



■ 45th Annual Cross Cultural Conference

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ISSUE



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Action Council Newsletter

■ APRIL 2023

■ CONFERENCE EDITION

Message From the **THE PRESIDENT**



James Starnes, Action Council President

Welcome back to Greenville, site of our first conference in 1979. Thank you for reviewing the 2023 Conference Edition of our newsletter. I am honored to serve as President of The Action Council and lead our effort to advocate for cultural competence at this crucial time in our history. For forty-five years we have been committed to improving the lives of citizens in need. Persons with physical or mental challenges often need others to ensure that they receive optimal care. They often need others to ensure that care is available. We must move beyond the days when the availability of high quality healthcare is based on one's geographical location or economic status.

While the Action Council has and will continue to be primarily focused on evidence-based training, we must strengthen our roles as advocates. We must remain unbiased and ensure that unheard voices are heard. The Action Council remains committed to creating culturally competent communities of care. When policy makers and constituents work together in harmony, service providers and Service recipients are the beneficiaries. The Action Council is proud to have a seat at the table.

We are grateful to all presenters, agencies, and organizations who have given their resources, time, and expertise to make the 2023 Conference the successful experience that we have come to expect. We thank the Planning Committee for its creativity. As always, we are grateful for all who continue to support us with your presence and gifts. May we be unmovable in our efforts to protect and enhance the dignity of all providers and consumers of human services.

From the Editor's Desk ERNEST SHAW, LMSW



Thank you for reviewing the 2023 Conference Edition of our newsletter. I am honored to serve as editor, and I strive to make each edition informative and correct. I appreciate the opportunity to continue to document the rich history of the Cross-Cultural Conference. In this edition we will briefly look back at last year's conference and highlight the lives of Dr. Carol Apt, Mr. Vince Ford, and Mr. Norman Deas. Each of these three individuals were significant contributors to successful conferences.

We should celebrate examples of cooperation, collaboration, and my belief that we can get more done if we work together despite differences, real or imagined. Individuals such as Dr. Kenneth Rogers has been a friend of our effort. Welcome to Greenville and please read the story of the first conference held in this beautiful city 44 years ago.

The seed that grew into our conference and organization can be found in the vision of Dr. Corbitt and his colleagues at a radically changing SC Department of Mental Health during the 1960s. I will tell this remarkable story in my presentation at the conference. On the eve of the 45th annual conference we continue to advocate for diversity in the provision and use of mental health services. Every president of the Action Council has had a significant connection to the agency caring for the mentally ill in our state. Therefore, we use these pages to highlight moments of collaboration with mental health and other human services agencies that should be celebrated.

The Manning Times.
Manning, SC, August 27, 1975

Mental Health Clinic Offers Youth Counseling

The Cherokee County Mental Health Clinic has begun a program for children with emotional or behavioral problems.

The clinic, located behind the County Health Dept. on South Church Street, is accepting children from ages 6 up to 18 years.

Marshall Gravely, a clinical social worker, Gravely will be joined next month by two additional professionals in the field.

Gravely received his B.S. degree in sociology from the University of North Carolina.

Gravely, who is of the Southern Baptist Church in Greenville, said the program will have a "person-to-person" approach, emphasizing and utilizing professionals in the various provider groups.

Gravely said potential participants in the program are children experiencing difficulties in adjustment through communication problems, hyperactivity, excessive aggression or withdrawal.

The clinic has funded a program for disadvantaged children in which the consultant is able to establish rapport and communication in a caring, understandable, but clinical manner.

The program is funded by a federal grant. The Cherokee Mental Health Clinic is supported by federal, state and local funds.

The center will accept children without restriction on ability to pay. The clinic has procedures for medical referrals if necessary.

The clinic's program is ongoing, with Cherokee's clinic a satellite of the Eastern-Manning Mental Health Center, based in Sumter. The regional program director is William F. Parker, currently assigned to the Cherokee clinic.

Gravely, who lives in Manning, is a Southern Baptist, and he is involved in the Cherokee clinic at 44444.

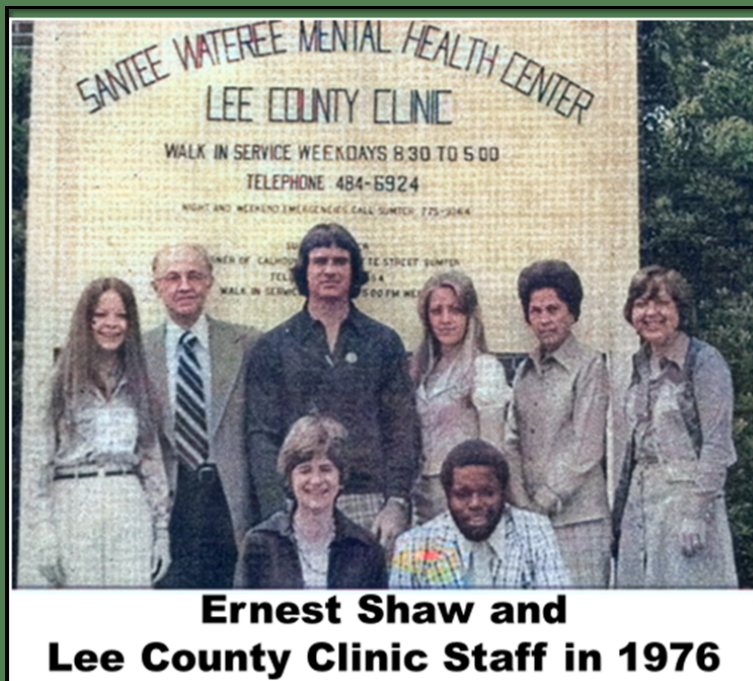
Gravely then and now

Shaw then and now

We have cited Joe James the long serving Director of a community mental health center who has attended every conference held in South Carolina and in recent years his wife and grandson have been among us.

One of the highlights of our conference has been the presentation of the Irene Singleton Award to a support staff person at one of the facilities of SCDMH. This award is named for Mrs. Singleton who was the life blood of the Fairfield County Mental Health Clinic for years. She died in 1991 at sixty-three. We are grateful to Mary Green who was there with Dr. Corbitt at the beginning and worked with Mrs. Singleton for keeping the ideals of Irene Singleton alive.

The 2022 Irene Singleton Award was presented to a deserving employee of the Santee Wateree Community Mental Health Center. The Center is in Sumter County with clinics in Clarendon, Kershaw, and Lee Counties.



**Ernest Shaw and
Lee County Clinic Staff in 1976**

I had the privilege of working for SWCMHC from 1975 to 1980. On a summer day in 1975 while seeking a job I read in a newspaper in Clarendon County that Marshall Gravely, a social worker from Myrtle Beach had been hired to work at the Clarendon County Clinic. Two days later I was interviewed by a director of one of the center's clinics and was offered a social work position at the Clarendon County or the Lee County Clinic. I chose the Clarendon County position and looked forward to working with Mr. Gravely. A week later, I was told that the Clarendon County position had already been filled by Mr. Gravely when it was offered to me. I was able to accept that explanation because I had read about it in the local newspaper.

I was then asked to take the Lee County position located in the last county in the state to become a part of the state mental health system. I had never been to Lee County, SC but I agreed to work there. The fifty-two months that I spent in that community was the most transformative period of

my life. In time I was asked to serve as director of the clinic. In 1979 I wrote a young lady who was graduating from college and asked her to come for an interview. I hired her but she soon left and joined the navy. I moved on as well but twenty years later in 1999, she tracked me down and we had lunch. We communicated infrequently during the next twenty years and in 2019, my wife and I had lunch with her. At lunch she gave me the forty-year-old letter that I sent to her asking her to come to work for Santee-Wateree Mental Health Center.

I was pleased when Mark Bellamy, a member of the Board of Directors of the Action Council went to work at Santee-Wateree. Chelsi Thrower of Santee Wateree was announced as the winner of the Irene Singleton Award at this year's conference. I went over and spoke with her. As I was returning to my seat, I heard Mr. Bellamy introducing a young man to another person as "Mr. Laws, the person in charge of the Lee County Clinic," a position that I held more than forty years ago.

Mr. Travis Laws, a Lee County native is a 2000 graduate of Claflin University who later earned a Master of Arts degree in Counseling and is pastor of a local church. Mr. Laws has worked in Lee County Schools and G. Werber Bryan Psychiatric Hospital, a facility of SCDMH named for Sumter attorney Gustavus Werber Bryan, the Father of Mental Health in the Santee-Wateree area. In 1954 he founded the SC Mental Health Association and served as its first president. He served as Director of the National Mental Health Association and as a member of the SC Mental Health Commission.

On our board, I have assumed the role as the preserver of our rich history because there is value in the work of the past. I also realize that our future is at risk with the passage of time and the passing of the elders of our organization. Yet my hope that our future will be bright was restored in the minutes spent with the young staff from Santee Wateree and I thank Mr. Bellamy for making those moments possible and I commend all the young people and students who attend our conference.



Mr. Bellamy with Ms. Thrower, and Mr. Laws

One Last Look at the 2022 Conference



We have profiled the remarkable life of Dr. Otis Corbitt many times on these pages. However, this story will highlight the wife who stood behind him and the children that the couple gave to the world. Betty Harris Corbitt is a Fairfield County native, and her family were members of White Oak Baptist Church No. 2 in Ridgeway, SC. She is the daughter of Shelton and Juliet Jones Harris. Her grandmother and parents are buried in the church cemetery. This is a church with a rich history.

Dr. James Peter (J.P.) Neal, Jr. an educator, television host, public servant, and

community developer served as Director of Community Relations and Special Assistant to the State Commissioner for Minority Affairs at The SC Department of Mental Health at a time when Betty Harris Corbitt's husband Dr. Otis Corbitt and others were working to realize a dream. Dr. Neal was ordained as a minister in 1975 and he served as pastor of several Baptist churches in the area including the White Oak Baptist Church No. 2.

Betty Harris earned an undergraduate degree in education from Benedict College and later earned a master's degree from the University of South Carolina. She married Otis A. Corbitt, a native of Salley, SC who had come to Columbia to attend Allen University located across the street from Benedict. Mrs. Corbitt supported her husband's efforts to envision, create and sustain the work that we continue in his name. The children of the Corbitts are Monica Corbitt Rivers and Aubria Diane Corbitt. Aubria is a 1983 graduate of Columbia's Keenan High School. She attended the Governor's School at the College of Charleston. She earned a juris doctor degree from the University of Virginia School of Law. Aubria is an attorney in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Monica Latrese Corbitt graduated from Columbia's Keenan High School as salutatorian and continued her education



The Greenville Religious Roots of the First Conference

Ernest Shaw, LMSW

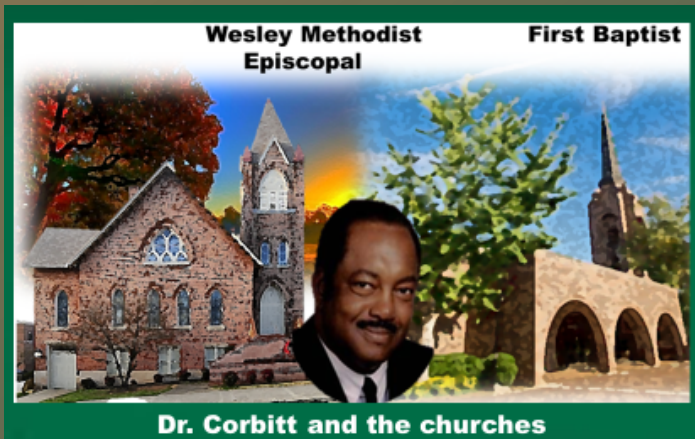
A grand tradition of the Cross-Cultural Conference has been the convocations hosted by local religious institutions and their members in the host cities. Historic Charleston was the site of the 1986 conference and the preliminary events were held at historic Emanuel A.M.E. Church.

In 1979 Wesley United Methodist Church hosted the Convocation with the One Hundred Voice Choir of Greenville's First Baptist Church supplying the music." Dr. Corbitt and conference organizers undoubtedly chose Wesley United Methodist Church and First Baptist Church of Greenville because of the contrasting racial composition of their congregations. An examination of the roots of these churches, one white and the other black, with tangled roots and extended families tell a story that we should retell here.



The Greenville Religious Roots of the First Conference

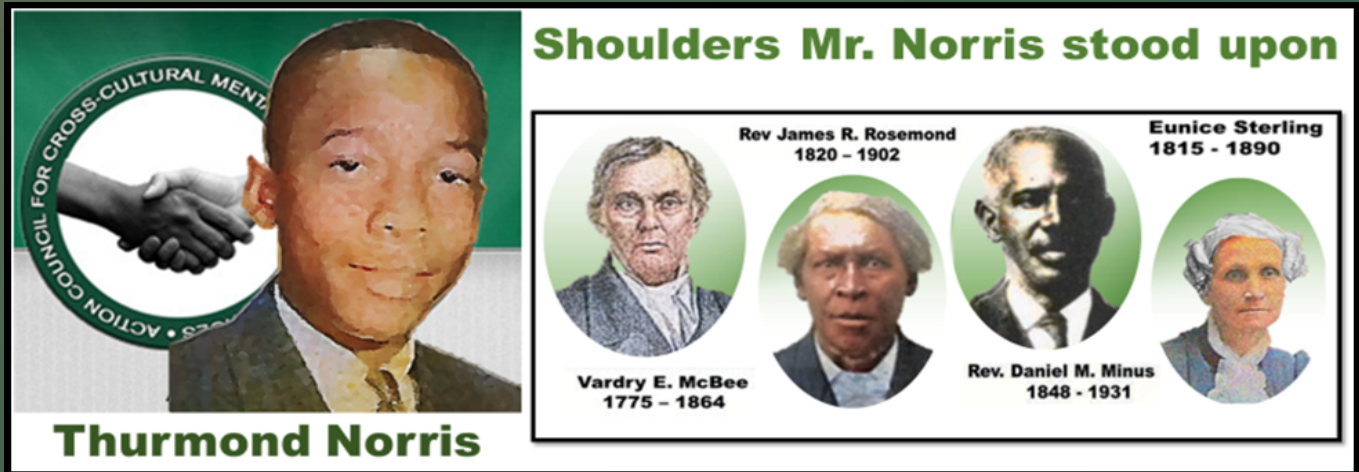
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We can begin by looking at the lives of a master and his slave. Vardry Echols McBee was born in 1775 in present-day Spartanburg, SC. He owned thousands of acres of land in the Greenville area and operated a business empire including a plantation with slaves. In 1860, fifty-six slaves including “Jim” who was born around 1820 were listed as his property.

McBee is known as the Father of Greenville because he gave so much of his wealth to his community. He donated land to First Baptist, First Presbyterian, Christ Episcopal Church, St. Mary’s Catholic, and Buncombe Street United Methodist churches that are still in operation 150 years

after his death in 1864. First Baptist Church of Greenville traces its roots to 1822 when a Baptist minister began conducting services in the courthouse. Vardry McBee donated land for Greenville Baptist after its organization in 1831. He gave lumber from his sawmill to each church in what became known as “McBee’s Tithe.” In 1876, his sons Alexander and Vardry McBee gave land to the Roman Catholic Diocese of South Carolina for the first Catholic church in the Upstate.



As other Baptist churches grew out of Greenville Baptist, the name of the mother church was changed to First Baptist Church in 1890. We should look at the roots of Silver Hill Methodist Episcopal and Springfield Baptist churches. McBee’s slave Jim and Gabriel Poole, a slave of Jeremiah Cleveland were slave preachers before emancipation. The two slaves traveled together spreading their message at a time when whites and their slaves attended the same churches, though not as equals. Slaves such as Gabriel Poole were members of Greenville Baptist.

Prior to the war denominations split over the issue of slavery and some broke into northern and southern branches. During reconstruction missionaries came down from the north hoping to establish equality between whites and the newly freed slaves in areas such as education and religion. When those efforts failed the races went their separate ways.

Jim McBee, the slave of Vardry McBee became a leader in the local Methodist Episcopal Church. He took the name James R. Rosemond after gaining his freedom and is listed as the founder of approximately fifty churches in the



The Greenville Religious Roots of the First Conference

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northwestern part of the state. Northern missionaries and their denominations established educational institutions to prepare men like Jim McBee for their mission.



Baker Biblical Institute was founded in Charleston in 1866 to train Black ministers. In 1867, Rosemond attended Baker and was ordained. In 1869, the Normal and Training School opened in Camden to train Black teachers. Claflin University was founded in 1869 in Orangeburg with the merger of Baker Institute and the Normal and Training School on the campus of the defunct Orangeburg Female Institute that operated for several years before closing during the war and selling its property to the Conference of the Methodist Church. Claflin was opened to students regardless of race or gender. The Claflins from Massachusetts, a politically prominent white Methodist family and financial supporters of Boston University, were the benefactors of the Orangeburg school.

Silver Hill the oldest historically Black Methodist Church in Greenville was founded in 1866 by James R. Rosemond, the former slave. The sons of his former owner sold land at reduced prices to Silver Hill and other Black churches in the community. The present church was built between 1899 and 1903. In 1902, its name was changed to John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church in honor of John Wesley the founder of the Methodist Church in the 1700s.

A year after Rosemond founded Silver Hill, Rev. Poole and Black members of Greenville Baptist asked to be dismissed to form their own church, Springfield Baptist Church, the oldest Black Baptist congregation in downtown Greenville. The new church met in First Baptist until 1872 when they built their own church. From the Springfield Baptist Church developed Mount Zion, Macedonia, and Pilgrim Rest Churches.

The State Newspaper noted Poole was born on the corner of Main Street and McBee Avenue in Greenville. He was an illiterate slave. However, he became a leader and a preacher to other slaves and was respected by whites in the area. The Rev. James C. Furman the pastor of the Greenville Baptist Church from 1871 to 1874, namesake and President of Furman University was listed among his advisors of Poole.

Rev. Poole served as pastor of Springfield Baptist for years. He died in 1899 at 89, the oldest person in Greenville. The October 8, 1899, edition of the New York Times noted that fifty years earlier when both were slaves, Poole, the Baptist preacher and Rosemond, the Methodist pledged that the first to die would have his funeral preached by the survivor. Rev. James Rosemond preached the funeral sermon for Rev. Poole as promised.

In 1974, First Baptist moved to its current location and five years later the One Hundred Voice Choir of the church made the trip to Wesley United Methodist Church to sing at the Convocation of the conference when Dr. Corbitt and his associates came calling. Meanwhile, Springfield Baptist Church currently located at 600 East McBee Avenue was at the epicenter of the civil rights movement in Greenville during the 60's.

The church burned in 1972 and in 1976 the present church was completed. In 1974, Rev. D. C. Frances died and Rev. John H. Corbitt, a former college professor who was at the march in 1963 in Washington with Dr. King, and the brother of Dr. Otis Corbitt became Senior pastor of Springfield Baptist Church and was at the helm when his brother came to town in 1979. He served as pastor until his retirement in 2011. He was replaced by Rev. Kippie C. Brown of Lake City who left in 2017 and in 2018 Dr. Corbitt returned to Springfield as interim pastor and served for four years until a few months ago. Rev. Vinson Royal is the new pastor.

McBee supported education as well. In 1820 he donated land for the Greenville Academy, one of the town's first schools. Furman Academy and Theological Institution was established by the SC Baptist Convention in 1825 and moved to Greenville in 1851. McBee sold choice acres to the school for less than market value. The Baptist Convention

The Greenville Religious Roots of the First Conference

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established Greenville Baptist Female College in 1854 and it opened in 1856, on the site originally donated by McBee to the Greenville Academy. Rev. James Furman the pastor of the Greenville Baptist served as president of both institutions. The school became Greenville Women's College in 1914 and merged with Furman in 1938 as a coeducational institution. Furman has endured and individuals such as Mr. Joe James are listed among its alums. Daniel Milton Minus was born to slaves in Colleton County in 1848. He was able to attend Claflin University in Orangeburg because Mrs. Eunice Sterling, a white lady from Poughkeepsie, N.Y. paid his tuition. Her husband was a merchant, and they were philanthropists who aided runaway slaves on the Underground Railroad. Mrs. Sterling survived her husband by 37 years, and she died in 1890.

The February 18, 1886, edition of the Times and Democrat, the Orangeburg newspaper described Minus as a "good and faithful man" who had served as pastor of the colored Methodist church in town. In the 1890s he became pastor at Silver Hill and in 1896 opened Greenville Academy in a room in the church. This was the city's first high school for Blacks and Rev. Minus served as president. Two years later the school expanded and bought the church building when the congregation moved to another location. In 1902, the school bought land from Mr. B.M. McBee and built a school outside of the city limits.

Rev. Rosemond died in 1902, the year Rev. Minus renamed the school Sterling Industrial College in honor of the Mrs. Sterling who paid for his education at Claflin. Prominent whites supported the school financially and as it grew Rev. Minus left the ministry and devote full time to the school. In 1913 he resigned from the school and returned to the ministry. He died in 1931.

Sterling closed briefly after his successor President Carey Jones resigned. In 1915, Enoree River Baptist Association opened Enoree High School. In 1929, the Greenville County School District assumed responsibility for the public education of Blacks and changed the name back to Sterling High School to serve as the first Black public high school in the county. Its graduates included Robert Anderson, Rev. Jesse Jackson, and Thurman Norris.

Robert Anderson is not as well-known as Henrie Monteith and James Solomon. However, the three enrolled at the University of South Carolina as a trio in 1963 becoming the first blacks to attend the school since 1877. After leaving the school he served in Vietnam. He earned a social work degree from Hunter College and spent years working with the dispossessed of New York City. Anderson died in 2009.

Helen Burns was a student at Sterling High School and a member of Springfield when she gave birth to a son, Jesse in 1941. The father was a married man twice her age. Helen married Charles Henry Jackson who adopted her son Jessie. Jackson and Norris played football at Sterling and Jackson earned a scholarship to play at the University of Illinois before turning to civil rights. His mother was a member of the choir at Springfield, and she passed her musical talent on to her younger son Charles "Chuck" Jackson who became a recording artist. However, she passed her passion for social justice to Jesse. Charles Jackson died in 1979 at age 59 and Mrs. Jackson died in 2015 at 92. Former President Clinton and Rev. Al Sharpton attended her funeral at Springfield.

Norris served in the military and was a community developer and civil rights leader in Greenville for years where he rubbed shoulders with John A. McCarroll, the director of the Phillis Wheatley Center who was also involved with our organization.

In 1963 Abraham Jonah Whittenberg, a member of Springfield Baptist Church filed suit against the segregated school system. Sterling High School burned in 1967 and the resulting turmoil hastened the end of segregation in the Greenville Schools. Sterling's last class graduated in 1970. Thurman Norris was also an active member of the Action Council, and he served as Vice President. He was President of the Sterling High School Alumni Association. His daughter Dr. Shannon Denise Norris graduated from Duke University School of Medicine and is practicing in Georgia. The life of Mr. Norris is a clear demonstration that anyone of us may be just a few degrees of separation from a person whose world is vastly different.

When the United Methodist Church was created with the merger of several bodies John Wesley became John Wesley United Methodist Church and was there to host the Convocation for that first conference before the educational part

The Greenville Religious Roots of the First Conference

Continued



Rev. Lawrence Cantey, LMSW

of the conference met at the Thunderbird Inn Motel the next day. The contributions of the Greenville churches to the success of that first conference certainly provided a model that has served us well for four decades.

Darlington County native Rev. Edward Emmanuel Jenkins was the Pastor of Wesley in 1979 when Dr. Corbitt and friends came to town. He was a graduate of Claflin and Gammon Theological Seminary. Dr. Jenkins served on the Board of Trustees of Wofford and Claflin. He died in 1995 and was survived by sons Rev. Warren Jenkins of Orangeburg and Rev. Dr. A. Clark Jenkins of Kingstree.

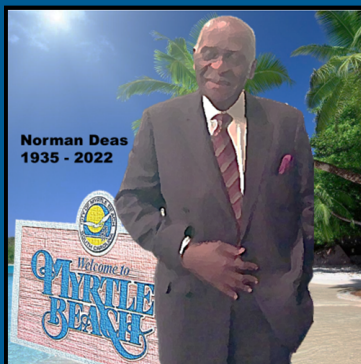
The Rev. Granville Aiken Hicks, a distinguished 1957 graduate of Claflin University served as the pastor of John Wesley UMC from 1997

to 2001. He exemplified a kindred spirit with the ideals of our organization by creating programs to improve race relations, education, and leadership. For more than twenty years Claflin University has hosted The Granville Hicks Leadership Academy to honor Rev. Hicks and emphasize connections between the academy, Claflin University, and The United Methodist Church, an organization that is coming apart at the seams over the issues of sexual orientation and the church much like it did over race during an earlier time.

The McBee name is still prominent in Greenville today. When the First Baptist Church voted to move in 1974, a part of the church chose to remain at the original location on West McBee Street and became Downtown Baptist Church. Several McBees are buried in Christ Episcopal Church Cemetery in Greenville. When telegrams began notifying families around the country that their sons had made the ultimate sacrifice in a place called Pearl Harbor in 1941, it is said that the first one sent to Greenville listed the name of twenty-year-old Seaman 1st Class Luther Kirk McBee, great-grandson of Greenville pioneer Vardry McBee.

I was making final changes in this story when I got a call from Rev. Lawrence Cantey. He and I were both born and grew up in Greeleyville, SC and were coworkers in Columbia for years. He attended last year's conference in Myrtle Beach after many years absence. Rev. Cantey who serve as pastor of Mt. Nebo, Bethlehem, and St. John United Methodist churches in the Orangeburg area said he was calling because he knew that it was about time for this year's conference. I told him that we would be meeting in Greenville this year. His response was that he planned to attend wherever we meet.

Thanks for Welcoming Us Mr. Deas



**Norman Deas
1935 - 2022**

Norman Deas was born in 1935 in Georgetown County. He attended a one room school in Pawleys Island run by legendary educators Ruby and William Forsythe. He was a 1954 graduate of Howard High School in Georgetown. Mr. Deas graduated from Johnson C Smith University in 1968 and went to work for the Federal Housing Administration in Washington. He participated in the historic March on Washington in the summer of 1963 and plans for him to go to Birmingham, Alabama for training were derailed when white supremacist bombed a church and killed four young black girls a couple of months later. Eleven year old Denise McNair was one of the victims. Her father spoke at the 2000 conference in Augusta. He died at 93 in 2019 and her mother, the last parent of a bombing victim died at 93 early in 2022.

Mr. Deas died on December 21, 2022 at the age of 87. He was active in the AME Church. He served as chairman of the S.C. Mental Health Association and a member of the Waccamaw Mental Health Center Board. Mr. Deas was perhaps best known as a member of the Local planning committee, the group that has been instrumental in planning for so many of our conferences in Myrtle Beach. We appreciate the contributions of Mr. Deas and extend our condolence to his family.