Wespath in a Short-Term Investment Fund.

As of December 31, 2025, the Trustees held approximately \$5,300,000 (5.3 million) in operating/undesignated funds, \$5,200,000 (5.2 million) for litigation, \$1,100,000.00 (1.1 million) for the Boy Scouts litigation, and \$469,000 (four hundred and sixty-nine thousand) in unfunded pension obligations collected from the sale proceeds of closed churches and from 2023 and 2024 separating churches. As of the writing of this report, the United Methodist Conference of South Carolina has filed 72 lawsuits, which are pending in the District Court.

With the cabinet's consent, the Trustees hired the law firms of Haynesworth Sinkler Boyd and Cassidy and Coates to represent the Conference on February 25, 2026. As a result of unilateral actions by churches inconsistent with the clear language of the BOD, churches have declared that they are no longer United Methodist. To preserve the connection and the assets of the conference, the Conference has brought lawsuits against these churches.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Claire Van Den Berg
Chair, South Carolina Conference Board of Trustees

Insurance Company	Coverage type	Description of Coverage
Nexus	Claims made	Directors and Officers, Employment Practices
Nexus	Discovery	Crime Coverage
Philadelphia Insurance Companies	Occurrence	General Liability, Auto, Property, Professional Liability, Sexual/Physical Abuse
Philadelphia Insurance Companies	Occurrence	Umbrella Liability
Tokio Marine	Claims made	Cyber Liability
United States Liability Insurance Group	Occurrence	General Liability on Vacant Properties
Accident Fund	Occurrence	Workers Compensation

Property	District	12/31/2024				Retained by		Designation	
		Balance	Sale Proceeds	Other Receipts	Expenses	beneficiary	Trustees		Ending Balance
Arial	Anderson	-	-	75,616.31	(855.00)	-	-	74,761.31	Not urban
Grace/Abbeville	Anderson	-	-	169.53	(775,451.48)	-	-	(775,281.95)	Not urban
Moore's Chapel	Anderson	(1,688.32)	-	-	(167.76)	-	-	(1,856.08)	Not urban
Orville (South Main Chapel & Mercy Center)	Anderson	(50,018.84)	-	-	(13,444.00)	-	-	(63,462.84)	Not urban
Smiths Chapel	Anderson	(1,983.76)	-	-	(114.96)	-	-	(2,098.72)	Undesignated
Zion Waihalia	Anderson	15,000.00	-	-	-	-	-	15,000.00	Not urban
Berea (Cordesville)	Charleston	109.63	-	-	-	-	(109.63)	(0.00)	Not urban
Berea (Cordesville) cemetery	Charleston	15,209.17	-	-	-	-	-	15,209.17	Funds held for cemetery
Ebenezer/Mondks Corner	Charleston	-	279,007.11	2,139.59	(26,280.52)	-	-	254,866.18	Not urban
Two Rivers (new church start)	Charleston	45,387.97	-	-	(280.04)	-	-	45,107.93	Urban
College Place	Columbia	(225.73)	-	-	-	-	225.73	0.00	Urban
St Mark	Columbia	-	-	272.50	(13,366.84)	-	-	(13,094.34)	Urban
Bowers Chapel	Florence	(771.52)	-	-	-	-	771.52	-	Not urban
Trinity	Florence	54,681.59	-	-	-	(39,370.74)	(15,310.85)	-	Not urban
Trinity cemetery	Florence	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	Not urban
Concord (Greenville Korean Mission)	Greenville	6,111.01	-	-	(8,888.00)	-	-	(2,776.99)	Urban
Trinity (new church Open Hearts)	Greenville	(58,666.36)	-	-	(33,248.00)	-	-	(91,914.36)	Urban
Woods Chapel	Greenville	-	547,710.00	6,753.42	(15,972.29)	-	-	538,491.13	Not urban
Zion-Andrews (New Beginnings)	Greenville	59,626.78	-	-	-	-	-	59,626.78	Urban
Belvedere	Greenwood	84,964.53	-	-	(14,249.41)	-	-	70,715.12	Not urban
Epling Memorial	Greenwood	-	-	1,306.00	(6,745.25)	-	-	(5,439.25)	Not urban
Lebanon	Greenwood	-	-	19.42	(3,577.71)	-	-	(3,558.29)	Not urban
Mt Vernon	Greenwood	(8,978.70)	-	-	(650.00)	-	-	(9,628.70)	Not urban
Ashland/Bishopville	Hartsville	(2,736.65)	-	1,250.00	(1,915.16)	-	-	(3,401.81)	Not urban
Bethel/W Darlington	Hartsville	-	-	-	(1,712.08)	-	-	(1,712.08)	Not urban
Friendship	Hartsville	15,467.95	129,597.00	1,000.00	(6,148.10)	-	-	139,916.85	Not urban
Hebron	Hartsville	7,457.20	-	817.00	(363.00)	-	-	7,911.20	Not urban
Snowhill	Hartsville	(237,960.88)	-	-	-	-	620.80	-	Not urban
Christ/Myrtle Beach	Marion	(2,393.75)	-	-	(24.93)	-	-	(237,985.81)	Not urban
Iona	Marion	(2,393.75)	-	-	(114.96)	-	-	(2,508.71)	Not urban
Old Galilee	Marion	(240.41)	3,000.00	-	(792.00)	-	-	1,967.59	Not urban
Central Rowesville	Orangeburg	12,075.88	-	-	-	(8,694.63)	(3,381.25)	0.00	Not urban
Clafin	Orangeburg	(628.00)	-	-	(2,016.20)	-	-	(2,644.20)	Not urban
Good Samaritan	Rock Hill	(371,884.30)	1,757,719.50	294.60	(32,701.82)	(974,468.15)	(378,959.83)	-	Not urban
Asbury Park	Spartanburg	(37,450.00)	7,363.00	1,000.00	(2,193.05)	-	31,280.05	-	Not urban
Lockhart	Spartanburg	(7,763.69)	-	-	(4,363.43)	-	-	(12,127.12)	Not urban
Unity	Spartanburg	(5,122.31)	-	-	(3,815.44)	-	-	(8,937.75)	Not urban
Trinity/Smoaks	Walterboro	-	-	-	(2,355.13)	-	-	(2,355.13)	Not urban
Retained by Trustees, all funds	Conference	16,051,206.05	-	650,621.14	(896,696.97)	(8,819,314.86)	4,935,996.46	11,921,811.82	
Held for Cabinet	Conference	-	-	-	(536,028.40)	800,000.00	-	263,971.60	For displaced pastors
Held for Congregational Development	Conference	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Total		15,578,163.74	2,724,396.61	741,259.51	(2,404,531.93)	(9,041,848.38)	4,571,133.00	12,168,572.55	

James L. Belin Board of Trust

Purpose:

The purpose of the James L. Belin Board of Trust is to ensure that ministry will take place as directed by the intent of the James L. Belin Trust and that all property of the James L. Belin estate, both real and personal, be direction and appropriated for the benefit of missions.

Key moments from the previous year:

Overall, the James L. Belin Board of Trust had a good year. The Trustees oversaw the investment, and it has grown being invested with Mercer. Mercer took over Vanguard's nonprofit investments, and the Trust was previously invested with Vanguard. The Trustees completed their commitment to Epworth Children's Home for a \$50,000 scholarship. This money will be administered through The South Carolina United Methodist Foundation, Inc. We are getting materials together to have a display at the 2026 Annual Conference concourse advertising what the James L. Belin Grant is for and how churches can apply to create new ministries that benefit their congregation.

Objectives for the coming year:

The James L. Belin Board of Trust is going to keep overseeing the investment and making sure that it grows and is managed well. Our objectives are to: Meet quarterly, decide on another multi-year (large impact) or endowment we would like to seed next, keep giving 3% of the interest to the Board of Global Ministries for the Belin Grant, and have our annual audit completed. We would like to hear more about how local churches are using the grant and hear stories connected to the ministries that are created from the monies awarded.

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

The James L. Belin Board of Trust exists to help churches seed new ministry opportunities. We are grateful to be a part of this opportunity. Our hope is that churches in the SC Annual Conference continue to thrive and the money that is awarded be a large part in helping congregations to succeed in reaching people for the Kingdom of God.

Respectfully submitted:

Meredith Marie Dark, Secretary
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(864) 597-9525

Other ministry members

Charlie Thomas, President
Collin Crick, Treasurer

United Methodist Center Board of Trustees

Purpose:

To provide office space for the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church, and to operate, supervise and maintain such facilities, renting the space therein to offices, agencies, and affiliates of the Conference.

Key moments from the previous year:

The Trustees modified the rent charged to the offices and agencies in the building in 2024. In preparation for the change in rents, the office space was measured and assigned to the appropriate occupant, the common areas were measured and allocated to the occupants, and a new rent per square foot established. The rent per square foot in 2024 was \$8.50 per month. The rent increase scheduled for 2025 was delayed because of the perceived need to hold steady during uncertain times.

However, during the last three years, the operations of the United Methodist Center have resulted in deficits despite attempts to minimize expenses. Rent escalations for building occupants has resumed with the 2026 rent per square foot being \$8.75 and the 2027 rent per square foot being \$9.00. The scheduled rent increases are not enough to offset the expected operating deficit.

Objectives for the coming year:

We recognize the building is approaching an age where renovation and/or refurbishment will be needed. The Trustees are seeking alternatives for office space with the goal of reducing the cost.

Action(s) required from the 2026 Annual Conference:

The United Methodist Center "is a subsidiary of and amenable to the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church" as defined in its bylaws. The Trustees of the United Methodist Center seek authorization from the annual conference to investigate options for providing office space to the offices, agencies, and affiliates of the Conference. These options may include, but are not limited to, selling the current property at 4900 and 4908 Colonial Drive in Columbia, South Carolina; entering into a purchase agreement for another office space; entering into a lease agreement for another office space; and/or pursuing other options as may be discovered. A separate resolution is presented seeking this authority.

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

The Trustees are at work to provide the space needed in cost effective ways and to be excellent stewards of the funds provided.

Respectfully submitted,
Mr. Hal Clarkson, Chair
hal.irmo@gmail.com
(803) 446-9459

Other ministry members:

Rev. Doris Bright
Ms. Kathy Hart
Rev. Sarah Johnson
Rev. David McManus
Ms. Debbie Smoak
Ms. Mamie Thomas

Resolution: United Methodist Center Office Space and Property Authorization

Whereas, the United Methodist Center was constructed in 1981 and expanded and renovated in 2002; and

Whereas, the space needs and operational requirements of the building's occupants have changed since the original construction, expansion, and renovation; and

Whereas, the operation of the United Methodist Center as a facility has resulted in operating deficits during the past three fiscal years (2023–2025); and

Whereas, the current facility requires substantial renovation and capital investment to extend its useful life and to enable more efficient and effective use of space;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the South Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, in accordance with ¶2512 and ¶2513 of the Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, hereby authorizes the United Methodist Center Trustees to identify, evaluate, select, and execute the most appropriate alternative or alternatives for providing office space for the offices, agencies, and affiliated entities of the Annual Conference, and to take all actions necessary to implement that alternative, without the need for further approval by the Annual Conference.

Be it further resolved, that the authority granted herein includes, but is not limited to, the authority to:

1. Sell the current properties located at 4900 and 4908 Colonial Drive, Columbia, South Carolina, and to execute listing agreements, sales contracts, closing documents, and other instruments necessary to complete such sale or sales;
2. Purchase other real property suitable for office space and conference operations, and to execute purchase agreements and closing documents;
3. Lease other property suitable for office space and conference operations, and to negotiate and execute leases and related agreements; and
4. Pursue and implement other feasible options identified through the Trustees' due diligence, and to execute agreements and instruments necessary to carry out the selected alternative or alternatives.

Be it further resolved, that any net proceeds from the sale of the current United Methodist Center properties shall be used to provide for replacement office space for the Annual Conference and its related offices, agencies, and affiliates.

Be it further resolved, that the authority granted herein does not include obtaining a mortgage for the acquisition of property. Such authority must be granted separately by the Annual Conference.

Be it further resolved, that in evaluating and selecting office space alternatives, the United Methodist Center Trustees shall seek input from current building occupants; however, such input shall be advisory, and the Trustees shall retain full responsibility for the final decision and selection of the alternative or alternatives to be implemented.

Be it further resolved, that in all decisions and actions taken under this resolution, the United Methodist Center Trustees shall prioritize faithful stewardship of apportionment funds used to support conference office space and property, consistent with their fiduciary responsibilities under the Book of Discipline.

Be it further resolved, that the Trustees shall report the final decision and the material terms of the selected alternative or alternatives to the Annual Conference once a decision has been made and implementation is underway.

Submitted by the United Methodist Conference Center Board of Trustees