



# MESSENGER

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF TITUSVILLE

206 S. HOPKINS AVE, TITUSVILLE, FL 32796

MAY 2025

## Building peace in a dangerously polarized US

By Heather Hahn

April 9, 2025 | LAKE JUNALUSKA, N.C. (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/building-peace-in-a-dangerously-polarized-us>

### Key points:

- † A United Methodist Peace Conference drew some 200 clergy and laity to discuss breaking down national divisions.
- † Participants heard about the dangers of Christian nationalism and polarization in the U.S.
- † Pursuing peace does not mean ignoring past hostilities or staying silent in the face of current injustices, participants also were told.
- † Some of the conference participants joined a nearby [Hands Off! rally that drew a cross-section of people to protest](#) the dismantling of federal government services.



*The Rev. Beth Crissman (left), director of the Peace Conference, clasps hands with Western North Carolina Conference Bishop Ken Carter during the gathering's closing worship as Bishop Robin Dease looks on. Carter helped with planning and spoke throughout the conference. Dease, bishop of the North Georgia and South Georgia conferences, led the closing worship service on April 6. Photo by Crystal Caviness, United Methodist Communications.*

*(Continued on page 2)*



*(Continued from page 1)*

One thing Americans of all political stripes can agree on is that the people of the United States are deeply divided. In fact, “polarization” was dictionary Merriam-Webster’s choice for its 2024 word of the year.

All too frequently, Christianity has contributed to this polarization — erecting barriers between Americans and fueling mistrust. Yet, Christians in general — and United Methodists specifically — also can heal the fractures and help those most likely to be hurt by the nation’s brokenness.

That was the overall message of the Peace Conference on April 4-6 at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center. Some 200 clergy and laity, including college students, attended the gathering.

The event’s theme drew from [Ephesians 2:14](#): “For Christ is our peace ... and he has broken down the dividing walls, which is the hostility between us.”

Bishop Kennetha Bigham-Tsai, who leads the Iowa Conference and co-leads the Illinois Great Rivers Conference, expanded on that theme during opening worship.

“Friends, today we are in deep peril because of walls,” she preached.

“All around us, people are building walls — walls to keep immigrants out, walls to keep people of color in their place, walls to hem in the LGBTQ community, walls to shut out the poor. These walls are being built through restrictions on health care, [through layoffs and attacks on funding](#), through violent and dehumanizing speech. These walls are being built through fear.”

However, she said, Christ shows another way. Jesus broke down walls throughout his earthly ministry — healing on the Sabbath and eating with tax collectors. He also spoke up for the oppressed and marginalized.

Christ demonstrated, the bishop stressed, that peacemaking does not mean keeping silent or accommodating injustice.

Bigham-Tsai and other speakers at the conference were addressing an audience mostly from a region still reeling from the fallout of church divisions. From 2019 to 2023, more than 7,600 U.S. congregations left The United Methodist Church — prompted largely by conflict over LGBTQ inclusion. About half of those disaffiliations [were in the Southeastern Jurisdiction](#).

Those disaffiliations as well as current U.S. political strife played a role in this year’s revamp of the Peace Conference, said the Rev. Beth Crissman, the conference’s director. Crissman is a district superintendent and director of peace building ministries in the Western North

Carolina Conference.

Lake Junaluska first hosted a Peace Conference in 2009. The gathering, organized by longtime peace activists, was both interfaith in nature and focused on the wars then raging in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Peace Conference continued annually through 2019, which the original organizers saw as a good endpoint.

Now the circumstances have changed, Crissman said, but the need to foster peace has not. So, she and other leaders in the Western North Carolina and neighboring North Carolina conferences got to work designing a new conference.

The intent, she told United Methodist News, is “to reclaim our call as ambassadors for peace, particularly in our highly polarized political environment, which also impacts our churches as we have seen even within our own denomination.”

The Rev. Jonathan Marlowe, co-senior pastor of Mount Zion United Methodist Church in Cornelius, North Carolina, attended the first conference as well as the most recent one. “This Peace Conference is more holistic in terms of bringing in aspects of racism that were not much talked about at that earlier one,” he said.

As a bishop, Bigham-Tsai told those gathered that she will pastor all people, but not the walls they erect to hold others back.

“I am not the pastor of anyone’s racism. I am not the pastor of anyone’s misogyny. I will not pastor anyone’s homophobia or hatred and disrespect toward immigrants,” she said.

Instead, she said she looks for the divine within everyone she meets: “I will pastor and seek to grow the Christ within you — the God that I know is in all of us. And I will do that by challenging you to love across barriers of difference and to break down walls.”

Polarization erodes democracy and makes violence more likely, said Kristen Wall. She has experience addressing global conflicts for think tanks and the U.S. Institute of Peace, [now being dismantled by the Trump administration](#).

“When there is significant polarization, it’s harder to communicate and coordinate to solve shared problems. Grievances accumulate, creating an opening for political leaders who exploit feelings of abandonment or frustration through wedge issues,” Wall said.

“Partisan gain becomes more important than playing by the rules. This breaks down an interest in sharing power, which is the bedrock of a democratic system.”

Anyone familiar with U.S. history will know such disunion is not unprecedented in a

*(Continued on page 4)*

# 2025 March Budget Summary

The Finance Committee appreciates your contributions and donations. With your support we will be able to continue sharing God's love with those around us.

<u>Income</u>	
Total Income:	\$50,572
<u>Expenses</u>	
Church Programs:	\$357
Finance:	\$559
Church Administration:	\$1,781
Facility Maintenance:	\$16,755
Personnel:	\$24,304
<u>Conference Apportionments:</u>	<u>\$3,256</u>
Total Expenses:	\$47,012
<b>Income Over Expenses:</b>	<b>\$3,530</b>

The budget for 2025 is **\$500,000** which, divided evenly, makes each month's goal \$41,667 rather than being weighted differently throughout the year.

Thank you for your loving generosity in keeping this church operating! Only with the generosity of our congregation have we been able to weather the storms of the past and even the storms that will inevitably come.

## MAY BIRTHDAYS

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 4 Pam Holmes     | 10 Tom Trovillion |
| 4 RoAnne Damoff  | 13 Grace Barron   |
| 4 Carol Stephens | 23 Tom Hammond    |
| 4 Wayne Lennard  | 24 Marion Brady   |
| 7 Liam Bolton    | 28 Cathy Spencer  |
| 7 Jackie Smith   | 29 Grace Haile    |
| 10 Diane Brown   | 31 Joe Kendall    |



## MAY ANNIVERSARIES

- |                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| 7 Mark & Amie Kendrick  | 28 Bob & Lanelle Netherton |
| 14 Bill & Kitty Baldwin |                            |

(Continued from page 2)

nation [still struggling with the legacy of enslaving Black people and brutalizing Native Americans](#), said Derrick Scott III. He is a longtime campus minister and co-lay leader of the Florida Conference.

In [Luke 4](#), Scott said, Jesus was confronting historic hostilities when he preached good news to the poor and ended up angering everyone in the synagogue.

“One of the things I think is happening in Luke 4 is the recognition that if we bypass history, if we don’t confront the historic hostility, we cannot have unity,” said Scott, a history major.

He urged his audience not to get too caught up in comparing one group’s suffering with another. Such comparisons without acknowledging people’s different stories, he said, can lead to “the kind of cheap solidarity that runs away when privilege is threatened.”

The Rev. Ismael Ruiz-Millán, the North Carolina Conference’s executive director of connectional ministries, was inspired by Scott’s talk. He cautioned white people not to rush to relieve their guilt about the sin of racism by silencing people of color. He said he has often seen white people interrupt a lament by calling for prayer around the person sharing their pain.

“We need to be careful of using means of grace as a means of oppression, as a weapon to silence the lament of the oppressed,” he said.

The Rev. Gary Mason — [a Methodist minister known to many United Methodists](#) — talked about the threat of Christian nationalism. He spoke from experience in working to end Northern Ireland’s 30-year-long civil war known as the Troubles. About a decade ago, Mason heard a quote from a Japanese scholar on Shinto nationalism that he thinks applies to both his homeland and the U.S.

“An incomprehensible act becomes comprehensible when told in conjunction with religion,” he recounted. “It’s that ‘God-is-on-our-side’ mentality.”

Addressing toxic religion, he said, will require United Methodists to take their ministry outside church walls. He also suggested United Methodists be willing to talk to men with guns in their hands, including Proud Boys and One Percenters. He stressed that engagement is not endorsement, but relationships are key to changing hearts and minds.

“I would say to all of you that even if you feel that America may be in despair, don’t give up,” Mason said. “The oxygen of hope is one of the most essential mechanisms the Christian church can actually bring.”

*Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or [newsdesk@umnews.org](mailto:newsdesk@umnews.org). To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free UM News Digest](#).*

## Black churches preserve history, shape future

By John W. Coleman  
April 10, 2025 | UM News

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/black-churches-preserve-history-shape-future>

### Key points:

- † **Legacy Black churches are seeking new ways to remain vital and reach communities, including inclusion initiatives and merging with other congregations.**
- † **Several United Methodist annual conferences have offices, programs and committees devoted to resourcing Black churches and leaders in particular.**
- † **Congregations continue to minister to rural and urban areas, taking mission and service beyond church walls.**

**Editor’s note:** This is Part 4 in a special UM News series on [legacy Black United Methodist churches](#) that are maintaining their traditions while also doing innovative ministries to serve the present age. The series features venerable yet still vital African



*Singers perform during the Lenten season at Union Combined Parish in Boston. In 2024, historically Black Union United Methodist Church in the South End merged with three other congregations — Old West Church in the West End, Community Church in Brighton, and Glendale Church in Everett — to form a new worship community. File photo courtesy of Union Combined Parish.*

*American churches in the United Methodist connection.*

“Throughout history, Black churches have

(Continued on page 5)

*(Continued from page 4)*

been more than places of worship,” said Bishop Tracy S. Malone of the Indiana Episcopal Area. “They have been sanctuaries of healing, centers of empowerment and catalysts of justice for people who have endured systemic oppression and dehumanization.”

The first Black woman to serve as president of the denomination’s Council of Bishops, she sees these churches as “places where the wounded can find refuge, where truth is boldly proclaimed and where hope is nurtured.”

For many Black churches, being relevant and resilient means looking beyond their doors to offer fresh expressions of church and to impact their communities by forming partnerships and nonprofit entities, as is the case with the historic Black United Methodist churches featured in the initial three parts of UM News’ [Legacy Black churches](#) series. Some also are renovating and repurposing their aged church buildings to invite new people in to benefit from fresh ministries, like [pouring new wine into old but fortified wineskins](#).

At [Black Methodists for Church Renewal’s general meeting](#) in Los Angeles last month, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi recalled a childhood memory of her father, a pastor, taking his family to visit local churches during vacation. One favorite stop was historic Tindley Temple United Methodist in Philadelphia — the nearly century-old citadel of Black congregational and community life built by iconic preacher and hymnist the Rev. Charles A. Tindley. It was one of America’s first megachurches, numbering about 10,000 members in the 1920s.

Today, the sprawling sanctuary’s wooden pews and balcony chairs are rarely full — save for major events like annual performances of Handel’s “Messiah” in December — and the celebrated Möller organ upstairs is rarely played. But downstairs, where the church once held Sunday school classes, crowds now come to enjoy tasteful food, fun and music in the new [Tindley Tea Cafe](#).

After the COVID pandemic, Tindley Temple tried to reopen its popular soup kitchen — once among the city’s largest. But repairs for its broken freezer and refrigerator were too costly. So, to raise needed funds, the church used its kitchen, restaurant license and local partnerships to open the Tindley Tea Cafe in 2024.

Along with savory dishes served daily, from menus designed by a neighboring culinary school, the cafe has hosted a gospel karaoke night, a televised election debate watch party and other gatherings for the community. Moore-Koikoi, who leads the Eastern Pennsylvania/Greater New Jersey Episcopal Area, urged BMCR members to visit the cafe if they are ever in the area.

Tindley Temple’s young pastor, the Rev. John Brice, sees the Holy Spirit moving in this new endeavor and “maximizing the potential of the church to engage with its community in new ways.” Meanwhile, with grocery prices and food insecurity a growing concern, church leaders expect to purchase needed equipment and resume their soup kitchen ministry this year.

“Our churches are facing the most dramatic headwinds they have seen in several generations for complex reasons,” said Bishop Gregory Palmer, now retired and serving as the Council of Bishops executive secretary. “But they are also facing their greatest opportunity to be shaped again by the core message of the Gospel and to articulate and embody that message creatively to both the church and the yet-to-be church. We must strive to make the church a place where all people feel more loved.”

### **Historic churches making new history**

Indeed, hundreds of historic Black churches are surviving and serving their increasingly unchurched communities with a message and ministry grounded in Christ’s love. Some are even using that message to make new history.

In October, St. Mark’s United Methodist Church in Montclair, New Jersey, became the Greater New Jersey Conference’s [first historically Black reconciling congregation](#). It is now a part of the Reconciling Ministries Network of churches that intentionally include and affirm LGBTQ people in the life and leadership of the congregation.

Church leaders received training to advocate for the holistic health and wellness of Black LGBTQ communities, especially young people, and to develop congregational initiatives that promote inclusion.

Union Memorial United Methodist Church in Boston is the oldest Black congregation in New England Methodism. Organized in 1818 by the Rev. Samuel Snowden, a former slave, the church has a long history of abolition and civil rights work. It hosted the 1950 NAACP convention that voted to pursue the Brown v. Board of Education case in the U.S. Supreme Court, which ended legal school segregation.

“The three gifts of the Black Church have always been its spiritual depth, its emphasis on social justice and its holistic community involvement,” said Bishop L. Jonathan Holston, episcopal leader of the North Alabama and Alabama-West Florida conferences. “It is our responsibility and, indeed, our sacred calling, to be a people of faith committed to the biblical witness of advocacy against hate in all its forms.”

Union joined the Reconciling Ministries Network in 2000 and is believed to be the first Black

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Continued from page 5)*

Methodist church to openly welcome and engage its LGBTQ neighbors. While still mostly Black, it is becoming more multicultural as membership grows in its gentrifying neighborhood.

The church made history again in 2024 by merging with three other congregations to form the [Union Combined Parish](#), a racially diverse, multisite congregation. Now they share two worship sites, four church buildings, three affordable living residences and a collective mission to seek intersectional equity and justice for all.

“The coronavirus pandemic and global lockdown, the Black Lives Matter movement and the loss of a quarter of U.S. congregations from our denomination have taught us that we can no longer do things the way we’ve always done them,” writes the Rev. Jay Williams, lead pastor, on the church’s new website. “In this light, we’ve been innovating and imagining all that is possible.”

Church mergers are usually a difficult enterprise that demand care to avoid potential pitfalls. Most churches undertake them only to survive and avoid closure. But in these challenging times, as Williams said, such collective innovation has become necessary for many.

Three historic Black United Methodist churches in Houston merged their declining resources and memberships in November after several years of preparation. [Legacy United Methodist Church](#) is their new, multigenerational congregation. Sloane Memorial, St. Mark’s and Wesley United Methodist churches had been “displaced from their respective mission fields by gentrification and a highway expansion project,” according to the Rev. Elijah Stansell Jr., Metro District superintendent.

“Once we started worshipping together, we started looking at how we were so much better together as a whole,” Legacy member Rochelle Cebrun shared. “We felt the difference almost immediately. Now we’re just over 100 members in one unified church; and we just had four new families join.”

The “Mother Church of African-American Methodism on the West Coast,” Wesley Church in Los Angeles, established in 1888, merged in 2018 with Bowen Memorial United Methodist to create Heritage United Methodist. The 85 percent Latino/Hispanic and 15 percent African American congregation, with a Latino pastor, has a mission “to be a thriving, dynamic multicultural ministry empowered by the Holy Spirit to touch people with God’s love.”

### **Ministering in rural and urban areas**

Most historic Black United Methodist churches are small to midsize congregations serving neighbors through ministry in rural areas and towns.

However, many in larger, urban areas are more widely known, even if their congregations have declined in size and scope of ministry in recent decades. They include Cory in Cleveland; Scott in Detroit; Sharp Street in Baltimore; St. James in Kansas City, Missouri; and Mt. Zion in New Orleans.

[Taylor Memorial United Methodist Church](#), the oldest historically Black United Methodist congregation in Northern California, has been in Oakland since 1921. Now more racially and ethnically diverse, its mission to go beyond the walls of the church is important to its members, according to church leader Leslie Forestant. That includes weekly distribution of healthy food and support for [Covenant House](#), a residential facility for homeless young people.

Meanwhile, [Easter Hill United Methodist Church, in Richmond](#), California, is active in a multicultural, interfaith coalition of congregations helping unhoused residents to access shelter, food, parenting classes and other needs as they transition to self-sufficiency. The church also operates one of Richmond’s [Freedom Schools](#), the national literacy and social justice summer program created for young students by the [Children’s Defense Fund](#). The popular schools boost students’ motivation to learn and become involved in social concerns.

The [South Carolina Conference](#) has long had the denomination’s largest number of Black members and churches. Three of its most historic churches are Old Bethel United Methodist Church in Charleston, John Wesley in Greenville and Trinity in Orangeburg.

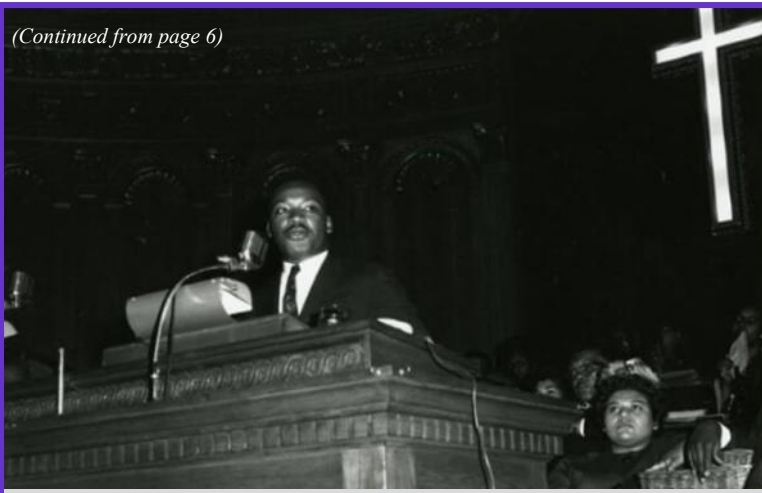
[Old Bethel](#), founded in 1797 and likely the conference’s oldest church structure, began as a racially mixed congregation; but free and enslaved Black members were relegated to sit in the galleries. Black members seceded to create their own congregation in 1840. Years later, they returned to the original building, which they moved across the street, when the white members built a larger church facility on the grounds, now named Bethel United Methodist. Eventually, the two congregations forged a close relationship based on their shared history — a relationship that benefited the Methodists of Charleston during and after the Civil War.

[Trinity United Methodist](#) and [John Wesley United Methodist](#), first named Silver Hill Methodist Episcopal Church, both were started in 1866 and introduced Black Methodism to their respective areas. A century later, they would host important civil rights meetings and rallies that featured prominent national leaders like the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., NAACP head Roy Wilkins and future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall.

### **Conferences resource Black churches**

South Carolina devotes staff, funding and programs to

(Continued from page 6)



*The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. speaks at Cory Methodist Church in Cleveland in 1963. Cory is one of many historic Black United Methodist churches that hosted King and other leaders for major civil rights events and rallies. Photo courtesy of Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. Used with permission.*

help develop and resource Black congregations. In 1998, the conference established its Office of African American Ministries to reverse declines in Black membership and churches.

“We offer grants, resources, training and special events designed to support leadership development of African American clergy and to help African American small-membership congregations start new ministries,” said the Rev. Walter Strawther. He is a congregational specialist assigned to African American Ministries. The special events include the biennial Summit on the Black Church and the annual Carolina Black Clergy Leadership Retreat, cosponsored with the North Carolina and Western North Carolina conferences.

Like other conferences, South Carolina relies on support from the denomination’s [Strengthening the Black Church for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#) initiative and partners with its conference Black Methodists for Church Renewal caucus.

A survey of conference websites reveals seven others that identify offices, programs and committees devoted to resourcing Black churches and leadership in particular. Those conferences are [Peninsula-Delaware, Texas, Louisiana, North Georgia, Western North Carolina, Michigan](#) and [California-Nevada](#).

The California-Nevada Conference’s Committee on African-American/Black Ministry created a five-year strategic plan in January, after [leaders of its Black churches](#) welcomed newly assigned Bishop Sandra Olewine last November.

And the [North Georgia Conference’s Black Congregational Development Office](#) offers a rich variety of programs and initiatives to help generate new leadership and approaches to ministry.

That includes an Ambassadors Internship Program for mentoring young leaders, help with marketing, fundraising and technology needs, and a Black Church Collective that networks churches with local United Methodist-supported historically Black colleges and universities and other partners.

“The Black Church’s legacy of perseverance and its commitment to justice and equity position it as a vital force in shaping the future of United Methodism,” said Georgia Episcopal Area Bishop Robin Dease. “Our ministry is not only about preserving a legacy but also about shaping a future where inclusion and spiritual vitality thrive so all churches can remain vibrant and relevant.”

Several conferences have shown their commitment to justice and equity in major financial ways. [New England](#) voted in 2023 to cancel major debts owed by its 18 Black churches for past-due property insurance and apportioned funds. The resolution, drafted by Union Memorial pastor Williams, cited the biblical practice of Jubilee and the fiscal losses of Black churches and clergy from “decades of divestment, denial and discrimination.”

The Eastern Pennsylvania Conference [forgave about \\$3 million in debts](#) for its 29 African American churches in 2018, acknowledging similar justice reasons.

And the Missouri Conference in November 2022 provided a dozen of its 27 historic Black churches with one-time, [unrestricted “boost” grants](#) of up to \$25,000 each. Those grants were used to support outreach efforts, worship and youth ministry, facility maintenance and renovations, improved building accessibility, technology for livestreaming and digital media and other needs.

Meanwhile, other conferences resource Black churches and leaders through offices and programs that are identified more broadly as “multicultural” or “racial-ethnic” ministries. And many conference websites promote anti-racism programs and resources for all churches to support the denomination’s ongoing commitment to ending racism.

“But beyond activism and resistance to end racism, the church is also called to renewal,” said Bishop Malone, who is leading the Council of Bishops to craft a new vision for the denomination’s future. “Our worship, discipleship and outreach ministries must not only address injustices. They must also cultivate a deeper, broader vision of the Beloved Community where all people can flourish.”

*Coleman is a UM News correspondent and part-time pastor. News media contact: Julie Dwyer, news editor, [newdesk@umnews.org](mailto:newdesk@umnews.org).*

## Death doula helps navigate end-of-life care

By Jim Patterson  
April 7, 2025 | UM News

[https://www.umnews.org/en/news/death-doula-helps-  
navigate-end-of-life-care](https://www.umnews.org/en/news/death-doula-helps-navigate-end-of-life-care)

### † Key Points:

† A new Iliff School of Theology course aims to give pastors and others the foundation they need to support the dying and their families.

† It is billed as the first theology school to offer this training.

† Beth Elliot, a death doula who leads the Foundations of Death Care course, said incorporating dying as a part of life and speaking about it can help ease the way at the end.

Counseling someone approaching death can be difficult territory, not to mention supporting family members who have their own needs.

Working as a chaplain at St. Vincent's Regional Hospital in Billings, Montana, to earn continuing professional education hours, the [Rev. Sam Beaves-Fisher](#) didn't feel that he had enough know-how to help dying people and their families.

"I was really lacking around real concrete things about death," said Beaves-Fisher, pastor of Park City Community Church in Park City, Utah, a United Methodist church.

"Oftentimes we think about death and dying being stressful (only) on families," he added. "Well, that's because the dying person isn't communicating in the way that they typically had."

To address it, Beaves-Fisher turned to his seminary, [Iliff School of Theology](#) in Denver, one of 13 United Methodist theological schools in the U.S. There, a certificate program was started last fall to better equip professionals to help families and people close to passing away.

[Beth Elliot](#), the death doula program lead at Iliff, teaches the Foundations of Death Care course, which is available as an online or in-person experience.

The course is part of the Iliff Death Care Collective, a community of death care professionals, educators and advocates who are dedicated to reimagining the way people care for the dying, the deceased and their loved ones.

"There's a lot of ways that thinking and incorporating death into our world currently can enhance the way we live," Elliot said. The Unitarian Universalist minister has been an end-of-life doula for more than two decades.



*The Iliff School of Theology in Denver is offering a Foundations of Death Care course that is the beginning of a new certificate program to help caretakers better comfort dying people and their loved ones. It's billed as the first such offering at a seminary. Iliff is one of the 13 United Methodist theological schools in the U.S. Photo by truthseeker08, courtesy of Pixabay.*

A talk on death she gave at Iliff while working toward her master's degree led to the launch of the new offering.

"I spoke about my end-of-life doula work, and what that looks like amid the spectrum of care with hospice and palliative care and chaplaincy," she said. "After that, we started talking, and the class was born. It's the very first (such course) that is endorsed through a school of theology, so we have a very unique perspective from that point of view."

It's important to "change the narrative around death," she said.

"I do believe that speaking about death and incorporating it as part of your life and your conversations and your awareness does help ease the way at the end," Elliot said.

In addition to tending to mental health and stress, it is vital to have the paperwork in place and medical forms completed so "your family all know exactly what you want," Elliot said.

[Jiyoona Lee](#), director of the [Dallas Meditation Center](#), lost her brother because of COVID-19. She took the Foundations of Death Care course last fall in hopes of giving others the support she didn't receive.

"I have been interested in how to support people during their difficult times because my personal experience of navigating bureaucratic aspects of losing somebody and taking care of the aftermath was difficult," Lee said.

In addition to meditation, Lee teaches yoga and provides somatic experiencing therapy, an alternative treatment for trauma and stress-related disorders.

"My focus would be emotional support and

# Volunteers Needed!


Please call the office or speak with Darcia Bair. We are looking for people to be friendly faces and show the community that we are a loving, inclusive church. Sign-up sheets are on the back table in the sanctuary.

Come be the city on the hill for our community!

**Harry T. Moore Cultural Center and Museum  
Presents**

*Harboring Hope: The Power of Resilience*

# Juneteenth Celebration

 **June 21st, 2025**

 **11 am - 3 pm**

 **2180 Freedom Ave., Mims, FL 32754**

**Entertainment, Music,  
Food Trucks & Games**



**For questions please contact us at  
(321) 264-6595**



(Continued from page 8)

interpersonal aspects of supporting the family and the dying,” Lee said. “That’s how I’m envisioning it as of now, but I’m also keeping my mind open. I do want to be better equipped with legal aspects of this process, too, because I myself had a hard time navigating dealing with probate lawyers and unreturned calls and complications. So that’s somewhere that I can grow into.”

The course is well thought out, Lee said.

“It is a great survey of various types of information that people should be equipped with,” she said. “Each module covers different aspects of the journey.”

That includes the medical, legal and emotional aspects of the death experience.

“It allows you to use it as a starting point of envisioning what kind of end-of-life support or death doula you want to be,” Lee said.

Beaves-Fisher is considering hosting a two-day retreat about death at his church with the help of Iliff.

“We were really intrigued by their certification program,” he said. “I have a lot of midwives and birth doulas in my circle here in Park City who are kind of interested in the other end of things.”

Park City Community Church leans more traditional than Iliff, he said.

“I was a little hesitant bringing Iliff into what I would say is a more conservative culture and church, but I really trust what they’re doing through their innovation office,” Beaves-Fisher said. “I had the chance to work in that office for a while in seminary, and I really trust that their ultimate goal is to provide the best knowledge from multiple faith traditions and allow people to pick what works best for them.”

The first Foundations of Death Care course had 13 students, said Jeni Rinner, product development and user experience manager at Iliff.

“I’m genuinely overwhelmed at the amount of interest in this program,” Rinner said. “We’re working hard to build capacity to meet the need that we’re finding.”

Death should be “a friend or companion,” Elliot said. “In my life, I have witnessed more people than I can count in the moment they leave this earth, and I think with enough exposure, some of the fear does go away.”

*Patterson is a UM News reporter in Nashville, Tennessee. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or [newsdesk@umnews.org](mailto:newsdesk@umnews.org). To read more United Methodist news, to the [free Digests](#).*

## Floods devastate United Methodists in Congo

By the Rev. Fiston Okito  
April 10, 2025 | KINSHASA, Congo (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/floods-devastate-united-methodists-in-congo>

### † Key points:

- † **Over 1,000 homes, including those of at least 100 United Methodists, were affected by flooding in Congo’s capital.**
- † **Two local United Methodist churches also were damaged.**
- † **The government has opened the Tata Raphaël soccer stadium to accommodate flood survivors, while others are being housed with host families.**

United Methodists are among those picking up the pieces after devastating floods claimed at least 33 lives and destroyed thousands of homes in Congo’s capital.

The floodwaters damaged the homes of some 100 church members, as well as Marc Mokoie and Lemba Imbu United Methodist churches, according to the Central Congo Episcopal Area’s disaster-management office.

On April 5, torrential rains turned bustling neighborhoods into raging rivers. The Ndjili



*John Kodjo (standing), a member of Mapamboli United Methodist Church in Kinshasa, Congo, tries to salvage things from his flooded home. Torrential rains and flooding on April 5 damaged over 1,000 homes in the area and killed at least 33 people. Kodjo’s family fled on the roof of their home. Photo by the Rev. Fiston Okito, UM News.*

River burst its banks, flooding homes and causing extensive material damage.

The worst-hit neighborhoods included the communes of Limete and Matete, where many families were

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

left homeless. Boulevard Lumumba, one of the city's main thoroughfares, also was underwater, isolating some areas.

Although exact figures are still being assessed, the government reports that over 1,000 homes were submerged by the waters.

Marc Mokoie United Methodist Church suffered heavy damage. The sanctuary and church premises were flooded. Pastor André Tshola said the water washed away several musical instruments that are no longer salvageable, as well as other items of value to the church.

"We lost a lot in the floods," Tshola said. "The drums, the guitar, the mixer, even the plastic chairs were washed away. It's a difficult loss for our community to overcome."

Pastor Boncoeur Shongo of Lemba Ambu United Methodist Church said the flooding is preventing worshippers from attending services on Sunday. He said a nearby bridge also was washed away, keeping people from crossing the river to get to the church.

John Kodjo, a member of the chorus at Mapamboli United Methodist Church in Kinshasa, is among the survivors.

"I was already a few meters from my church to rehearse for worship when I received an urgent call from my wife. She told me to come home immediately, as the situation at home had become critical. She was with our twins and 5-year-old boy," Kodjo said.

When he rushed home, he discovered that his neighborhood had flooded.



*Debris from what was a bridge over the Ndjili River is shown in the aftermath of severe flooding in Kinshasa, Congo. With the bridge washed away, worshippers are unable to reach Lemba Imbu United Methodist Church, which also was damaged by floodwaters following torrential rains on April 5. Photo by the Rev. Fiston Okito, UM News.*

"The water was rising rapidly and reaching alarming levels," he said. "I had to dive in and take my family across on the roof to protect them. I lost everything, including the money I kept at home, but I thank God for saving my family."

Bibishe Mbutshu Omadeke, a member of Marc Mokoie United Methodist Church, was among those affected. She said she was surprised by the water's destruction.

"It was the first time I had seen such power," she said. "The water devastated the whole house, and before everything collapsed, it came up to the floor. I don't know how my family survived, but I think it was a real miracle."

Bibishe also lost everything she owned, including electronics, clothes and savings. "I don't know how to start again, but I know that with God's grace, we'll get a fresh start."

Flooding is a frequent occurrence in the region. Early last year, Kingabwa, a district to the north of Limete Commune, was severely hit by the flooding of the Congo River, which reached record levels. At least 55 people were killed and some 3,500 left homeless.

With financial support from UMCOR and the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, [the church distributed food, medicine and other supplies to those affected by that disaster in central Congo.](#)

Neighbors and community members came together in the hours following this month's floods. Humanitarian organizations and local authorities distributed food and clothing and offered temporary shelter. The government opened the Tata Raphaël stadium to flood victims, while others stayed with host families.

In the wake of the flooding, Kinshasa authorities are calling for better management of urban infrastructures to prevent disasters like this one in the future. There is also a need to strengthen weather warning and preparedness systems in the region, officials said.

Despite the ordeal, affected United Methodists remained faithful.

"Even in the face of loss, hope remains," Kodjo said. "We have lost everything, but God is with us and will raise us up again."

Okito is director of communications for the Central Congo Episcopal Area.

News media contact: Julie Dwyer at [newsdesk@umnews.org](mailto:newsdesk@umnews.org). To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free UM News Digests.](#)

First United Methodist Church  
Children and Youth Program  
2025 Summer Childrens Play

JULY 12 @ 6PM

JULY 13 @ 3PM

Show details TBA



### St. Luke pastor called to build bridges

By John W. Coleman  
March 13, 2025 | UM News

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/st-luke-pastor-called-to-build-bridges>

The Rev. Richie Butler, 52, came to [St. Luke Community United Methodist Church](#) in 2020 after three years of leading its mother church, historic St. Paul United Methodist Church. Freed slaves from Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas birthed St. Paul in 1873 under a brush arbor. The area, known as Freedman's Town, would become the center of African American life in racially segregated Dallas.

[St. Paul](#) provided space for a school that would become United Methodist-affiliated Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, Texas. And it supported the first Black students to attend United Methodist-related Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University.

Described as “the only church in downtown Dallas rooted in African American traditions of worship,” St. Paul birthed St. Luke Community United Methodist Church in South Dallas in 1933. And St. Luke, in turn, gave birth to St. Luke South United Methodist Church in suburban DeSoto in 2007, as increasing numbers of Black residents were moving into that area. The young, nontraditional, [growing congregation became chartered as The Village Church in 2013.](#)

While at St. Paul as a newly recruited, young

United Methodist pastor, Butler led a [dramatic revitalization of its life and ministry](#). He also earned recognition as a bridge-builder in race relations at a time of growing racial division and violence, when Dallas police officers were ambushed in 2016, leaving five dead and nine injured. The assailant, who was killed by police using a robotic bomb, was reportedly angered by a spate of shootings of Black men by white police officers.

Feeling “a calling from God,” Butler built an interracial team of local leaders — including former President George W. Bush, a United Methodist, as honorary chairperson — to organize interracial dialogues, group book studies, and plan other encounters and initiatives.

[Project Unity](#), the outcome of that effort, has grown into a source of community building and diversity, equity and inclusion solutions through its various “Together We Can” cross-racial and cultural learning and activity programs. They include Together We Ball, Together We Dine, Together We Learn and Together We Sing.

Major companies, universities, foundations, police, students, faith leaders and grassroots organizations are involved. And St. Luke has hosted some of the independent organization's events, while church members have volunteered.

*Coleman is a UM News correspondent and part-time pastor. News media contact: Julie Dwyer, news editor, [newdesk@umnews.org](mailto:newdesk@umnews.org).*

# You're invited to a Life Line Screening event!

Where: First United Methodist Church

When: Thursday June 5, 2025



Life Line Screening is the nation's leader in **Stroke and Cardiovascular Disease Risk Screenings.**

Trusted by over 10 million customers.

Screenings are simple and painless. Get peace of mind or early detection.

**Who should attend:** Anyone over the age of 40

### Special Pricing for \$159

- Carotid Artery Disease Screening
- Peripheral Artery Disease Screening
- Atrial Fibrillation Screening
- Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening
- Plus a FREE Hypertension Screening

## 4 ways to book your appointment...

Scan here:



Call 888-814-0466  
and use promo  
code: HSCA001

Visit  
LLSA.SOCIAL/HSCA

Text the word  
"circle" to  
216-279-1607

These tests cannot detect all risk factors for all conditions, such as and including the presence of coronary artery disease.

Those with abnormal results should discuss possible next steps with their family healthcare provider and ensure they understand the risk and benefits of any additional testing or procedures.

# North Brevard's GREATEST Baby Shower

All Expectant Moms, New Moms & Dads that register will receive a swag bag filled with baby items and resources!



## Saturday, May 3, 2025

9:00am - 2:00pm

**The Grove Church**  
1450 Harrison St. Titusville, Fl. 32780

Educational Classes	Giveaways & Prizes	Fun for the Kiddo's
♥ Safe Sleep	♥ Cribs	♥ Bounce House
♥ Carseat Safety	♥ Travel System	♥ Food Trucks
♥ Handling a Toddler	♥ Gift Certificates	♥ Face Painting
♥ Holy Bladder!	♥ Vendor Gift Items	♥ Food Trucks
♥ Chiropractic Care for Babies	♥ Baby Items, Educational Toys	♥ OPEN SPACE
♥ Breastfeeding Support		
♥ and SO MUCH MORE!		

**Sponsored By:**  
**Pregnancy Care Center at BETA**

Please call 321.264.0446 to become a Vendor or with any questions.




# Easter Offering Cross

## All funds will benefit:

- Our sister church in Holguin, Cuba
- Doctors Without Borders
- Our Community Garden

A huge thank you to everyone who donated to our special Easter collection! And thank you to Jan Gilreath and Cathy Spencer for bringing our cross to life with the beautiful flowers!

# May 2025

## First United Methodist Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				<b>1</b> 9:00am PEO Meeting 10:00am Ladies Day Out 6:00pm PEO Meeting	<b>2</b> 1-3pm Food Pantry	<b>3</b> 7:30am Garden Club 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
<b>4</b> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	<b>5</b> 7:30pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	<b>6</b> 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 6:00pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	<b>7</b> 9:00am Patchwork Friends 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir Reh. 5:30pm Vivos Voco Reh. 5:30pm We Gather 6:30pm Crosspointe Reh.	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> 1-3pm Food Pantry	<b>10</b> 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
<b>11 Mother's Day</b> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 11:00am Coffee Fellowship 	<b>12</b> 10:00am Sara Fernandez Bible Study 7:30pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	<b>13</b> 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 6:00pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	<b>14</b> 9:30am Kids Playtime 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir Reh. 5:30pm Vivos Voco Reh. 6:00pm Crosspointe Reh.	<b>15</b> 9:00am PEO Mtg. 12:00pm Ladies Day Out 4:00pm Leadership Team Mtg	<b>16</b> 1-3pm Food Pantry	<b>17</b> 8:00am Comm. Breakfast 10:00am Moonlight Quilters
<b>18</b> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 3:00pm Recital	<b>19</b> 7:30pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	<b>20</b> 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 6:00pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	<b>21</b> 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir Reh.	<b>22</b> 8am Children's Ctr. Grad.	<b>23</b> 9am Connection Kids Grad 1-3pm Food Pantry	<b>24</b> 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
<b>25</b> 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	<b>26 Memorial Day</b> — OFFICE CLOSED — 7:30pm Broadstreet Rehearsal 	<b>27</b> 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 5:30pm Moonlight Quilters 6:00pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	<b>28</b> 10:00am United Women of Faith Mtg. 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir Reh. 5:30pm Vivos Voco Reh. 6:30pm Crosspointe Reh.	<b>29 Ascension Day</b> 	<b>30</b> 1-3pm Food Pantry	<b>31</b> 8:00am Comm. Breakfast

## Table of Contents

- [Page One](#) — Building peace in a dangerously polarized US
- [Page Two](#) — Floods devastate United Methodists in Congo
- [Page Three](#) — Budget Summary / Birthdays / Anniversaries
- [Page Four](#) — Black churches preserve history, shape future
- [Page Eight](#) — Death doula helps navigate end-of-life care
- [Page Nine](#) — Juneteenth Celebration 2025
- [Page Ten](#) — Floods Devastate United Methodists in Congo
- [Page Twelve](#) — 2025 Summer Children’s Play / St. Luke pastor called to build bridges
- [Page Thirteen](#) — Lifeline Screening
- [Page Fourteen](#) — North Brevard Baby Shower / Easter Offering
- [Page Fifteen](#) — May Calendar
- [Page Sixteen](#) — Table of Contents / Church Info



### FUMC Staff

Reception Desk	Ext 201
Rev. Wayne Cook - Pastor	Ext 202
Mario Davis - Administrative Assistant	Ext 203
Glenda Waring - Membership Secretary	Ext. 204
Leah Patterson - Finance Secretary	Ext. 204
Lauren Good - Family Ministries	Ext. 205
Tom Mosier - Facilities Manager	Ext. 206
Leah Patterson - Custodian	Ext. 206
Carol Henn - Music Director	
J.D. Daniel - Organist	
Steve Rossi - Sound Tech	
Josh Huss - Lights and Visuals	

## 1st UMC Ministries

### OUTREACH

Bags of Grace	Patchwork Friends
Christmas Store	<i>(Quilting group providing quilts to the community)</i>
Community Breakfast	School Outreach
Community Garden	<i>(Apollo Elem., Madison MS, Andrew Jackson MS, Astronaut HS, &amp; Titusville HS)</i>
Cuba Missions	Stop Gap Community
<i>(Santa Cruz Methodist Church in Holguin, Cuba)</i>	Dinners
Food Pantry	Shoe Ministry
Good Shepherd	Undue Medical Debt
<i>(Funds to help the community with bills &amp; other needs)</i>	

### MUSIC MINISTRIES

Church Choir	Holiday Cantatas
Evensong Services	Special Concerts
Handbell Choirs	

### FAMILY MINISTRIES

1st Wednesday Dinners	Theater Programs
Children’s Ministry	<i>(Children &amp; Adult)</i>
Street Festivals	Vacation Bible School
Open Play	Youth—Longest Day of Your Life
<i>(1st Monday, safe playtime for parents &amp; kids)</i>	Youth Ministry
Rock the Universe	Bus Ministry
Summer Youth Camp	

### NURTURE MINISTRIES

United Women of Faith	Bible Studies
-----------------------	---------------

### First United Methodist Church

206 S. Hopkins Ave  
Titusville, FL 32796

Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.

Worship Services: 10:00 a.m.

Church Office Hours: 8am – 4pm, Monday - Friday  
Closed from 12:00 – 12:30 p.m.

Phone: (321) 269-7631

Fax: (321) 269-8359

E-mail Address: [office@fumctitusville.com](mailto:office@fumctitusville.com)

Website: [www.fumctitusville.com](http://www.fumctitusville.com)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/682694095204027](https://www.facebook.com/682694095204027)

Instagram Handle: [@UnitedChurch321](https://www.instagram.com/UnitedChurch321)

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChscOcLDe-wGkXHftvzGX9Q>

