

Sharing & Caring

Serving The Midlands for 42 years

Strain of U.S. economy affects health of those in need; New relationship with counseling center will provide aid

A new relationship between The Cooperative Ministry and The Christian Counseling Center of First Presbyterian Church, funded by a grant from TD Bank, will help Financial Empowerment clients with stress brought about by the nation's rising inflation rates.

Clients enrolled in The Cooperative Ministry's Financial Empowerment program will have access to up to six appointments, at no charge, with the counseling center. This initiative responds to the noticeable fatigue, financial stress, fear of homelessness, and inflationary-driven stress evidenced by clients meeting with Financial Health Coaches.

The Federal Reserve System, in 2023, looked at the stress on households caused by inflation and rising prices since the pandemic. The study suggested inflation hits low-income households the hardest, primarily because of food, gas, and rent costs. A lack of cash flow prevents these households from "stocking up" on goods when prices occasionally drop due to specials. The study also showed high inflation stress was hardest on minorities, those who rent, and households with children. These groups reflect the primary clients of The Cooperative Ministry.

From 2019 and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic until September 2024, the national cost of a dozen eggs has jumped from \$1.22 to \$3.20.

According to CBS News price checker, a loaf of bread has increased by almost 70 cents and a half-gallon of milk by one dollar. The price checker is based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data. Zillow reports that rent in Columbia has jumped from \$1,086 to \$1,563 per month, on average.



To help clients better manage their income and spending while working toward financial goals, The Cooperative Ministry started its Financial Empowerment program in 2022.

The Financial Empowerment program provides one-to-one coaching between clients and a staff or volunteer Financial Health Coach. Through this service, clients learn to manage their spending and savings to support their long-term financial well-being. Clients work on goals like creating savings accounts, managing household budgets, improving credit scores, and navigating purchasing a home or car.

As Financial Health Coaches met with clients, it was evident that many needed to talk with professionals about their overall life stress. These observations led The Cooperative Ministry to its current relationship with The Christian Counseling Center of First Presbyterian Church, Columbia. First Presbyterian Church is a founding congregation of The Cooperative Ministry.

A grant from TD Bank, one of The Cooperative Ministry's corporate sponsors, will pay for Financial Empowerment clients to access up to six appointments at the counseling center.

From Beth H. Irick, CEO

Thank you, church partners We love visiting with you

Each year, the Frances Foster Circle of Trenholm Road United Methodist Church meets in our boardroom and then serves for a few hours in our clothing bank. It's a joy to see these ladies each year.



It is an honor any time our staff can host our church partners for volunteerism, or visit worship services, missions conferences, small group gatherings, and staff meetings. We love to talk about our mission to help people become self-sufficient.

Here are some of the places we've been since the pandemic: Shandon Baptist Church's missions fair, a Mission Moment during Shandon United Methodist Church's worship and also an evening meeting with the Mary Campbell Circle, Windsor United Methodist Church women's group, First Baptist Church's missions fair for Sunday School classes, a missions meeting at St. Andrews Baptist, a staff meeting at Sandhills Community Church, the Spring Missions Conference at Gateway Baptist Church, a Young Professionals Sunday School class at First Presbyterian Church, participation at Tree of Life Congregation's Shabbat, and we will be represented at the upcoming Bazaar at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral.

We are so thankful for our church partners, who support our mission with financial gifts, volunteerism, and invitations to tell our story.

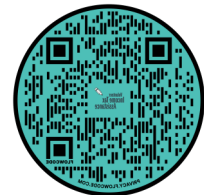
We would love to visit with your church, staff, missions gatherings, and small groups. Programs can be adapted to the available time and include our history, mission, and an overview of services. Please call Scott Vaughan at (803) 799-2428 to schedule a speaker and a program. Thank you!



BOARD OFFICERS—The Cooperative Ministry's Board of Directors met in August for its first meeting of the 2024-2025 Fiscal Year. Pictured, from left, are this year's board officers: Secretary Fred Manning, partner, Fisher Phillips; Chair Stephanie Yandle, customer experience manager, BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina; Vice Chair Alexa Godwin, marketing manager, Godwin Motors; CEO Beth Irick, of The Cooperative Ministry; and Treasurer Steven Hicks, CPA, Capital Markets, AgFirst.

Tax volunteers are needed to prepare returns in 2025

Volunteers are needed to assist clients through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program during the 2025 tax year. Volunteers don't need prior tax preparation experience; The Cooperative Ministry provides complete training and certification.



Volunteers can serve from home or with friends at a location near home.

For more information, please visit www.coopmin.org/vita, use the QR Code above, or contact Michelle Blackman, VITA coordinator, at mblackman@coopmin.org.

Thank you!

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THE COOPERATIVE MINISTRY
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during Midlands Gives 2024



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The signup form is on our Home Page



The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program

All car conditions accepted; towing is free in Columbia area

Proceeds from The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program support the organization's programs, helping clients work toward self-sufficiency.

The Cooperative Ministry's Car Program is managed in-house. Towing is free within 50 miles of Columbia. Cars are sold at a local auction; funds are not subjected to third-party fees.

"People donate cars for many reasons," said Scott Vaughan, The Cooperative Ministry's director of Community Awareness, who manages the Car Program. "Retirement-age adults are down-sizing. There's been a death in the family. The family no longer needs the car reserved for its students. There's also the car with a blown motor or transmission."

Scott said there is no need to apologize for the car's condition. The Cooperative Ministry takes them all, and towing is free. "Many donors begin by confessing all of the car's problems, but that's unnecessary. We provide free towing within 50 miles of Columbia, so it's moot as to whether the vehicle runs or not."

"We require a clean title and the keys," Scott said. "If a donor can't find the title, a replacement can be obtained from an office of SC DMV. If the title is in the name of a deceased relative, the title should be transferred to the legal power of attorney before donating. If I don't know the answer to a title-related

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Simple steps to transfer title.

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question, I know people who can help us find the answer."

Donating a car to The Cooperative Ministry is easy. There is a simple online form at www.coopmin.org/donate-your-car, or donors can call Scott directly at (803) 799-2428. Towing is at the donor's convenience but usually within 36 hours. Jason Mathias of A&E Towing provides this service for The Cooperative Ministry. Following the auction sale at Rawls Auto Auction in Leesville, Scott prepares and mails a 1098-C form that donors can use with tax preparation.

YEAR-END LUNCHEON—Below, Financial Health Coach Russ Bell, talks with Ms. Codell Tillman, a recent Financial Empowerment Program graduate, at The Cooperative Ministry's Year-End Celebration luncheon, June 18, at First Baptist Church, Columbia. Volunteers and church partners were also recognized.



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