

CHAPEL CHATTER

To Make Disciples of Jesus Christ and Impact the Community Through Faith and Action



Growing up in the Philippines, family dinner time is not just our daily ritual, but an opportunity to connect with each other on a deeper level. Where everyone seems to be in a hurry, we sit down and before we eat, we pray together. My parents taught me this important Christian virtue: “the family that prays together, stays together.”

There is power in praying together! However, there is a tendency among Christians to think of prayer gathering as an extracurricular activity in the life of the church. It's good to have, but not important enough to join, something you briefly tack on to a meeting before you get down to the real business. And there are a growing number of Christians who view prayer meetings as optional. That is why on July 15th, we will be having a Churchwide Prayer Gathering, 7:00pm at Plank Chapel UMC sanctuary. The gathering is open to everyone including church members and worshippers of Bethel UMC and Plank Chapel UMC.

The Bible tells us that praying together is as vital and important as praying individually. The practice of praying together is deeply rooted in Scripture. In the Old Testament, communal prayer is evident in various instances, such as when the Israelites gathered to seek God's guidance and deliverance. In the New Testament, Jesus Himself underscores the importance of collective prayer. In Matthew 8:19-20, He states, "Again, I tell you truly that if two of you on the earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three gather together in My name, there am I with them." Jesus taught His disciples to pray using plural pronouns: "Our father... give us... forgive us...bring us..." (Matthew 6:9-13). In other words, Christians have always prayed together. It is part of who we are!

Praying together enables Christians to claim Christ's promise of power through shared prayer. I thought about the image of geese migrating. They fly in formation as a flock. The combined force of their wings as they share the work of cutting through the air moves the flock more smoothly and swiftly than if each individual bird flew alone. Sharing together in prayer gives added power to the prayers of each person. Jesus promised that where two or three are gathered together in His name, He would be there among them. Praying together is built on this promise of His presence and His power.

Praying together connects us with one another and nurtures a healthy interdependence within the church. These prayers become part of who we are at the deepest levels of our being. This shared experience strengthens our identity as part of the church community and in turn, strengthens the church for its mission and ministry. In a world that emphasizes individualism and independence, the experience of praying together builds community and encourages a climate of mutual support. When we come together to pray with one another, we create bridges and community among the people of God.

Finally, praying together is one of the ways we bear one another's burdens. In our lives as Christians, we often face challenges that can feel overwhelming. We learn from Galatians 6:2 that we are called to lift each other up, especially in times of pains, struggles and challenges. Praying together helps others carry their troubles and as a result, we display Christ's love in action. Praying together promotes a sense of community, showing that we are not alone in our trials. We have each other to lean on, providing encouragement, strength and hope, which can uplift our spirits tremendously.

In closing, I hope that you will make every effort to attend the July 15th Churchwide Gathering. I also encourage you to regularly attend the Awakenings and Sunday Worship Services, and Wednesday Online Prayer Meeting every Wednesday, 7:00pm. Let us prioritize praying together! Through prayer, we as a church will overcome and move mountains. Through our collective prayers, we will be fruitful and flourishing. Trust in the Lord as He is always listening to and tending to our every need and request through sincere faith.

LET US PRAY TOGETHER! COME JOIN US!

CHURCHWIDE
Prayer
GATHERING

Wednesday, 7:00pm July 15, 2026
Plank Chapel United Methodist Church
3047 Bobbitt Road, Kittrell, NC 27544

MIRACLE SUNDAY UPDATE

As of today, churches in the North Carolina Conference raised \$221,335.74 contributions and commitments to the Miracle Sunday for The Endowment for Theological Education. Together, United Methodist around the world are raising up new generations of clergy leaders through this worldwide offering.

New Disciple Members of Plank Chapel UMC



The mission of Plank Chapel UMC is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ and impact the community through faith in action." On June 21, 2026, we welcomed our new disciple members of Plank Chapel UMC-- Joni Lynne Ayers, Mary Beth Jones & Charles Hall Jones Jr. Praise the Lord!

ACOLYTE TRAINING

Pastor Edgar will lead an Acolyte Training on July 30th, 2:30pm in the sanctuary. Please contact him to join other children and youth who already registered to become Acolyte.

**PLANK CHAPEL UMC
CHOIR**

Choir Practice is every Wednesday, 7:00pm. If you are musically inclined and willing to offer your gifts and talents, we would love to have you join the choir! Please contact Janet Bobbitt if you are interested.

NEW BOOK CLUB

Plank Chapel UMC is birthing a New Book Club. We meet every third Sunday of the month. Our next meeting will be on July 19th, 4:15pm in the Fellowship Hall. We are studying together the "Twelve Extraordinary Women" by Rev. John MacArthur. All who are interested are welcome to join.

DINNER CHURCH

Bethel UMC is hosting a Dinner Church on Saturday, July 18th, 6:00pm @ [4193 Fairport Road, Kittrell, NC](#). All are invited. Bring your families & friends!

Why do people attend church?

People go to church for a variety of spiritual, personal, and social reasons. While individual motivations differ, the most common reasons include:

- **Spiritual Connection:** The primary motivator for most attendees is the desire to feel closer to God, participate in corporate worship, and receive spiritual nourishment.
- **Community and Support:** Congregations serve as "second families," offering social connection, emotional support in times of sorrow, and a built-in network of like-minded individuals.
- **Moral Foundation:** Many parents attend to pass on their values and provide their children with a strong moral and ethical framework.
- **Guidance and Education:** Services provide teaching and guidance on how to interpret scripture, live better lives, and navigate personal challenges.
- **Service and Ministry:** It provides a structured environment to use one's spiritual gifts, volunteer, and give back to the local community. While some attend out of habit or a sense of religious obligation, the majority find that gathering provides a unique sense of peace, accountability, and purpose.

PROJECT BE A BLESSING

"Project Be A Blessing" is a new outreach ministry of Plank Chapel UMC with the main goal of being the hands and feet of Christ to foster children in the community and church members who are in nursing homes and homebound. Currently, there are more than 10,000 children and teenagers in the foster care system in North Carolina. To support this ministry, please make your check payable to Plank Chapel UMC and note: "Project Be A Blessing". For more info, please contact Peggy Hernandez (Lay Leader) @ (252) 204-3045.

OUTWARD WITNESS TEAM

Last May 2026, the Outward Witness Team of Plank Chapel UMC gave donations to the Community Partners of Hope and Miracle Sunday Initiative. Also, the Outward Witness Team in partnership with area churches coordinated the Kittrell Revival Mission Project on May 16th at Plank Chapel UMC Fellowship Hall. Together, we packed sixty mission boxes for distribution to those in need and vulnerable people in the community.



Staff-Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

Plank Chapel UMC Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

Plank Chapel UMC's Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) is here to build and maintain a strong positive relationship between staff and congregation to fulfill the mission of the church "to make disciples of Jesus Christ and impact the community through faith in action.

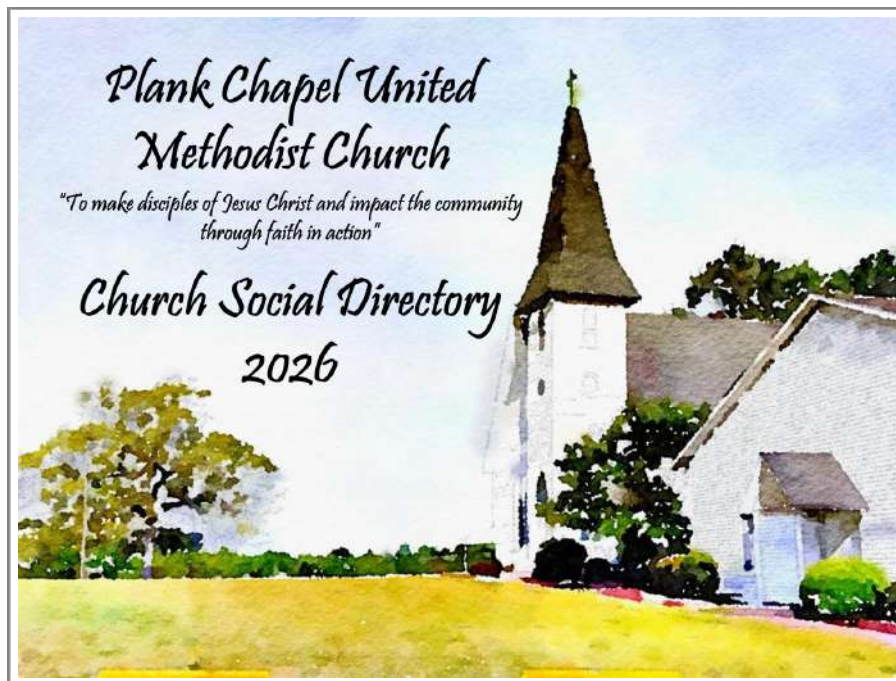
According to the UMC Book of Discipline 2024 (§ 258), "The committee shall assist the pastor(s) and staff in assessing their gifts, maintaining holistic health and work-life balance, and setting priorities for leadership and service." The PPRC works with Pastor Edgar and is devoted to encourage, strengthen, support the pastor, church staff and their families. It is the committee's charge to openly communicate with the pastor, church staff and congregation.

Therefore, we encourage the congregation to reach out to PPRC with any questions or concerns so that might be addressed in an orderly fashion. Please reference the PPRC members below.

Respectfully,

Ron Gustafson
Chairperson
Plank Chapel UMC
PPRC

Ron Gustafson (203) 641-2889
rongus72@gmail.com
Beth Heaton (252) 425-5565
Seh754@yahoo.com
Kris Edwards (252) 425-5902
Kristen2305@hotmail.com
Olivia Kemp (252) 432-9236
oaktree@centurylink.net
Larraine Abbott (252) 432-4748
jtalsa@centurylink.net
Mike Ranes (252) 762-8840
mhranes@hotmail.com
Lay Leader: Peggy Hernandez (252)



Plank Chapel UMC Social Directory 2026 is ready! Copies are available at the back of the sanctuary. The new church social directory contains birthdays and anniversaries. Special **appreciation** to Donald Rose McGhee, Pat Edwards, Scott Ritchey & Ryan Rowland for completing this wonderful project. Praise the Lord!

**Opportunity for children and youth at Plank Chapel
United Methodist Church:**

***Become an Acolyte
for 11 a.m. worship service***

Acolyte training prepares children and youth to assist in worship by lighting and extinguishing the altar candles. This sacred duty symbolizes bringing the "Light of Christ" into the service and carrying it out into the world.

Training to begin this month

**Contact Pastor Edgar to join other
children and youth already
registered to become Acolytes**

**919-418-0682
edejesus@nccumc.org**

CHANGE BUCKET

Change Bucket for July 2026 has been designated for Hinton Rural Center (#731372)-- a retreat and mission outreach agency of the Southeastern Jurisdiction that offers lodging and conference facilities for personal and family renewal and group retreats. Hinton also serves the community with the support of mission teams and local volunteers through its Safe & Healthy Home Repair and firewood ministries. For more information, please contact info@hintoncenter.org or visit its website: hintoncenter.org.

AWAKENINGS

Renew, refresh and revive your spirit as we worship our Awesome God at "Awakenings" every Sunday, 8:00am-9:00am (except third Sunday of the month). "Awakenings" offers contemporary music, come-as-you-are setting, relevant Bible-based conversation and a good cup of coffee! The "Awakenings" will meet on July 5th, 12th & 26th.



WEDNESDAY ONLINE PRAYER MEETING

Prayer Warriors are invited to join the Wednesday Online Prayer Meeting every week from 7:00pm-7:30pm. We will meet on July 1st, 8th, 22nd & 29th. On July 15th, there will be Churchwide Prayer Gathering from 7:00pm-8:00pm @ Plank Chapel UMC Sanctuary (In-Person & Online) .

Please **see the Zoom** link below.

Edgar Raymund A. DeJesus is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/96731072214?pwd=z6O3HHRhaCw13h03XmuULTm0Y9A4RJ.1>

Meeting ID: 967 3107 2214

Prayer Requests

Bessie Newman, Tim Smith, Fawn Westmoreland, Kerry Alexander, Debbie Fleming, James Satterwhite, Diane Del Conte, Karin & David Driver, Jay Fuller, Susie Beal, Marvin Daniel, Donna McDaniel, Arvelle Abbott, Mike Smith, Martha Rowland, Jeanette Weaver, Karen Lee Driver, Edward Woodlief, Bryant Bobbitt, Wayne Stegall, Family of John Rogers, Family of Margie Pendergrass, Family of David Howell, Family of Nancy Frazier, Kittrell community, our nation, earthquake in Venezuela, peace in the Middle East and the world. Shut-Ins: Sammy Burgess, Frances Beckham, Tim Smith, Martha Rowland, Ben & Jackie Brown, Virgie Eaves, Freddie McGhee & Frances Roberts. (For prayer requests, please call 919-418-0682 or email Pastor Edgar @ edejesus@nccumc.org.)

Plank Chapel UMC is featured in the NC Rural Center July 2026 Newsletter.

Please check the link: <https://www.ncruralcenter.org/2026/06/plank-chapel-umc/>

Scattering the Seeds of Faith in Vance County



Plank Chapel UMC has stood on the same spot on Bobbitt Road in Kittrell for over 125 years, but the church's history goes back much further. A July 10, 1780, journal entry by Francis Asbury, a preacher John Wesley appointed to share the message of Methodism, mentions a local church service with 60 people in attendance. From that journal entry, Plank Chapel can trace its beginning.

Centuries later, the church holds on to its history while it also builds bridges for the future. Two years ago, Plank Chapel completed the Rural Center's **Connect Church** program. This **Faith in Rural Communities** initiative helps churches create missional engagement projects.

As a result of Connect Church, Plank Chapel strengthened an ongoing program, The Journey, for kids ages 5-18 and also devised another program for adults called The Gathering. Both programs were created to increase a sense of community belonging and foster connection

**GIVING FLOWERS IN
HONOR OR IN MEMORY OF
LOVED ONES**

You are invited to generously give flowers on Sunday Worship Services for God's glory and in honor or in memory of your loved ones. Please contact Judy Wilson @ Judith9563@gmail.com or (252) 492-0624.

UNITED METHODIST MEN

The United Methodist Men set this year's BBQ Sale on Friday, November 6th. Please mark your calendar ahead. Also, the UMM Breakfast Fellowship will be held on Sunday, July 19th, 8:00am-9:00am in the Fellowship Hall. All men are invited!

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

The United Women in Faith are composed of women who are "powerful, fearless force" driven by God's love and united in sisterhood. With a focus on women, children and youth, we act for justice and transform communities. This month's meeting of the United Women in Faith will be held on Sunday, August 16th, 2026



Fresh Expressions VBS Summer Immersions

Have you been curious about Fresh Expressions? Throughout the summer, you can choose to drop in to another church's Fresh Expression as a guest and see what a Fresh Expression looks like... This exploratory summer experience is an easy way to determine what is possible for your church!

Here's what you need to do:

- Find a Fresh Expression on the sign-up that interests you.
- Sign up on the Lighthouse Congregations website — any UMC is eligible to attend as a guest! Please do not hesitate if your church is not a Lighthouse Congregation.
- Bring friends and experience a Fresh Expression.
- Stick around afterward to ask questions and learn how to start your own Fresh Expression.

It's that easy! We hope to see you this summer at these fun and immersive events!

SENIOR CIRCLE

Senior Circle is a wonderful way to meet new friends, build relationships and have fun among fellow Christians! We meet every third Wednesday of the month with a program and a wonderful luncheon fellowship @ Plank Chapel UMC Fellowship Hall. This month's Senior Circle will be held on Wednesday, July 15th, 10:00am in the Fellowship Hall. All are invited!

BLESSING BOX MINISTRY

Plank Chapel UMC saw a great need in the community for those vulnerable to have access to the food they cannot always afford. And so, we launched the Blessing Box Ministry in 2022 and encouraged church members as well as the community to help keep the box stocked with non-perishable food items for those in need. Also, please check your book shelves so that we can offer children and adult books as a lending library. We give thanks to God for your generous gifts and support for this outreach ministry

ACOLYTE TRAINING

Pastor Edgar will lead an Acolyte Training on July 30th, 2:30pm in the sanctuary. Please contact him to join other children and youth who already registered to become Acolyte.



Immersion Details and Descriptions

Come Again, New Bern Community Respite Care (*capacity 10 per gathering- multiple dates*) at Trinity UMC (New Bern)- Come Again is a place for people living with dementia to connect with each other and volunteers in moments of joy while care partners are provided time to themselves. Based on Respite for All, this intentional social club lifts up everyone's strengths in a supportive, creative and purposeful way. We all have something to give, and we all have fun! Learn more at <http://www.newbernrespite.org/>

Next Move Fellowship (*capacity 10*) with Benson Memorial - a board game church immersion at "The Kitchen Table" that offers a wide variety of board games and a "game tender" who can help the group decide what to play.

Messy Church (*capacity 10-20*) at Trinity UMC (New Bern)-Messy Church is an interactive worship experience for the whole family where kids AND parents or grandparents come together to experience music & games, fun teaching about God, and dinner. Find hope, have fun, and connect with new friends, God, and your family! For more info, see <https://trinitynewbern.churchcenter.com/pages/messy-church>

Oasis (*capacity 10-20*) - A Community of Asbury UMC- Oasis is a Fresh Expression for people at the intersection of faith and mental health, offering a low-barrier space of belonging and honest conversation. The community gathers twice monthly for game nights and story sharing, welcoming both those experiencing mental health challenges and those supporting others. The demonstration event would model an Oasis Story gathering and share how the ministry developed at Asbury.

Book Club (*capacity 10-20*) with Zebulon UMC- We host a community book club that meets at Creative Cup, a local coffee shop. Because of different people's schedules, we hold two meetings each month—one on the third Wednesday at 10:30 a.m. and one on the third Thursday at 6:30 p.m. Both groups read the same book. Community members have joined as a result of advertising as well as members inviting others.

Gaming Church (*capacity more than 30*) at Saint Paul UMC in Rocky Mount-Gaming Church is a Fresh Expression built around gaming as a common tabletop, creating community through play, fellowship, and shared experience. The immersion begins with a hands-on game where participants learn and play together, guided by appointed "game pastors" who help make the experience accessible to all. Following gameplay, participants gather for a brief "Jesus story" and reflection that connects themes from the game to faith, reminding us that Christ can be encountered wherever people gather around the table in community. This immersion offers an opportunity for play, fun, fellowship, and belonging.

Journey (*capacity more than 30*) at Plank Chapel UMC- "Journey" is a safe and caring space where children and youth (ages 5-18) in the community can encounter the love of Christ Jesus through "becoming, belonging and believing". Meeting once-a-month, activities include music, games, food, team-building and storytelling.

Movie Church (*capacity more than 30*) at Jarvis UMC- This Fresh Expression focuses on building community and connection through shared meals, conversation, and movies. Gatherings create space for belonging, with informal interaction during the film and community-building elements like raffles that highlight ministry connections. While centered on the unhoused population, all are welcome. It offers a warm, welcoming place to connect, enjoy community, and spend time indoors while waiting for shelter services to reopen.

Journey

Journey Family Picnic

Sunday, July 26

4 p.m. to ???

Celebrating America's 250th

Featuring

Outdoor Games:

Volleyball * Basketball * Badminton
Pickleball * Four Square * Corn Hole

Music * Food * Christian Fellowship

Special Guests: Military Speakers

Please RSVP By Monday, July 20 to:

Lora Young 336-504-7247 lhy13@hotmail.com

Or, Ron Gustafson 203-641-2889 rongus72@gmail.com

Journey children 5 to 18 and their family members are invited to attend the picnic!

(Please bring the included Back-To-School wish list form with you)

Journey is a safe and caring space where children and youth can encounter the love of Christ Jesus through "becoming, belonging and believing." Monthly activities include story-telling, devotionals, games, music and food.



Back-To-School Wish List

As part of our Journey program, we would like to offer our Journey children and youth a "back-to-school" wish list item that they need this school year.

Examples: shoes, clothing, school supplies, backpacks.
NO electronics, please

Child's Name _____ (age) _____

Wish list item: _____



June 17, 2026 Senior Circle



Pastor Edgar presented a devotion based on Hebrews 10:23-25 after Faye Woodlief opened the meeting. He spoke of the importance of Christian fellowship and how it impacts our daily lives both physically and spiritually. He spoke of the importance of encouraging one another as Scripture says ".....toward love and good deeds". As the early apostles gathered together for strength and wisdom during times of joy and sorrow, so should present day Christians come together sharing their beliefs in a God who is faithful so we may be strengthened to carry His message of love and salvation to the world.

Our guest speaker, Jennifer Goldman, a doctor of audiology (hearing specialist), had a message for all of us about the importance of being able to hear, something many of us take for granted. Her words seemed to reinforce Pastor Edgar's message about the importance of fellowship. She explained that hearing loss is associated with social isolation, depression, anxiety, falls and other injuries as well as cognitive decline and dementia. She explained many of the causes of hearing loss which may increase with age. Doctor Goldman recommended an annual hearing test often provided by family doctors or local certified audiologists. These tests are also provided for free at her office, Hearing Life, located on Graham Avenue in Henderson. Three of her patients attending Senior Circle can vouch for the fact that hearing loss can be treated and hearing aids make a tremendous difference in their daily lives and relationships.



The June meeting gave us a new appreciation for the gift of hearing as we gathered to listen to each other, to celebrate joys and share sorrows as we prayed for the family of John Rogers who passed away this month. We will miss him and his cheerful, loving smile.

Thinking about hearing.....as the program came to a close, Conrad and Janet headed to the piano and started playing and singing and it became clear we have a room full of musicians in our group whose music has lifted our hearts, added joy to our get togethers and enabled us to worship our God in song. Thank you for sharing the sound of music. CONRAD AND JANET PASTOR EDGAR JANET, CONRAD, NANCY JOYCE



CELEBRATING

We are glad Richard Roberts is back with us after recovering from a fractured hip. We missed you.



CELEBRATING

HAPPY
93RD
BIRTHDAY,
JOYCE ROBERTS



CELEBRATING
FAYE WOODLIEF
AND ALL SHE DOES FOR
SENIOR CIRCLE
WITH A SPECIAL GIFT
FROM
JANET BOBBITT

WITH LOVE, PRAYERS AND BEST WISHES,
YOUR FRIENDS AT SENIOR CIRCLE



Center for Leadership Excellence

North Carolina Conference

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Edgar,

Join us this July in Cary, NC, for a Safer Sanctuaries training with Michele Pavelich.

This training will give you the theological grounding, practical tools, and hands-on experience to help your congregation not only *have* a policy but also make it central to the life of the church.

The first 35 registrants whose church has not yet received a free copy of the new Safer Sanctuaries book will receive one at the event. We still have a few unclaimed copies available—register today to claim yours.



**SAFER
SANCTUARIES**

Nurturing Trust within Faith Communities



Good news! Plank Chapel UMC will be featured as impact story in the NC Rural Center's July 2026 Newsletter highlighting the rich history of the church, its involvement in Connect Church and where the church is heading for the next 250 years (as we celebrate America's 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence). Pastor Edgar & Scott Ritchey met last June 25th w/ Betsy Greer, Communications Associate of the NC Rural Center. Praise the Lord!

Love Boldly
Serve Joyfully
Lead Courageously



AC 2026: Final Wrap-Up

The North Carolina Annual Conference convened in Greenville, NC, from June 18 to 20, 2026. 1,013 people attended the conference, which focused on the theme “*Serve Joyfully*,” part of the vision statement for The United Methodist Church. Bishop Connie Mitchell Shelton presided over the NC Annual Conference as the episcopal leader.

On Wednesday, June 17, pre-conference events were held for clergy, laity, and the public. Rev. Tobi Nguyen, Rev. Dr. Glenn Stallsmith, Angelica Acosta Garnett, Doug Thie, Caleb Parker, Rev. Dr. Tim Catlett, Rev. Hope Ledbetter-Bock, and Rev. Jenifer Swindell led engaging Learning Labs to equip, inspire, and connect participants around the heart of disciple making, leader forming, and peace building.

The official business of the annual conference commenced on June 18, starting with executive sessions for clergy and laity. The laity session heard stories of laity serving joyfully in ministry and their daily lives. In the clergy session, members approved the ordination of 10 elders and the commissioning of 7 persons (3 deacons and 4 elders).

Conference attendees were encouraged to wear black in support of Thursdays in Black, a global movement for a world without rape and violence.

Bishop Shelton officially convened the annual conference and invited members to join together in worship, with music led by the Haymount UMC praise band. Bishop Shelton preached on Galatians 5 and the fruit of the Spirit, with a reflection on joy. “Joy is rarely private. Joy gathers. Joy connects. Joy creates belonging,” said Bishop Shelton. Opening worship concluded with Deacons and Deacon Candidates serving communion to attendees in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Order of Deacons.

The opening plenary session was called to order on Thursday afternoon, including the tradition of singing “And Are We Yet Alive”. Following the approval of the Conference rules, Conference Youth leadership presented a mock resolution, “Is a Hot Dog a Sandwich?” to help members engage with the structure of Robert’s Rules of Order.

Several ministries and committees shared updates and reports about how they are serving joyfully. Rev. Beth Hood, Assistant to the Bishop for the Office of Clergy Life, led the conference in a celebration of the 70th anniversary of the ordination of women in The United Methodist Church, wearing a bright red sparkly boa, red heels, and a sparkly red star wand. Rev. Hood noted that in the North Carolina Conference, 43% of clergy are women.

John Hall, Conference Lay Leader, brought forth a report on the 2025 resolution, “A Call for Conference LGBTQ+ Ministry Team,” which was referred to the Connectional Table and Rules Committee. The Connectional Table and Structure Review Committee approved the committee for inclusion on the Race Equity & Justice Ministries Team.

The NC Conference also celebrated the official federal recognition of the Lumbee Nation, the 575th tribe to be recognized. Lumbee Ambassadors wore traditional dress and sang “Amazing Grace,” followed by John Oxendine performing a Lumbee “Honor Song.”

Native American Ministries Committee members shared a history of the growth of United Methodist churches among Lumbee people and honored Lumbee clergy and laity. Panthia Locklear also announced the recipients of this year's Gary Wayne Locklear Mission Endowment, which supports ministries and outreach efforts that help others and share the love of Christ in memory of Gary Wayne Locklear.

Following the dinner break, attendees reconvened for an evening plenary session, with the joyful sounds of pastor's kids (PKs) playing games and hanging out with adult PKs in the Wiggle Space in the background. Rev. Dennis Peay presented the Statistician's report, three resolutions were brought forth by the Resolution Committee Chair, Rev. William Sabiston, and the nominations report was approved as amended. After the plenary, the celebration of the Lumbee People continued with the ice cream social.

Friday morning's plenary session began with Rev. Dr. Susan Henry-Crowe telling the story of the Social Principles, while volunteer artists worked on the stage behind her, creating art to represent each section of the newly revised Social Principles.

The Connectional Ministries report embodied serving joyfully with a fun presentation led by Rev. Ismael Ruiz-Millan and John Hall, Conference Lay Leader. Laughter filled the exhibit hall as the youth updated the conference on the various events framed by a tongue-in-cheek Weekend Update. Other Connectional Ministries celebrations included presentations of the Peacebuilding Awards, BeUMC Awards, Excellence in Evangelism Awards, and One Matters Awards to churches, clergy, and laity.

We remembered 20 clergy and 16 spouses at the All Saints Celebration and Memorial Service. Rev. Allen Bingham, pastor at Haymount UMC, shared a message entitled "May Our Joy Be Complete." He explained that the path to complete joy is to serve other people and added, "These pastors and their spouses have lived lives of service to other people."

The Friday afternoon session began with the celebration of 19 clergy retirees, followed by a Juneteenth Celebration full of powerful words by Rev. Kennedy Gray and Rev. Justin Coleman and inspiring music by the University UMC Jazz combo. As all Black clergy and laity gathered around the stage, Rev. Rhonda Grant Jordan said, "This is the beauty of our people. This is the strength of our story. This is the living testimony of Juneteenth."

The financial reports were presented by the Conference Council on Finance & Administration, the Insurance Committee, the Board of Pension, and the Commission on Equitable Compensation on Friday afternoon. The proposed 2028 budget is a 4.31 percent decrease, or almost \$529,000, from the 2027 budget. Conference members approved the motion to adopt all of the reports as presented in an almost unanimous vote. The Joint Committee on Clergy Medical Leave and the Board of Trustees were approved as written in the Conference Workbook.

On Thursday evening and Friday afternoon, 11 resolutions were presented to the body. On Saturday morning, celebration of the Lumbee Nation continued as Rev. Jim Jones, a member of the Lumbee tribe, offered highlights of connections between the Lumbee and the NC Conference. Rev. Shawn Blackwelder and Bishop Sam Rodman dialogued and shared information about the potential Full Communion Agreement between The United Methodist Church and the Episcopal Church. Bishop Rodman reminded us that entering into Full Communion does not mean we will all do things the same way, but rather, that we would be able to learn from each other and serve together in shared worship, shared ministry, and shared mission to the world.

Bishop Shelton expressed gratitude for the district superintendents and cabinet, prior to the fixing of appointments. Rev. Dr. Gray Southern, the Conference Secretary, along with Bishop Shelton, closed the plenary session by thanking all the staff and volunteers for their dedication and time in making the gathering possible.

After the conclusion of business, 41 people publicly proclaimed their calling to ministry during the Ordering of Ministry Service. The Right Rev. Michael Curry delivered a powerful message centered on a scripture from Exodus. Curry reminded the candidates, "When you do the work of God, it is God working through you. You do not have the power to do the work you have been given. If you think it is your own, you are going to make a fool of yourself. There is power in God's purpose for your life."

In the spirit of ecumenism for the Ordering of Ministry Service, the laying on of hands for ordination included AMEZ Bishop Darin Moore, UMC retired Bishop Paul Leeland, and UMC resident Bishop Shelton. Episcopal Bishops Rodman and Curry stood in affirmation for the ordination of the elders. Throughout the conference, many mindful health and mission opportunities were provided, including Blueprint for Wellness Screenings and a collection of almost 2,500 UMCOR's School Kits.

A special offering supporting The Endowment Fund for Theological Education in Regional Conferences outside the United States was received during the opening worship service and the Ordering of Ministry service. The total from Miracle Sunday and the Annual Conference Session offerings has exceeded \$205,000. Learn more about the special offering and ways to give at nccumc.org/ac2026/special-offerings/.

Data and Statistics:

- Membership for 2025 was 136,130, down 6,255 from 2024.
- Average attendance at the principal weekly worship service stands at 28,946, down 11 from 2024.
- Professions or reaffirmations of faith for 2025: 1,166, up 11 from 2024.
- Adults and young adults in small groups for 2025: 1,818, up 140 from 2024.
- Worshipers engaged in mission for 2025: 32,181, up 2,070 from 2024.
- The Conference approved a budget of \$11,279,314 for 2028, an 4.31% decrease from the 2027 budget.
- The Annual Conference voted to formally close 10 churches.
- 19 clergy entered retired status.
- 10 elders were ordained, with an average age of 37.
- 4 elders and 3 deacons were commissioned, with an average age of 34.
- 9 local pastors were licensed, with an average age of 47.
- 2 deaconesses were commissioned.
- 13 lay ministers were certified.
- Annual Conference 2027 will be June 16-19 in Greenville, NC.

Recordings of all plenary sessions and worship services are available on the [NC Conference app](#) or at nccumc.org/ac2026/watch/. You can view photos from the three-day conference online in the [Annual Conference 2026 album on Flickr](#). The final PDF of the Resolutions is available at nccumc.org/ac2026/resolutions.