



MESSENGER

SEPTEMBER 2025

Cousins recall the days after Katrina

By Kathy L. Gilbert

Aug. 8, 2025 | SLIDELL, La. (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/cousins-recall-the-days-after-katrina>

Key points:

- † Taking a break from volunteering at vacation Bible school at Hartzell Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, seven cousins talked about what it was like to live through the hurricane.
- † The family members said they stuck together as a community after the storm.
- † The young men also shared the lessons Katrina taught them.



Corey DuPlessis recalls fleeing his home with family after Hurricane Katrina flooded Slidell, La. He was 9 years old at the time. Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.

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FUMC is 150 years old!

Block Party
October 11th & 12th

And I thought my dad was old!

Join us!

LGBTQ advocates head for ‘uncharted’ territory

By Heather Hahn
July 30, 2025 | MADISON, Wis. (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/lgbtq-advocates-head-for-uncharted-territory>

Key Points:

- † **United Methodists gathered for the Reconciling Ministries Network’s first Convocation since last year’s momentous General Conference removed denomination-wide bans targeting LGBTQ people.**
- † **Even with success at General Conference, the group’s message throughout the July 24-27 event was that the movement is still needed as the denomination rebuilds and addresses injustice around the globe.**
- † **The gathering was filled with moments of celebration as well as recognition of the challenges ahead.**

For Helen Ryde, The United Methodist Church’s removal of barriers to LGBTQ ministry was like when the walls of Jericho came tumbling down.

“[Joshua only took seven days](#),” said Ryde, director of mission impact for [the Reconciling Ministries Network](#). “We were marching around those walls for 50 years, right?”

Ryde acknowledged that the timeframe wasn’t the only notable difference between the Bible story and the effort to topple the denomination’s fortifications against LGBTQ inclusion.

“The truth is: We were always both inside the walls and outside the walls.”

Ryde was speaking to those gathered for the Reconciling Ministries Network’s July 24-27 Convocation at First United Methodist Church in downtown Madison, Wisconsin. More than 250 people, in person and online, attended the advocacy group’s first such gathering since [last year’s General Conference brought a seismic shift in the international denomination](#).

After decades of internal strife [and the heartbreak of church disaffiliations](#), the United Methodist legislative assembly last year voted overwhelmingly to remove denomination-wide bans on [same-sex weddings](#), [openly gay clergy](#), and [funding for ministry with LGBTQ people](#). Perhaps most significantly, General Conference delegates also eliminated an assertion — first approved by General Conference in 1972 — [that called the practice of homosexuality “incompatible with Christian teaching.”](#)



Mountain Sky Conference Bishop Kristin Stoneking gives the benediction at the closing worship of Reconciling Ministries Network’s convocation held at First United Methodist Church in downtown Madison, Wis. The July 24-27 convocation, with the theme “Uncharted,” celebrated the removal of denomination-wide restrictions targeting LGBTQ people and also acknowledged the challenges ahead in a new denominational landscape. Photo by Joscie Cutchens, UM News.

The 2025 Convocation, with the theme “Uncharted,” offered a time for advocates to celebrate and cooperate as they move into a new denominational landscape.

“I want to tell you that every reconciling United Methodist and every reconciling United Methodist ministry played a role in getting to this moment,” said Jan Lawrence, Reconciling Ministries Network’s executive director, in opening the Convocation.

The Reconciling movement began in 1984 with an initiative by another advocacy group, [Affirmation](#), to build a network of United Methodist churches committed to full inclusion. Over the decades as successive General Conferences erected more barriers to LGBTQ people, the network’s growing membership kept praying and organizing with faith that God was leading the church into a new day.

Though that new day has now arrived, the Reconciling Ministries Network has no plans to close up shop. The group, [which launched a new strategic plan this year](#), sees opportunities to work more closely with the denomination in rebuilding after church exits and supporting its justice work.

“The season of disaffiliation was and continues to be difficult. It not only divided congregations; it divided families,” Lawrence said. “[And the rising violence and authoritarianism in the world around us](#) has added work to justice seekers. But as the Reconciling movement and the Reconciling people in The United Methodist Church, we will keep showing up.”

Unlike Joshua’s forces, the Reconciling Ministries Network and its allies never had the goal of destruction

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2025 July 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.

Income

Total Income: \$57,761

Expenses

Church Programs:	\$0
Finance:	\$333
Church Administration:	\$1,891
Facility Maintenance:	\$11,341
Personnel:	\$33,312
Conference Apportionments:	\$3,256
<u>Change in Payables:</u>	<u>\$1,826</u>
<i>Total Expenses:</i>	<i>\$51,959</i>

Income Over Expenses: \$5,802

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

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

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SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

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Carnival Games!

(at First United Methodist Church)

"I can hold my pinky out this far! Do you think that will help me win prizes in the games at the church block party?"

Church gift fuels student's determination to succeed

By Chenayi Kumuterera

July 21, 2025 | MUREWA, Zimbabwe (UM News)

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/church-gift-fuels-students-determination-to-succeed>

Key Points:

- † As gratitude for the church scholarship he received, Africa University graduate shares family's harvest with Zimbabwe West Conference office staff.
- † Panashe Banda graduated in June with a Bachelor of Science honors degree in social work.
- † He said he hopes to use his education to contribute meaningfully to the church and society and that his story will inspire others to give back in their own way.

When Panashe Banda walked across the stage at Africa University to receive his diploma in June, the 24-year-old realized a dream he “only dared to imagine.”

“My life journey to Africa University was a testament of God's grace,” he said.

Struggling daily against poverty, his mother strived to scrape together enough money for his school fees and necessities, while he lived with his maternal grandparents in Murewa.

“Each day,” he explained, “was a testimony to their resilience, and their sacrifices fueled my determination to succeed.”



Panashe Banda poses with his uncle, James Chadamoyo Chipuka, at their rural homestead in Chikomo village in the Murewa District of Zimbabwe. Banda received the Bishop's Episcopal Scholarship, which covered his costs to attend Africa University. “I hope to carry forward the same spirit of generosity and purpose that the church exemplified,” Banda said. Photo by Chenayi Kumuterera, UM News.

When Banda completed his ordinary level, equivalent to U.S. high school graduation, the dream of continuing to advanced level seemed out of reach. The financial burden was heavy for his mother, so he herded neighbors' cattle and worked in their fields. “I poured my heart into my studies,” he said, “and I passed with 12 points.”

Despite this achievement, higher education felt like a distant dream. Then a life-changing opportunity came from The United Methodist Church: Through the Bishop's Episcopal Scholarship, Banda was offered a chance to attend Africa University, fully funded.

[One of 622 recent Africa University graduates](#), Banda earned a Bachelor of Science honors degree in social work.

“Whether through my career, community involvement, or personal actions,” Banda said, “I hope to carry forward the same spirit of generosity and purpose that the church exemplified.”

To show his gratitude, Banda has been sharing his family's harvest with the Zimbabwe West Conference head office staff each year while pursuing his studies. That gift includes seasonal produce such as cucumbers, mangos, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, avocados, pears, and mazhanje — an African wild fruit found in the forests — as well as peanut butter.

“Reflecting on the church's influence, I am struck by the ripple effect of its generosity,” he said. “The scholarship was not just a gift to me; it was also an investment in the future, with the potential to inspire others to give back in their own way.

“As a beneficiary of this kindness, I feel a responsibility to honor the church's trust by using my education to contribute meaningfully to the church and society.”

He said the scholarship was more than financial aid.

“It was a lifeline and a bridge to a future I had only dared to imagine. With a heart full of gratitude and a spirit



Panashe Banda graduated from Africa University in June with a Bachelor of Science honors degree in social work. He hopes to work with a nongovernmental organization “focused on addressing social issues like poverty, gender-based violence or access to education in underserved African communities.” Photo courtesy of Africa University.

What churches need to know about immigration

By Heather Hahn
July 21, 2025 | UM News

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/what-churches-need-to-know-about-immigration>

Key points:

- † **United Methodist leaders are seeking to keep people informed as the U.S. government cracks down on immigration.**
- † **While birthright citizenship is safe for now, United Methodist attorneys raised alarms during a webinar about recent travel bans as well as escalating raids by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.**
- † **As of June, the Cato Institute reported that 71% of ICE arrests and 67% of ICE detentions were of people who had no criminal record.**
- † **This comes as recently passed legislation has just made ICE the highest-funded law enforcement agency, by far, in the federal government.**

The U.S. government has devoted unprecedented resources to the deportation and detention of immigrants — all while working to strip legal status from more than a million people.

Such developments raise fears across the country, including among United Methodist immigrants and their church communities.

Guided by multiple Bible passages [including Jesus' call to welcome the stranger](#), United Methodist leaders have stepped up to keep people informed of what's happening and where they might go for help.

[The Council of Bishops](#) and United Methodist agencies provided the most recent update in a [July 17 webinar](#), presented in English with interpretation in eight languages. The webinar drew about 1,000 participants.

“Immigration is not just a political issue. It is a theological one,” the Rev. Giovanni Arroyo, the top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race, told those gathered.

“It is not merely about policy; it's about people,” he said. “Today, we gather to receive updates rooted in legal reality and grounded in our shared faith, and we gather in this space to learn, to question, to lament, and to imagine a more just and compassionate future together.”

During the webinar, United Methodist attorneys gave an update on where things stand with birthright citizenship, travel bans, and Immigration and

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.”

— Excerpt from the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1868.

In response to the recent U. S. Supreme Court decision related to birthright citizenship, the United Methodist Council of Bishops, general agencies and partner organizations hosted a webinar July 17. While birthright citizenship is safe for now, church leaders noted the dangers posed by current immigration policies. As of June, 71% of people arrested by ICE have no criminal record. Parchment image by Safwan Thottoli, courtesy of Unsplash; map image by OpenClipart -Vectors, courtesy of Pixabay; graphic by Laurens Glass, UM News.

Customs Enforcement tactics. Throughout the webinar, Arroyo reminded participants that the gathering was intended to provide general legal information not personal legal advice.

Birthright citizenship

Birthright citizenship, [the issue that prompted the webinar](#), is safe for now thanks to court actions this month.

William Powell, senior counsel with Georgetown University's [Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection](#), gave an overview of what's happened since an executive order by President Trump cast birthright citizenship in doubt.

The order, issued shortly after Trump's second inauguration Jan. 20, denies automatic citizenship to babies born in the U.S. to parents either temporarily or illegally here.

To Powell and multiple judges, this executive order is a clear violation of the U.S. Constitution's 14th Amendment. [Its first sentence states](#): “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside.”

However, the U.S. Supreme Court majority in [Trump v. CASA, Inc.](#), released June 27, opted not to take up the merits of Trump's order but instead limited the scope of lower-court judges' injunctions against Trump's actions. The ruling did open the door to class-action lawsuits, and that's exactly what has happened since.

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Korean pastor chronicles family saga of war, faith, resilience

By the Rev. Thomas E. Kim
July 25, 2025 | UM News

<https://www.umnews.org/en/news/a-korean-american-diasporas-enduring-saga-of-war-faith-and-resilience>

Key points:

- † This year marks the 80th anniversary of Korea's division and the 75th anniversary of the Korean War.
- † "Rebuilding the Fallen Fence: A Korean American Family" is a poignant and deeply personal memoir by the Rev. Suk-Chong Yu, a retired United Methodist pastor and firsthand victim of the Korean War.
- † Yu chronicles the shattering impact of the Korean War on his family, delves into his personal path of

rebuilding and the eventual reconnection of family members scattered across several continents.

Rebuilding the Fallen Fence



"Rebuilding the Fallen Fence: A Korean American Family," a memoir by the Rev. Suk-Chong Yu, is a moving testament to the enduring power of faith, family, and the human spirit amidst unimaginable adversity. Cover art courtesy of Covenant Books.

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ablaze with determination, I stepped onto the campus of Africa University, carrying the love of my family and the church and an unyielding resolve to honor their faith in me.

"My journey is proof that no obstacle is too great when met with resilience, and no dream is too big when lifted by the hands of those who believe in you," Banda said.

He expressed special thanks to retired Bishop Eben K. Nhwatiwa and the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area.

Banda hopes to combine community service and clinical social work.

"My immediate goal," he said, "is to work with a nongovernmental organization focused on addressing social issues like poverty, gender-based violence, or access to education in underserved African communities."

According to Margaret Makadzange, Zimbabwe West associate lay leader and an Africa University board member, the episcopal scholarship assists United Methodist students "who are gifted but cannot afford education at Africa University, which is among the top universities in Zimbabwe."

During the past eight years, the scholarship, which covers both room and board, has helped four students.

Banda's mother, Lindiwe Chipuka, is a member of the Chemapango United Methodist circuit in Murewa. "I saw the hand of God and the church's love throughout my son's academic journey at Africa University," she said. "Alone, I could have not managed this far."

His recently widowed grandmother, Maideyi Chipuka, joined in thanksgiving.

"The spirit of God visited my house," she said. "I witnessed the presence of the Holy Spirit, which selected my grandson for a scholarship. The graduation of Banda left me in tears of joy. I keep praying that God will continue to lead my grandson and bless The United Methodist Church." Chipuka is a member of Chivake North United Methodist Circuit in Murewa.

"The church's commitment to empowering the marginalized through education has not only shaped my path but also deepened my understanding of what it means to support others," Banda said. "The church stands as a powerful example of how faith and action can intersect to create lasting, positive change, and I am honored to have been a recipient of its generosity.

"This experience, inspired by the church's unwavering dedication to uplifting those it serves, has left me with a lifelong commitment to giving back."

Nhwatiwa said the scholarships are an investment in the church's future.

"The church has already done what is expected of a church: to have compassion," he said. "Scholarship recipients represent a collective future."

Kumuterera is a communicator in Zimbabwe West Annual Conference.

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

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Corey DuPlessis was 9 years old when Hurricane Katrina swept through his home.

“Actually, I remember it vividly because we had just had a father-son fishing trip out at the church and me and my dad had won. We had brand-new poles and everything. When we came home, they were floating, broken in the yard.”

Seven young men, ranging in age from 29 to 40, took time away from volunteering for vacation Bible school at Hartzell Mt. Zion United Methodist Church to gather in the Rev. Tiffanie Postell’s office to talk about what it was like to live through Katrina and the devastation left behind.

The cousins swapped stories about escaping their homes with relatives and friends as the storm dumped up to 7 feet of water.



Jared Townsend remembers helping family and friends muck out their homes after Hurricane Katrina caused widespread flooding in Slidell, La. Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.

All the young men remember mud, downed trees and the smell.

“This is a family church. I remember going from house to house cleaning out,” said Jared Townsend, who was 11 at the time of the storm. “It’s the craziest thing; this church looks like an updated version of the same church.”

They remember doing everything together: playing basketball, attending church and going through the hurricane.

“We all live in (Indian) Village; we are all connected. We grew up going to vacation Bible school, coming to this church to play basketball, Sunday school. And these kids are going to have that same type of memory. That’s something beautiful to me, just the community,” said Joe Guyton, who was 20 at



Quin Johnson talks about lessons learned 20 years ago during Hurricane Katrina in Slidell, La. Photo by Mike DuBose, UM News.

the time of the hurricane.

The village is marked by a historic marker about the Native American presence, particularly the Muskogean, Tangipahoa, and Acolapissa tribes, before European settlement.

The most distinct thing Quin Johnson said he remembers was just coming back together.

The group discussed rusted coat hangers, the humidity and having to throw out some of their favorite things.

But they remember well some of the lessons Katrina taught: Tell someone where you are going if a storm is approaching; have walkie-talkies and CB radios because phones won’t work; check in when you are safe and never leave anyone behind.

Gilbert is a freelance writer in Nashville, Tenn., who covered the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina for UM News in 2005.

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

Hurricane Katrina survivors remember storm

For more stories from survivors, visit this website.

<https://www.umnews.org/en/landing-pages/hurricane-katrina-survivors-remember-storm>

20 years after the hurricane devastated Slidell, Louisiana, and their church, members of Hartzell Mt. Zion United Methodist count their blessings.

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but expansion — helping the church share Christ’s love with more people.

“[Our mission](#) is to provide a space where every Christ follower discovers who they are and can be who they are in The United Methodist Church in all of the fullness of what that means,” said the Rev. David Meredith, a retired United Methodist pastor in the West Ohio Conference and the group’s board chair.

Emblematic of the denomination’s greater openness, he spoke under banners representing the Convocation’s sponsorship by 24 of the denomination’s 51 U.S. conferences. Other sponsors included general agencies and other United Methodist ministries who, under the earlier funding ban, could not offer such financial support.

In another sign of how much things have changed, three bishops attended the Convocation. They included host Bishop Dan Schwerin of the Wisconsin and Northern Illinois conferences; Bishop Cedric Bridgeforth, the denomination’s first Black gay bishop and leader of three Greater Northwest conferences; and Mountain Sky Conference Bishop Kristin Stoneking, the denomination’s third gay bishop.

Council of Bishops President Tracy S. Malone, who leads the Indiana Conference, was unable to attend in person but sent video greetings.

United Methodist seminaries also were well represented among the sponsors. Bryan P. Stone, the new dean of Southern Methodist University’s Perkins School of



Derrick Scott III, a Reconciling Ministries Network board member and Florida Conference co-lay leader, celebrates the changes in the denomination thanks to Reconciling Ministries Network’s organizing. He also challenged Reconciling members to work more toward intersectional justice. Just speaking for himself, he said “queer inclusion is still a predominantly white conversation ... queer inclusion is still a predominantly U.S.-centric conversation and still a predominantly ableist conversation.” Photo by Joscie Cutchens, UM News.



From left, Reconciling Ministries Network staff members Helen Ryde, the Rev. Emily Bagwell, and Laura Young delight in sharing the state of the movement for LGBTQ inclusion. For the first time, United Methodists policies do not ban gay ordination or same-sex weddings denomination-wide. Photo by Joscie Cutchens, UM News.

Theology in Dallas, attended in person.

“I wanted to us to be present here, to communicate our passion and joy to work with LGBTQIA-plus persons as allies and as a school for whom that population is absolutely central to my vision for what theological education should be,” Stone said.

Also among the sponsors was [Rainbow Tree: Korean Christians Welcoming LGBTQIA](#), a largely Korean American group that got started shortly after the 2019 General Conference passed the Traditional Plan — making the LGBTQ restrictions seem impenetrable.

“We realized that there were some assumptions that all Koreans are conservative and support the Traditional Plan,” said the Rev. Hyunwoong Hwang, a United Methodist pastor in Wisconsin. “So, we wanted to say there are some other Christians, Korean Christians, who support inclusive work.”

Yet, even as the denomination’s walls have fallen just as in Jericho of old, Ryde said pieces of the former barriers still block the way.

“That’s where we are,” said Ryde, who uses they/them pronouns. “We’ve got the walls down, but we’re still navigating the rubble on the ground. So, our job as we move forward is to get that rubble out of the way. There are some in the institution who are staying behind the rubble, pretending it’s still a wall.”

Laura Young, the network’s director of congregational engagement and resource development, said some bishops, conferences, and churches are welcoming same-sex weddings and gay clergy. Still others are acting like nothing has changed at all.

She summed up the situation this way: “The changes that we achieved at General Conference removed

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mandated discrimination, but the option to discriminate is still very much there. The bottom line: Your level of inclusion is dependent on your ZIP code.”

She added that the struggles are not confined to the U.S. South.

Even as United Methodist churches become more hospitable, the U.S. and some state governments are becoming more hostile to people on the margins. Among those especially targeted are trans people, racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants and even people who simply are visiting the U.S.

The Rev. Valerie L. Jackson, chair of the network’s Equity Council, preached that one lesson from the first chapter of Exodus is that people can be free one day and enslaved the next.

“Our freedom and our liberation depend on who is in leadership,” said Jackson, senior pastor of Park Hill United Methodist Church in Denver. “Our freedom and our liberation depend on who is on the Council of Bishops, who our district superintendents are, who the lead pastors of our churches are. Our freedom and our liberation depend on who is in the Oval Office.”

For many at the Convocation, this was a time of both joy and trepidation for the challenges ahead.

Alice Williams, Florida Conference co-lay leader, said that because of the longtime advocacy of the Reconciling movement, she was able see the face of God in two moments this past year.

The first was the ordination of her openly gay friend, the Rev. Kip Nelson. The second was her own wedding to her beloved of 45 years inside a United Methodist church.

Taking inspiration from Ryde’s description of the rubble still around, Williams said that, in these days, Reconciling United Methodists need to be “the rubble-rousers.”

“We need to be the rubble-rousers that start to help people to understand, first, our presence. We cannot shrink,” said Williams, a network board member.

“The second piece is that we build the relationships that help people to understand and demystify what it means to be queer in this country and around the world. We also need to look for ways to insert ourselves in the conversation.”

Bishop Stoneking, the first openly gay and married bishop elected since the elimination of the gay-clergy ban, preached July 27 at the Sunday service that doubled as the Convocation’s closing worship.



From left, the Revs. Lydia Muñoz and Sooah Na sing during Sunday service, which doubled as closing worship for the Reconciling Ministries Network convocation. Muñoz is the executive director of El Plan for Hispanic/Latine Ministry, and Na is an ordained elder in the Greater New Jersey Conference. Photo by Joscie Cutchens, UM News.

She preached on Acts 16:6-15, which describes how Paul and his companions struggled to figure out where God was sending them before a vision guided them to the imperial city of Philippi in Macedonia. There they met Lydia, the purple-cloth dealer who was baptized alongside her entire household.

United Methodists in the Reconciling movement are similarly trying to discern God’s next steps, Stoneking said, and as happened with Paul and his companions, the Holy Spirit could lead them to an unknown and potentially dangerous place. But like the early evangelists, they also will likely make new friends along the way.

This was the first Convocation for more than half of the people in attendance.

“Let us move with the hope and faith of a people who have long labored for a cause and have seen it come to fruition — knowing that if it can happen once, it can happen again,” she said to applause.

“This is what we are called to do when suffering still exists. This is what hope sounds like when it won’t stay quiet. This is what love looks like when it moves in and infuses every place where love doesn’t yet reign. It says, ‘God sent us because God is still leading.’”

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

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On July 10, a federal judge in New Hampshire [certified babies as a class in a new lawsuit and blocked the birthright citizenship order nationwide](#). On July 16, a federal judge in Maryland said [she would do the same if an appeals court gave the green light](#).

“So if you’re pregnant...and your baby is born in the United States, they will be a citizen by birth and are guaranteed to be United States citizens,” said Powell, whose institute is representing parents in the Maryland case.

“That’s very important. And as we litigate the case going forward, our goal is to keep it so that no one ever is subject to that executive order.”

Powell is a member of Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington. His institute is also involved in other immigration-rights cases including the ongoing interfaith lawsuit, joined by United Methodists, [that seeks to protect houses of worship from immigration-enforcement raids](#).

While confident courts will continue to uphold birthright citizenship, Powell added that parents still should get a Social Security card and passport for their newborns as soon as possible. Right now, a birth certificate is sufficient to prove someone born in the U.S. is a citizen, he explained, but without birthright citizenship that would change.

“If they get rid of birthright citizenship — even for some people — then for everybody, you’re going to have to show something else to prove it about either your parents’ citizenship or when you were born besides just the birth certificate,” he said. “That’s going to be complicated. ... Better to be safe than sorry.”

ICE tactics

Still, more worrying for many on the webinar were current tactics used by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents.

[The agency](#), founded in 2003, is receiving an unprecedented influx of money under the recently signed “Big Beautiful Bill” — [making it by far the highest-funded federal law-enforcement agency](#). The law gives ICE [\\$45 billion to expand its already sprawling detention system of adults and children over the next four years](#).

Even with those allocations just starting, ICE agents — often wearing masks or otherwise refusing to identify themselves — have already been ramping up raids in response [to the quota of 3,000 arrests a day](#).

Alba Jaramillo and Melissa Bowe, attorneys and co-executive directors of the [Immigration Law and Justice Network](#), spoke of what they

Multiple people charged with impersonating ICE officers amid US deportation crackdown

There has been an increase in arrests across multiple states of people allegedly [impersonating Immigration and Customs Enforcement officers](#). [The use of masks and lack of visible identification](#) has facilitated criminals in detaining, kidnapping, and assaulting confused victims. Some cities are creating and distributing educational materials, such as videos and graphics, to teach residents how to recognize legitimate law enforcement officers and potential imposters. *(This reporting is according to multiple news sources and is not a part of the original immigration article from [umnews.org](#).)*

have been seeing in their ministry. The United Methodist-supported network, with 19 sites nationwide, provides low-cost and no-cost legal services to immigrants and refugees working within the U.S. legal system.

“President Trump ran his campaign with a promise to deport what he called ‘the worst of the worst’ immigrants with a criminal history,” Jaramillo said. “But in fact, all immigrants and people of color alike are at risk of being targeted by ICE.”

She said that ICE agents have used such tactics as dressing up as electric workers to arrest families and pretending to be social workers to arrest migrant children. They have arrested asylum seekers at their court hearings and longtime U.S. residents showing up for work.

Jaramillo also pointed to [a report by the libertarian-leaning CATO Institute](#), which found that as of June, 71% of ICE arrests and 67% of ICE detentions were of people who had no criminal convictions.

Alligator Alcatraz, the detention facility Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis built with emergency funds in the flood-prone Everglades, is already facing allegations of medical neglect and [the inhumane conditions of its cage-like units](#). Of the 700 people being detained, only about a third have a criminal record. Those detained include [a 36-year-old, who has legal status through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program](#), and for a time, [a 15-year-old](#), even though the location is not intended for minors. Neither have criminal convictions.

At the same time, the Trump administration is working to make even more people’s status illegal by removing temporary protected status from [some 1.2 million people fleeing wars, natural disasters, and oppression](#).

Jaramillo said attorneys in the network are advising clients to request virtual hearings to avoid ICE encounters and to attend training to know their rights.

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“The Constitution applies to everyone no matter their immigration status,” she said.

Travel bans

Bowe, Jaramillo’s colleague, noted that travel is now especially fraught. At this point, the Trump administration has suspended U.S. entry to citizens of 12 countries and issued partial bans on citizens of seven other nations, [including Sierra Leone where The United Methodist Church has a sizable presence](#).

But even for U.S. citizens, Bowe said, coming back to the U.S. or even traveling domestically has brought new challenges. Within 100 miles of the border and at airports, enforcement officers can question anyone whether they have lawful immigration status.

“It’s not normal or right to be scared to travel,” Bowe said. “It’s not normal or right to have community disappeared in the street by unmarked agents. And it is not normal or right to ban travel like this.”

It should be noted that the immigration crackdown is unpopular. [According to a CNN-SSRS poll released July 20](#), 55% say the Trump administration has “gone too far” in deporting immigrants living in the U.S. illegally. The same July 10-13 poll found a 57% majority also oppose plans to build new detention facilities for undocumented immigrants.

The results follow other national polls indicating falling support for mass deportations as well as rising support for immigrants in general. Earlier this month, [Gallup reported a record-high 79% of Americans](#) consider immigration good for the country.

Bishop Robin Dease, who leads the North Georgia and South Georgia conferences, concluded the webinar by reminding those online that their voices matter.

“You’re standing up for fairness and inclusion, and that takes courage, and that takes heart,” she said. “So keep going because every conversation we spark, every policy we challenge, every person we educate, it all adds up.”

At a time when forces seem intent on extinguishing the beacon the U.S. long has provided for [“huddled masses yearning to breathe free”](#), retired Bishop Minerva Carcaño also reminded webinar participants that God’s light endures.

The chair of the Council of Bishops Immigration Task Force opened the webinar with a devotion based on [Deuteronomy 10:16-19](#). The passage reminds the Israelites that God loves the foreigner and that they, too, are “to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt.”

The bishop admitted that many in the U.S. never expected to live in a country that

increasingly feels more like autocracy than a democracy. However, she said, Scripture makes clear that autocrats are only temporary.

“There is only one God — God above all gods, Sovereign of sovereigns, our awesome God who stands and calls for justice,” Carcaño said.

“The God whom we serve requires that we — you and I — stand with him as a people of justice, a justice that just pours itself out like pure love upon every single one of us, but especially upon those who suffer most — the orphan, the widowed and the immigrant.”

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

Resources

The United Methodist Church’s Social Principles, based on Scripture, affirm “the dignity, worth, and rights of migrants, immigrants, and refugees, including displaced and stateless people.”

United Methodist agencies and the Council of Bishops have put together resources for people seeking to work toward immigration justice.

These include:

- † The recording of the webinar, with closed captioning in multiple languages, made available by the United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race.
 - † Mustard Seed grants provided by the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries to fund local-church projects that support migrants and refugees. The deadline to apply is Sept. 1.
 - † Resources assembled by United Methodist Communications that provide an overview of church teachings and actions related to immigration and global migration.
 - † A Bible study titled “Immigration and the Bible: A Guide for Radical Welcome,” put together by United Women in Faith.
 - † United Methodist Women in Faith also has put together a free Racial Justice Timeline in English, Spanish, and Korean.
 - † Immigration Justice Resources from the United Methodist Board of Church and Society.
- El Plan for Hispanic/Latine Ministry, which works to strengthen United Methodist Hispanic ministries, also plans to provide training for clergy titled “Immigration and Pastoral Care.”

(Continued from page 6)

This year marks the 80th anniversary of Korea's division and the 75th anniversary of the Korean War, which erupted on June 25, 1950.

The brutal conflict resulted in the deaths of 500,000 Chinese soldiers, approximately 50,000 U.S. and U.N. forces, and 3 million Koreans from both the North and South, including countless civilians. A military armistice agreement signed on July 27, 1953, left an estimated 10 million separated family members across the divided peninsula.

[“Rebuilding the Fallen Fence: A Korean American Family”](#) is a poignant and deeply personal memoir by the Rev. Suk-Chong Yu, a retired United Methodist pastor and firsthand victim of the Korean War. Yu's narrative, originally published in Korean and now translated into English, offers a unique lens into 20th-century Korean history, spanning generations and continents and standing as a testament to the enduring power of faith, family, and the human spirit amidst unimaginable adversity.

The book is structured in two parts. Part I chronicles the shattering impact of the Korean War on the Yu family, whose lives were irrevocably “fallen.” Part II delves into the author's personal path of rebuilding and the eventual reconnection of family members scattered across South and North Korea, America and Europe, illustrating how the fence was “rebuilt.”

Yu begins by immersing the reader in the brutal reality of the Korean War. His vivid recollections from a child's perspective paint a harrowing picture of a nation torn apart.

The family, living in Munsan near the 38th parallel, was immediately caught in the crossfire. Yu recounts the chilling moment when his father, a former pastor turned anti-communist leader, was kidnapped by communists less than 15 minutes after returning home from hiding in Seoul.

“His hair looked as white as snow,” Yu recalls, describing the last glimpse of his father, who was 50 years old at the time and never seen again. This profound loss, coupled with the family's subsequent scattering, forms the “fallen fence” of the title.

The war's devastation extends to other siblings. Yu's eldest sister, Hee-jung, and second sister, Hee-sung, defected to North Korea, a decision born from complex political convictions and the chaos of war. Their stories, often gleaned from later reunions, offer rare glimpses into lives lived under a vastly different ideology. The youngest brother, Suk-young (later David), was adopted by an American family, a poignant reflection of the thousands of Korean orphans who found new homes abroad.

These early chapters are a raw, unvarnished account of a family ripped apart by ideological conflict and the sheer brutality of war, leaving readers to grapple with the immense human cost of division.

Part II of the memoir shifts to Yu's personal journey of healing and rebuilding, beginning with childhood experiences that shaped his patriotism and his eventual calling to ministry. Yu recounts a formative moment in elementary school where he sacrificed himself to take punishment for a classmate, an act he attributes to the early influence of Christian teachings. This sense of self-sacrifice and commitment to others becomes a recurring theme throughout his life.

Yu traces his vocational path from seminary training to his early career as an editor at the Christian Literature Society of Korea, and later to an academic position at Chung-Ang University. Along the way, he crossed paths with influential thinkers like Dr. Yoon Sung-bum, a pioneer in indigenous Korean theology, and Dr. Park Dae-sun, a bold scholar who challenged South Korea's military dictatorship. Yu's experiences with government censorship and student protests reflect the tense political climate of South Korea during his early career.

The narrative also illuminates the lives of his siblings. His fourth sister, Hee-young, migrated to Germany in the 1960s to work as a nurse, while her husband labored as a miner. Their stories highlight the courage and sacrifice of Korea's “guest worker” generation. Another sister, Hee-sook, and her husband pursued the American dream, building a life of faith and perseverance despite language barriers and racial discrimination.

Perhaps the most compelling chapters are those detailing the author's multiple reunions with his sisters in North Korea. These trips — beginning in 2004, decades after their separation — offer a rare and intimate look at life on opposite sides of the world's most heavily fortified border. Yu candidly shares the initial awkwardness and the eventual rediscovery of deep familial bonds, transcending ideological divides. He describes the joy of shared meals, songs, and laughter with his North Korean relatives, even amidst the stark realities of their



The Rev. Suk-Chong Yu is a retired United Methodist pastor and author of “Rebuilding the Fallen Fence: A Korean American Family,” which chronicles the devastating impact of the Korean War on his family. Photo courtesy of the Rev. Yu.

(Continued from page 12)

impoverished society.

One of the most powerful moments came when Yu led a secret worship service for his sisters, reading from Jeremiah 29:4-7, a passage about thriving even in exile. These reunions profoundly reshaped his perspective. He came to see North Koreans not as enemies, but as “brothers and sisters in need of God’s mercy and care.”

His reflections on the Korean War and his call for reconciliation are deeply spiritual and morally urgent. He believes that, like the biblical story of Jacob and Joseph, reunification must come through forgiveness and the agency of the Korean people themselves.

The book also delves into the complexities of international adoption through the story of his younger brother, David. Yu explores the challenges of identity, discrimination, and the ultimate triumph of love within David’s adoptive American family. He offers thoughtful suggestions for improving the international adoption process, emphasizing the importance of genuine love, cultural connection, and ongoing support for adoptees.

The memoir culminates with the author’s own reflections on his life with his late wife, Yon Sil, particularly her struggle with dementia. He shares tender anecdotes of her “returning to 2 years old” and his unwavering devotion as her caregiver, embodying the “warm hands” metaphor that runs through the book.

In her foreword, Yu’s granddaughter, Hope Sun-Mi Alice Yu, aptly notes that the memoir brings a unique

perspective to Asian American literature. Unlike many contemporary works that are often critical and written by younger authors, Yu’s narrative offers a complete and true story from the perspective of an older Asian person, providing agency to a generation often depicted through stereotypes. It delves into the “full complexity of life rooted in the everyday,” finding humor and grace even in the shadows of war.

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung of the Ohio Episcopal Area offered similar praise for Yu’s memoir.

“The pain and wounds caused by the division of the Korean Peninsula cannot be expressed in words. However, the author overcomes the pain of the times with the value of faith and calmly records the complex discourse of reality,” Jung wrote in a blurb on the book’s back cover.

“Rebuilding the Fallen Fence” is more than a family history; it is a powerful testament to the human spirit’s capacity for survival, adaptation, and love. It offers a vision of faith that does not ignore suffering but seeks to redeem it through compassion and connection. This memoir is essential reading for anyone interested in Korean history, the Korean diaspora, family resilience, and the enduring power of Christian faith in a fractured world.

Kim is director of Korean and Asian news at United Methodist Communications. Contact him at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umnews.org. To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe](#) to the free UM News Digests.



YOU'RE INVITED TO

Thanksgiving Service

& Picnic

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30TH
10AM**

EVERYONE WELCOME FOR
A SERVICE, FOOD, AND MUSIC

**First United Methodist Church
Grassy Lot**

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

150
YEARS
1875-2025



BLOCK PARTY

OCTOBER 11TH, 2025
10 AM - 2 PM

CELEBRATE WITH US IN ON SATURDAY!

ENJOY **FOOD TRUCKS**, **LOCAL VENDORS**,
GAMES WITH PRIZES, **FACE PAINTING**,
MUSIC, AND **FUN FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!**

THEN JOIN US ON SUNDAY FOR A SPECIAL
ANNIVERSARY WORSHIP SERVICE AT FIRST
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH —
FOLLOWED BY A FREE COMMUNITY LUNCH!

SUNDAY SERVICE & LUNCH

OCTOBER 12TH, 2025
10 AM - 1 PM

SEPTEMBER 2025

First United Methodist Church

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Labor Day — OFFICE CLOSED — 	2 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 11:00am Food Pantry 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	3 9:30am Patchwork Friends 1pm Bible Study 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir 5:30pm We Gather	4 10:00am Ladies Day Out 6:00pm PEO Meeting	5 11:00am Food Pantry	6 7:30am Garden Club 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
7 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	8 10:00am Sara Fernandez Bible Study 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	9 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 11:00am Food Pantry 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	10 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir	11	12 11:00am Food Pantry	13 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
14 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship 11:00am Coffee Fellowship	15 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	16 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 11:00am Food Pantry 5:00pm Solos Meeting 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	17 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir	18 12:00pm Ladies Day Out 4:00pm Leadership Team Mtg.	19 11:00am Food Pantry	20 8:00am Comm. Breakfast 10am Moonlight Quilters
21 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	22 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal 	23 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 11:00am Food Pantry 5:30pm Moonlight Quilters 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal	24 3:30pm Silver Chimes Reh. 4:30pm Chancel Choir	25	26 11:00am Food Pantry	27 8:00am Comm. Breakfast
28 9:00am Sunday School 10:00am Worship	29 7pm Broadstreet Rehearsal	30 7:15am Rotary Club Meeting 11:00am Food Pantry 6:30pm Soliloquy Rehearsal				

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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
J.D. Daniel - Organist	
Steve Rossi - Sound Tech	
Josh Henn - 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, & Titusville HS)</i>
Cuba Missions <i>(Santa Cruz Methodist Church in Holguin, Cuba)</i>	Stop Gap Community
Food Pantry	Dinners
Good Shepherd <i>(Funds to help the community with bills & other needs)</i>	Shoe Ministry
	Undue Medical Debt

MUSIC MINISTRIES

Church Choir	Holiday Cantatas
Evensong Services	Special Concerts
Handbell Choirs	

FAMILY MINISTRIES

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

NURTURE MINISTRIES

United Women of Faith	Bible Studies
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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

Website: www.fumctitusville.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/682694095204027

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

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

[UChscOeLDe-wGkXHftvzGX9Q](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChscOeLDe-wGkXHftvzGX9Q)

