

# THE BEACON

A Newsletter for Benson Memorial United Methodist Church

May 3, 2026

## Making a Difference for Jesus

by Pastor Alan Felton

I have recently been writing about how it seems most people are looking for three things from a church: *connection*, *meaning*, and *the chance to make a difference*. In last week's Beacon, I offered some thoughts on meaning. Let's turn our attention to the subject of making a difference this week.

A question that I sometimes encourage churches to ask themselves is this: If this church closed tomorrow, would anyone notice? I've served some places where the answer was a resounding "yes." But unfortunately, I have also been in some churches where the reply was a painful "no." The answers were not based on the size of the church or the health of its budget; rather, whether a church would be missed was largely determined by how much it was involved outside its walls. Did the community feel a positive impact because of the church's work, or was the church merely

for those who gathered on Sundays and then went away until the next week?

United Methodists believe that "the local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society" (*Book of Discipline 2020/2024*, p. 149). The church does not exist for its own sake. The church is a servant to others. We follow Jesus, who said, "I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness" (John 12:46).

To say this another way, the church ought to make a difference. We seek to do that at Benson Memorial by living the organizational values we have determined best guide us as disciples of Christ. Those values—**welcome, diversity, community, discipleship, open-mindedness, and justice**—describe who we are and how we want to grow in the Spirit. These are more than merely nice-sounding words;



instead, they are descriptors of how we want to make a difference in the world.

As members of Benson Memorial, we live these values individually and collectively. Each of us can be committed to seeing that these values take root in our lives, just as we are dedicated to realizing them together as a church. Living these values may not make any of us candidates for inclusion in the history books, but there is no doubt that if we follow Jesus and live these values through concrete action, our community will be a better place. We will indeed make a difference in the name of Jesus.

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[facebook.com/bensonmemorialumc/](https://facebook.com/bensonmemorialumc/) | [instagram.com/bensonmemorialumc/](https://instagram.com/bensonmemorialumc/)

## Thanks for a Successful Clothing Drive

Your donations of clothing, shoes, and personal care items filled 12 large bags and totes as well as five boxes. This bounty was delivered to the Arise program center Monday, May 27. Robin Harrington, volunteer and outreach manager at Arise, expressed her thanks as did the program participants who unloaded the car. Your generosity and care for others is greatly appreciated!

— Dee Springsteen



## Adult Fellowship

*May 14, 2026, Trip to the Farmers' Market*

Please plan to meet at the church by 11:15 a.m. if you need a ride or can offer one. We will gather for lunch at the State Farmers' Market Restaurant, and afterward you'll be free to browse and shop. This will be our final Adult Fellowship gathering until September 10.

**ATTENTION**

### OUT OF THE OFFICE NOTICE

Pastor Alan will be out of town between May 1–10 and unable to respond to phone calls, emails, or texts during that time. Pastor Katelyn and other staff members may be contacted during this time if you have any need to reach out.

## A Friendly Reminder for Scheduling Church Events

We are grateful for the many ways our lay leaders help keep the life of the church active and engaging. As you plan meetings and events, we kindly ask that you remember to complete the calendar request form on our website: <https://bensonmemorialumc.org/member-resources.html#online-forms>.

Additionally, if a meeting is canceled or details change, please notify the church office at [office@bensonmemorialumc.org](mailto:office@bensonmemorialumc.org) as soon as possible. This allows us to adjust schedules and avoid any confusion.

Our calendar request form also includes helpful questions that may address details you might not otherwise think to include when scheduling.

Thank you for your help!

# SPIRIT FEST

## Italian Lunch

All are welcome!

Join us for a joyful time of food and fellowship!

**SUNDAY  
MAY 17  
11:15AM - 1:00 PM  
FELLOWSHIP HALL**

Please bring a side dish or dessert to share.

**INVITE A FRIEND!**

The church will provide an Italian lunch featuring lasagna & spaghetti with meatballs.

The kitchen will accept foods to keep warm or cool beginning at 8:00.

**BENSON MEMORIAL UMC**



**Our Summer Book Club starts soon so it's time to get reading and prepare to enjoy discussions of three great books.**

**Monday, June 29, 6:00 p.m., Youth Center**

**[Theo of Golden: A Novel](#) by Allen Levi**

This best-selling novel explores themes of generosity, community, and relationships as it follows a stranger named Theo who becomes fascinated with the pencil-drawn portraits of people he has never met hanging in a coffee shop in the small Southern town of Golden. Theo purchases the portraits with the intent to give each person depicted their portrait and learn the stories of their lives.

**Wednesday, July 15, 6:00 p.m., Youth Center**

**[Marsha: The Joy and Defiance of Marsha P. Johnson](#) by Tourmaline**

This joyful biography of a legendary activist, artist, and music doesn't shy away from the difficulties faced by its pioneer of a subject, Marsha P. Johnson. There at the beginning of the LGBTQ rights movement in 1969, Marsha chronicles Johnson's upbringing in New Jersey, her life on the streets of New York, her powerful work as an activist and inspiration to those around her—and how her faith in Jesus shaped her from the very beginning.

**Wednesday, August 19, 6:00 p.m., Youth Center**

**[Mother Emanuel: Two Centuries of Race, Resistance, and Forgiveness in One Charleston Church](#) by Kevin Sack**

This startling work of nonfiction traces the history of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston as part of a study of Black life in Charleston through the Civil War and Civil Rights as well as the horror that unfolded at Mother Emanuel in June 2015 when the church was the site of an awful act of racially inspired violence during a Bible study where nine were killed.

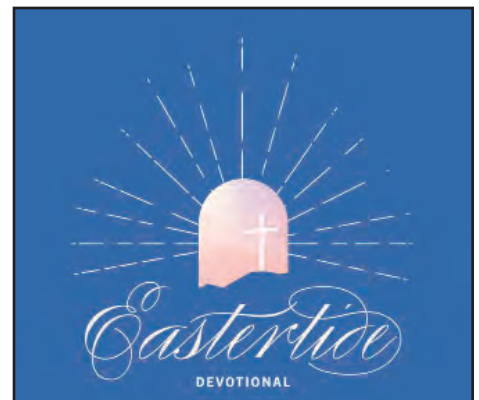
## Downtown Raleigh Racial History Tour

Discover the rich African American heritage woven into the heart of Raleigh on a short downtown walking tour. Explore significant landmarks, including [Shaw University](#), one of the oldest historically Black universities in the South, and the [Pope House Museum](#), which tells the story of one of Raleigh's most prominent Black citizens. Hear little-known stories that may surprise you and deepen your understanding of Raleigh's past.

We will be carpooling from the church at 3:30 pm. If you want to drive directly there, we'll be meeting our tour guide at the southeast corner of S. Wilmington St. and E. Cabarrus St. (put "Lincoln Theatre" in your GPS to make it easier). There is plenty of street parking as well as a deck nearby.

**Join us on Sunday, May 3, at 4 p.m.**

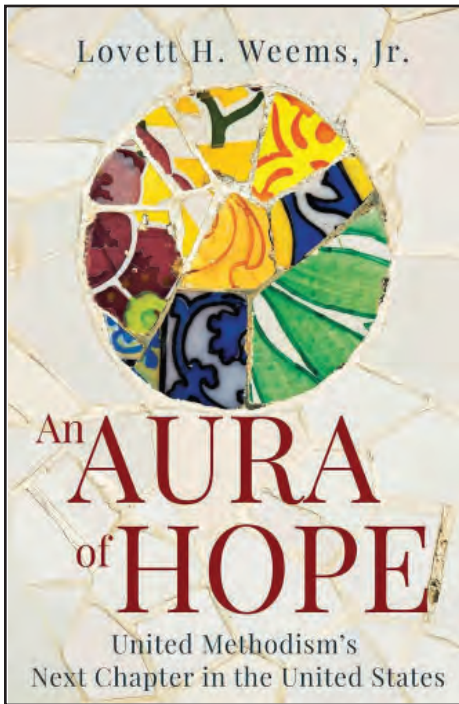
to walk in the footsteps of those who shaped our city's history and continue to inspire our community today. Then plan to stay downtown for dinner at [Flavor Hills](#), a Black-owned restaurant serving Southern comfort food. Contact [Susan Brooks](#) to sign up.



## New Devotional Resource for the Easter Season

The UMC's General Board on Religion and Race offers a new devotional resource for the Easter season. This collection offers insights from a diverse set of voices within the UMC designed to inspire actions that promote solidarity and inclusion and build the Beloved Community.

**[This free resource can be found using this link.](#)**



## *An Aura of Hope* Begins on May 13

The final Wonderful Wednesday study series for the spring begins on Wednesday, May 13. This study is guided by a new book written by Lovett Weems, Jr. titled *An Aura of Hope: United Methodism's Next Chapter in the United States*. As United Methodism exits a turbulent time of change, this study will explore what is next for our annual conferences and local congregations. We will look carefully at how past changes and changes that we are experiencing now may specifically influence ministry and mission at Benson Memorial. The study is taught by Pastor Alan.

Available now at [Cokesbury](#) and [Amazon](#).



## Celebrating Shannon Luxford's 26 Years of Faithful Service

Shannon Luxford is retiring as Benson Memorial's preschool director after 26 years of faithful, dedicated service in caring for our children. Through her leadership, the preschool has made a lasting, loving impact on generations of children—both from our church family and the wider community.

If you would like to share your appreciation and love for Shannon, you are invited to leave a card or note in the basket in the narthex. Please do so by Monday, May 18.

Shannon will be deeply missed, and we offer our heartfelt gratitude along with our prayers and best wishes as she enters this new chapter of life.



**5TH SUNDAY**  
**FOOD COLLECTION**

**MAY 31, 2026**

We accept donations of non-perishable food in jars, cans and sealed packets. We recommend jelly (no glass jars), pasta sauce (in plastic jars or cans), canned vegetables, boxed dinners, and non-food items such as paper towels and cleaning supplies. Other food items gladly accepted.

**Bring your donations to the Administration Building (look for the green wagon).  
We'll deliver them to North Raleigh Ministries Food Pantry. Thank You!**



## Mother's Day Carnations

**The Susanna Wesley Group will be taking orders  
for Mother's Day carnations through Sunday, May 3.**

Carnations may be ordered for \$5 each, in memory (white) or in honor (red) of a member's mother.

The ordered carnations will be used for the altar arrangement on Mother's Day, May 10.

After the service, the arrangement will be shared with a senior living location. Proceeds from the sale of the carnations will go toward the Susanna Wesley Scholarship Fund or one of their mission projects.

Name of person placing order: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of (white): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In honor of (red): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Number of carnations: red: \_\_\_\_\_ white: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost: \$5.00 each Total enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Please place in the offering plate or mail to

Benson Memorial UMC, 4706 Creedmoor Road, Raleigh, NC 27612.

Make checks (marked "Mother's Day carnations") payable to Benson Memorial United Methodist Church.

Indicate on envelope of cash payments that it is for Mother's Day carnation orders.



# Save the Dates: Opportunities for Outreach

## Block Party Planning Meeting

Sunday, June 28, 9:30–9:50 a.m. Fellowship Hall Room 101

## Block Party Planning Meeting

Sunday, July 26, 9:30–9:50 a.m. Fellowship Hall Room 101

## Block Party Setup

Saturday, August 22, 9:00 a.m., Courtyard

## Bless Our School Sunday

Sunday, August 23, 10:00 a.m.

## 4th Annual Neighborhood Block Party

Sunday, August 23, 11:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m.

## Rise Against Hunger Meal Packaging Event

Sunday, October 4, 11:30 a.m.–2:00 p.m., Fellowship Hall

## Community Trunk or Treat

Sunday, October 25, 4:00 p.m. Admin Building Parking Lot



## Sunday, May 3

8:45 a.m., Children's Sunday School

8:45 a.m., Pathfinders Class

10 a.m., Worship Service

11:15 a.m., Benson Discussion Class

11:15 a.m., Bright Siders Class

11:15 a.m., Chimes Choir Rehearsal

3 p.m., Prayer Shawl Ministry

## Tuesday, May 5

10:30 a.m., Women Who Read Book Club

## Wednesday, May 6

7:15 a.m., Coffee and Prayer

5:45 p.m., Community Dinner

6:45 p.m., Adult Bible Study

7 p.m., High School Bible Study

## Thursday, May 7

10 a.m., Thursday AM Bible Study

4:45 p.m., Chancel Choir Rehearsal

## Sunday, May 10 - Mother's Day

8:45 a.m., Children's Sunday School

8:45 a.m., Pathfinders Class

10 a.m., Worship Service

11:15 a.m., Benson Discussion Class

11:15 a.m., Bright Siders Class

11:15 a.m., Chimes Choir Rehearsal

## Monday, May 11

6:30 p.m., Worship Committee

## Wednesday, May 13

5:45 p.m., Wonderful Wednesday Meal

6:45 p.m., Adult Bible Study

7 p.m., High School End-of-Year Party

## Thursday, May 14

10 a.m., Thursday AM Bible Study

11:30 a.m., Adult Fellowship 4:45

p.m., Chancel Choir Rehearsal

## Saturday, May 16

9 a.m., Campus Work Day

## Sunday, May 17

### Spirit Fest Sunday

8:45 a.m., Children's Sunday School

8:45 a.m., Pathfinders Class

10 a.m., Worship Service

11:15 a.m., Spirit Fest Luncheon

## Monday, May 18

1:30 p.m., Susanna Wesley Group

7 p.m., Trustees Meeting



## Campus Care Update

At the March workday, 14 volunteers focused on improving the campus's appearance by trimming liriopse, pampas grass, and numerous shrubs in preparation for spring.

At the April workday, four volunteers trimmed shrubs in the courtyard and planted Easter lilies in the Memory Garden, located near the mailbox in the parking area.

The next campus workday is scheduled for May 16, 2026. Volunteers will begin cutting back hollies in the courtyard and throughout the campus, as many are diseased and need to be removed. This will be a significant undertaking, and we will need many volunteers to assist with this project.

FEMA has been closed for several months, and we are still awaiting our final reimbursement from the Sanctuary project before moving forward with our next project, the Administration Building.