



October 3, 2019



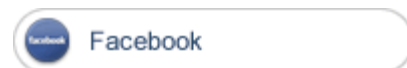
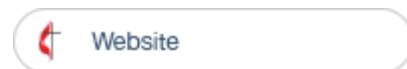
September 11--A Day of Remembrance



Sites around the conference honored first responders and all who defend our freedom on September 11-- A Day of Remembrance. Our Montgomery site wrote thank-you notes to first responders. In Eufaula, members of Communities of Transformation baked treats for the city's police department. Emily Proctor, our South Walton site coordinator, offered a "Blessing of helmets and badges" as firefighters from South Walton participated in a 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb in Panama City Beach, Florida. We are thankful for those who serve!

Phenix City Begins Seventh Awaken Class

Want more?



Contact us

Katy Wrona,
Conference Director

[Email Katy](#)

Courtney Albrecht,
Communications Coordinator

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Community partnerships are vital to the success of Communities of Transformation. Phenix City site coordinator Joan Gatewood has developed a new partnership that has helped her find good candidates for Communities of Transformation. The [Crisis Center of Russell County](#) has referred clients to Communities of Transformation, resulting in new participants for our latest Awaken Class. Through diligent prayer and tireless effort, Joan began the site's seventh Awaken class at the end of September with five new participants and three new volunteers! Thanks be to God for his provision.

Participant Spotlight: Pine Hill's Terri Square



Terri Square, a member of our Pine Hill site, is a single mother of three children who are 10, 9, and 9 months. Site coordinator Brenda Autry knew Terri would be a good fit for Communities of Transformation, so Brenda made sure Terri knew about meetings. Terri came to Communities of Transformation ready to achieve a goal: Terri needed a job that worked with her children's school schedule, so she looked into getting her substitute teacher's license. Site coordinator Brenda Autry encouraged her through the process of applying, and Terri got her license in August. Since then she has worked almost every day! Most of Terri's work

is in schools in Camden or Pine Hill. Sometimes she even gets to teach at the school her daughter attends! She gets calls from schools every day, and she very rarely turns down a substitute job. One school is even talking to her about applying for a permanent position there. Terri has help from a family member to keep the baby, but having a schedule that lines up with the school schedule of her older kids has been a relief to her. She loves being with her kids. Terri says, "They are a part of me and they're the reason I push myself to do the things I do!"

Attending weekly meetings and being part of a community of support is important for setting and reaching goals. Terri will celebrate her completion of the Awaken curriculum in October. We could not be prouder of her, and we are grateful to be part of her journey!

South Walton Site Featured in Local Magazine



Our South Walton site was recently featured in VIE Magazine based in Santa Rosa Beach, Florida. [Click here to read the article about Communities of Transformation's South Walton site.](#)

October Events

Thursday, October 3- Coffee with Cliff in Mobile

Saturday, October 5- Fundraiser luncheon in Evergreen

Monday, October 7- Visitor night in Eufaula

Tuesday, October 8- Volunteer training in Brewton

Monday, October 14- Overcoming Adversity program in Eufaula

Tuesday, October 15- Awaken class begins in Brewton

Saturday, October 19- Awaken overview in Mobile

Monday, October 21- Evergreen site visit to Equal Justice Initiative's National Memorial for Peace and Justice Legacy Museum

Monday October 21- Faith Leaders' meeting in Selma

Tuesday, October 22- Celebration in Pine Hill

Tuesday, October 29- Fun Night in Phenix City

Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.



November 5, 2019



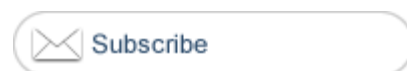
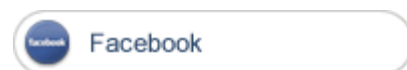
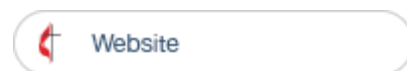
Eating Healthy in Montgomery



Members of our Montgomery site have really enjoyed the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) through the Alabama Extension Office. They have learned about how to incorporate physical activity 3 times a day for 15 minutes, couponing, healthy recipes, how to read food labels, and grocery store planning. One big takeaway was how to eat healthy on a budget! They learned that health isn't about the number on the scale, but incorporating nutritious and seasonal foods into our diet, like fruits, veggies, proteins, grains, healthy fats, and dairy to assist bone health. The Food and Nutrition Education Program has empowered members to make healthy and budget-friendly food choices all in moderation! Balance is key.

Understanding Each Other in Evergreen

Want more?



Contact us

Katy Wrona,
Conference Director

[Email Katy](#)

Courtney Albrecht,
Communications Coordinator

[Email Courtney](#)



Our Evergreen site is working on a book study of *Just Mercy*, and as part of that study they joined friends in the Baypines district on a trip to the National Museum for Peace and Justice in Montgomery. The group knew the tour would be an emotional one, so they prayed and prepared their hearts, asking the Holy Spirit for guidance. Site coordinator Anita Watson thought a mindset for understanding was important to the group. After an emotional day, the group discussed their reactions and prayed for unity. The group ended their day at Montgomery's River City Church with communion.



Laying a Foundation in Selma



Communities of Transformation in Selma is laying a foundation for re-launching our site through informal meetings with the community's faith leaders. Site Coordinator Liz Huynh is working with longtime COT supporter Jan Justice to discern opportunities in Selma, focusing on the needs of the city, potential obstacles, and partnerships. They have engaged in thoughtful discussion about the realistic changes that need to be made, and how Communities of Transformation might be able to be part of that solution. If you are interested in finding out more about COT in Selma, contact Liz at lizbrownhuynh.cot@gmail.com.

Eufaula Participant Spotlight: Earlona Walker



Earlona Walker completed the Awaken curriculum as part of COT Eufaula's seventh class in August of 2018. After that, she set a goal for herself. Earlona committed to a rigorous, twelve week training course with the Alabama Department of Corrections Training Academy. She graduated, then soon started working at an Alabama Correctional Facility. Earlona has been working since

April. She is a great representative of a person whose life has been changed by her involvement in Communities of Transformation, so the leadership team in Eufaula asked her to share her story. Look for her story soon in the *Eufaula Tribune*. Our site coordinators are always reaching out to find people like Earlona who are ready for sustainable change!

Dothan Participant Spotlight: Phyllis Dickens



"I had heard 'no' so many times. I told my husband I was never going to apply for another job." Dothan participant Phyllis Dickens could not see good options for herself before coming to Communities of Transformation. But Phyllis was faithful to attend and complete the Awaken Class. She also worked on her education. Phyllis earned her GED this spring and is now enrolled in classes at Wallace Community College. Today Phyllis has a job that works around her school schedule and has been promoted to a supervisor position. She encourages her former Awaken classmates and other member of COT Dothan. The leadership in Dothan voted unanimously to ask Phyllis to become part of our COT Dothan leadership team. Phyllis's words depict her humble, grateful attitude. "People have told me "I have a story to share and I need to tell it. But, I don't want to brag, to bring attention to me... I can tell the goodness of God being faithful in my life. God used a song to bring me back to Him and to a place where I could begin to make positive changes."

At a recent Wallace Community College Banquet, Phyllis served as an ambassador, networking with students, benefactors, WCC staff, and community leaders. She is using all the wisdom, discernment, and encouragement, gained from COT to continue learning. Instead of simply surviving, Phyllis is thriving!

Vital Conversations Around the Conference



Vital Conversations: Meaningful Conversations on Race were held around the conference during the month of October. These meetings provided a time for lay persons and clergy to talk intentionally about race, culture, and justice. Katy Wrona, conference director, attended the conversation in Mobile. Our Montgomery site participated in the discussion at Metropolitan UMC. Evergreen Site coordinator Anita Watson attended Monroeville's meeting. These conversations showed us our implicit bias, and taught us how we can acknowledge and resist racism. These conversations are something we want to continue moving forward. Montgomery COT Volunteer Coordinator, Celeste Eubanks facilitated these conversations all over Alabama.

Upcoming Events

November 5- Celebration in Dothan

November 7- Informational meeting in Selma at Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church

November 9- Awaken overview at Perry Hill UMC in Montgomery

November 11- Veterans Day

November 12- Veterans Day parade in Eufaula and Stress Management presentation in Montgomery

Week of November 25-29- No meetings/Thanksgiving Holidays

December 3- EAT South Growing Your Own Food presentation in Montgomery

December 10- Christmas Potluck in Montgomery; Celebration in South Walton

December 16- Ecumenical Service of Remembrance and Healing at Community Church in South Walton at 1 p.m

December 18- Wreaths Across America Event in South Walton

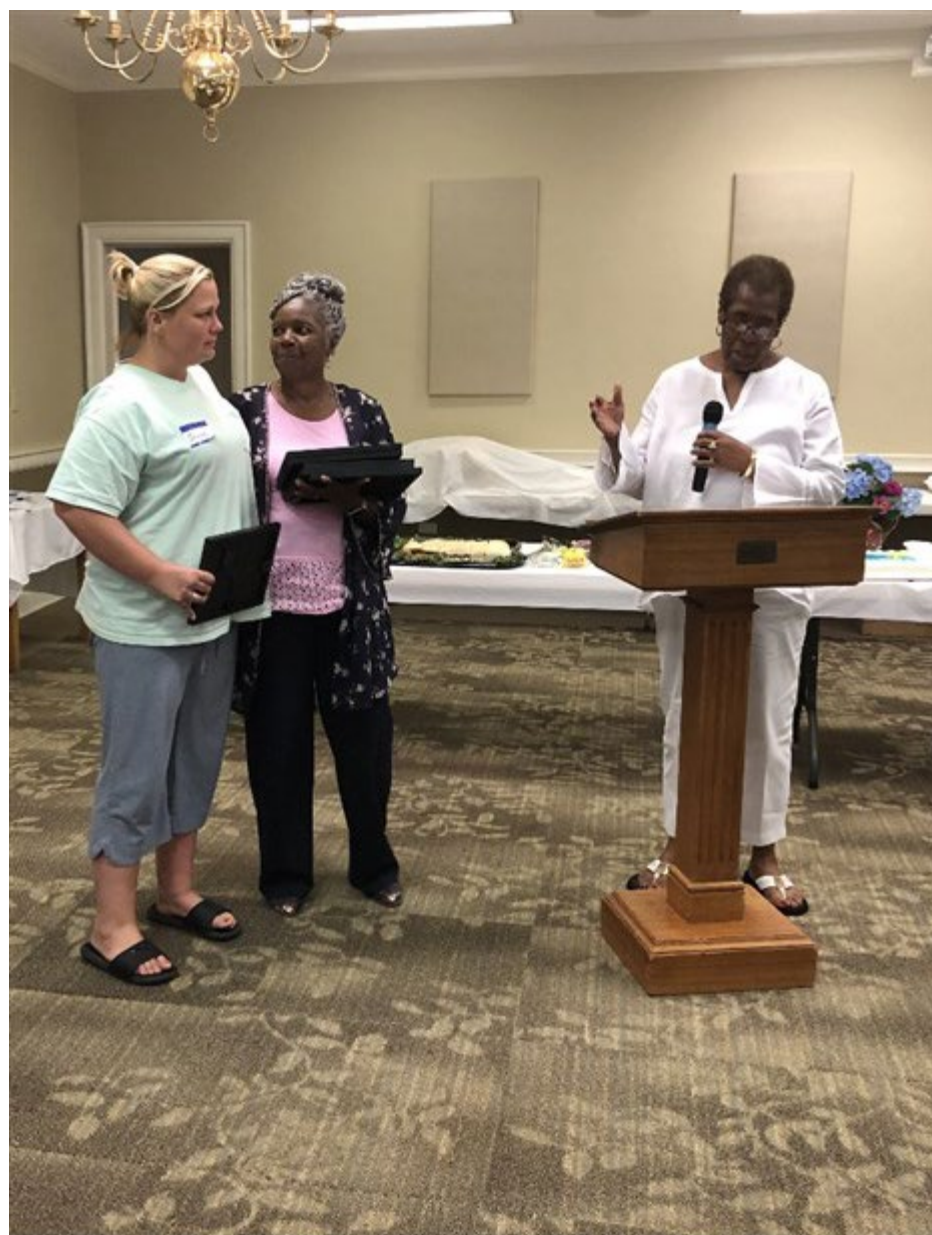
Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.




December 5, 2019





Living a Life of Service in Brewton



Want more?

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Contact us

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Conference Director

[Email Katy](#)

Courtney Albrecht,
Communications Coordinator

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Irene Johnson presents a certificate while Brenda Stallworth speaks.

Trainer Irene Johnson has been part of Communities of Transformation in Brewton from the beginning. Her dedication is no surprise to the people who know her. Site coordinator Shae Hines says, "Irene truly loves what she does! She goes above and beyond for Communities of Transformation without ever expecting anything in return."

Irene is a retired social worker who stays busy helping others. She volunteers with Christ Kingdom ministry center in Brewton where she works in the food pantry. She often cooks meals for the elderly. Irene volunteers with Escambia County Habitat for Humanity, too. But Tuesday nights are reserved for Communities of Transformation meetings where she works alongside Brenda Stallworth to teach Awaken classes. Thank you, Irene, for a life of service!

A Positive Outlook in Phenix City



Rev. Ralph Wooten serves Communities of Transformation in Phenix City in so many ways! Lately he has led classes in Appreciative Inquiry. Have you wondered why negative comments and conversations stick with us for so long after they occur? Our bodies have very different physical reactions to criticism and negative conversations than we do to praise and positive conversations. We can't undo the past, but we can make changes in the present to create a better future. Appreciative Inquiry is about looking for the best in people and in situations; it is a perspective shift that allows us to make positive changes. For Communities of Transformation, Appreciative Inquiry is a method our members can use to create lasting change. At weekly meetings, that means we begin with good news end with affirmations to set up a framework for positive thinking.

There are five basic principles of Appreciative Inquiry:

- Words Create Worlds- what we think about shapes our reality
- Inquiry Creates Change- when we ask a question, we begin to change
- We Can Choose What We Study- what we learn about creates our reality
- Image Inspires Action- we get more of what we focus on
- Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change-looking for the best

When we shape our conversations in a way that leads to a positive outlook, we become calmer and happier. Think about how you can use these ideas for more positive thinking!

Connecting with United Methodist Women



The Alabama-West Florida Conference UMW Spiritual Enrichment Retreat at Blue Lake on October 11-13 gave attendees some insight into Communities of Transformation. Reba Wiley, former site coordinator for Communities of Transformation Pine Hill, was the speaker. The theme was "Love in Action," and Reba spoke about loving God, loving ourselves, and loving others. Reba talked about Communities of Transformation as a way of loving others. After their Saturday night dinner, Reba asked members to arrange their chairs in a circle and share good news, just like members do at COT meetings. Reba and Katy Wrona shared about Communities of Transformation, then the evening closed with affirmations.

South Walton



In South Walton, we are grateful for Kate Smart. She's been with us from the beginning, first as a volunteer and Leadership Team member, and now as an Awaken student. Every week, Kate arrives at our host site an hour and a half early to start setting up, and stays late to help make sure all the dinnerware gets reorganized and put away neatly. She is passionate about hospitality and often brings extra decorations or signs with inspirational messages to make our folks feel welcome. She is also passionate about making sure we are guarding each other's dignity in the process of helping. In fact, it was our initial book study of *Helping Without Hurting in Church Benevolence* that got her fired up about helping to launch Communities of Transformation in South Walton. She often opens our Leadership Team meetings with the most thoughtful prayers, and she has made an effort to get to know many of our COT members one-on-one outside of our weekly Tuesday night gatherings. With her humble, open and courageous spirit, she lives out every day our conviction that we are all on a journey of transformation. It's hard to imagine COT without her!

Remembering Mrs. Irby in Pine Hill



Mrs. Irby surrounded by COT friends at the library

On November 10, 2019, the Pine Hill site lost one of our precious members, our beloved Lora Irby. She will be truly missed by COT, UMW, Junior Achievement, and her home church. Mrs. Irby was very active in the community. She was always ready and willing to help wherever the need was, especially with small children. Please remember her family in your prayers.

Upcoming Events

December 3- EAT South Growing Your Own Food presentation in Montgomery

December 4- Luncheon in Evergreen

December 5- Cookie Swap in Evergreen

December 7- Gift Hope alternative gift fair in Montgomery

December 10- Christmas Potluck in Montgomery; Celebration in South Walton; Meeting with DHR in Mobile

December 14- Wreaths Across America Event in South Walton

December 15- Senior Citizens' banquet in Pine Hill

December 16- Ecumenical Service of Remembrance and Healing at Community Church in South Walton at 1 p.m

December 17- Christmas party in Phenix City

January 11- Awaken workshop in Dothan

January 20- MLK Day Walk in Pine Hill; Day of Service in Montgomery

January 25- COPE event in South Walton

January 28- Taste and See in Pine Hill

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