



Congregational Update – Annual Conference Summary

June 11, 2025

OPEN HEARTS

OPEN MINDS

OPEN DOORS

Beloved Church,

The South Carolina United Methodist Annual Conference convened at the Greenville Convention Center, June 8–11, 2025, with our Resident Bishop, Rev. Leonard Fairley presiding for the first time with us in SC.



Clergy and lay delegates from across the state spent time together for worship, business, and fellowship.

We used the theme "See the Possibilities of a Seed" to reflect where we are as United Methodists in South Carolina. We have much to mourn with our conference losing so many churches to leaving the UMC in the past two years, and the ways that impacted our connection in South Carolina and with the denomination. We even had a service of lament at the closing of conference to recognize the pain and loss we experienced. However, Bishop Fairley reminded us often that after we honor our sorrows, we let them go and let the tears we weep water the seeds for new possibilities.

I can already see the seeds of possibility starting to take root as I look at the class of ordinands and commissioned ministers this year, knowing that our own three candidates from Open Hearts will soon be among them; as I look at the results from the **Jeremiah Teams**; and as I experienced how joy-filled this Conference was.

I would say the highlight of this Annual Conference was my participation as the First Assistant Secretary to Annual Conference. I was able to attend to the finer details of the conference, working with the staff of the Greenville Convention Center, GNTV, and the Annual Conference committee to make sure our work and worship went smoothly.

Lastly, I am glad to report that my appointment as your Lead Pastor at Open Hearts was fixed and approved at Annual Conference. I look forward to serving with you this next year with joyful expectation!

Your ministry partner,
Rev. Karen Jones
Lead Pastor

Bringing Open Hearts to Annual Conference



Exhibit Table

Thank you to our 16 volunteers who managed our table in the Exhibit Hall, and to our staff for providing materials for the table. We handed out copies of our 2024 Impact Report, 2025 Narrative Budget, and informational brochures about Open Hearts UMC.



Leading Worship

Sarah Moseley, member at Open Hearts and formerly our Ministry Coordinator, was spotted sharing her musical gifts at the Tuesday Morning Service of Prayer and Praise. Rev. Karen Jones also participated in the Service of Lament to Hope as a liturgist



Legislative Leadership

A resolution passed to a SC Inclusion Team for the purpose of supporting LGBTQIA+ clergy, laity, and candidates, amplifying their voices, and creating resources. Since conference budgets are made well in advance and this team would begin its work this year, Rev. Karen Jones made an amendment to fund this team's work through donations, which you can contribute [here](#). (Select Other, writing in the memo "LGBTQ Inclusion Team.")

Hospitality

Open Hearts UMC offered space and hospitality to the Annual Conference for special events held offsite. We hosted the Deacon Lunch as well as the Candler Alumni Dinner in Trinity Hall. Special thanks to our



staff Alex Payne and Tina Majors for assisting with the logistics of hosting.

Bringing Leadership to the UMC

- **Jana Clack** and **Sandy MacMillan** were recognized during Annual Conference alongside other individuals who completed the studies for license as a local pastor. This is part of their candidacy process towards ordination.
- **Beth Padgett**, OHUMC Communications Chair, was nominated to serve on the Trustees of the SC United Methodist Advocate newspaper.
- **Margaret Clayton**, member of OHUMC, was nominated to the Spartanburg Methodist College Board of Trustees.
- **Ashley Newton**, member of OHUMC, was re-elected as a member on the Trustees of the Annual Conference.
- **Tom Creech**, a member of the OHUMC Board of Stewards, continues to serve on the Greenville District Board of Congregational Development.
- **Rev. Dr. A.V Huff**, a retired ordained elder here at OHUMC, will continue as the Conference Historian.
- **Rev. Karen Jones** will continue to serve as the First Assistant Secretary to the Annual Conference, Jeremiah Team member for District Realignment, and Greenville District Committee of Ordained Ministry member.

If you are interested in sharing your gifts with the UMC of South Carolina Annual Conference, please fill out this [form](#) from the conference website.

Kids Camp at Conference

Open Hearts UMC was glad to host the Kids Camp for the children of Annual Conference delegates. Many thanks to our Director of Discipleship, Jana Clack for designing and implementing the camp, and to our nursery staff, Meredith Robinson and Moriah Journell, for caring for delegate's children during conference.



Other Notable Items from SC Annual Conference

- A special Annual Conference will be called for **October 18, 2025**

to be held virtually for the purpose of hearing proposals from Bishop Fairley's Jeremiah Team that is addressing how the conference is structured and how it operates missionally. To learn more about the work of Jeremiah Teams, click [here](#).

- Annual Conference passed a motion to go on record express concern "about the federal government making deep cuts to needed federal jobs, health care, education non-profit agencies, universities and discrimination without justice against the vulnerable, immigrants, and LGBTQ+" (Jessica Brodie, Daily Advocate).
- 56 churches are currently in litigation with the UMCSC to separate from the denomination after a UMC Judicial Council decision ruled churches cannot separate using paragraph 2549.
- \$12 million was collected from church separations last year. Allocations of these funds include apportionments, direct bill balances, unfunded pension liabilities, Trustees litigation fund (see above), Trustees operating fund, funding for displaced pastors who remain United Methodist but are not serving due to litigation, and the Cabinet Hope Fund. (It should be noted that Open Hearts UMC was a beneficiary of the Hope Fund for the upgrade of our fire monitoring system and HVAC system.)

Website : openheartsumcsc.org



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