METHODIST SENIOR SERVICES

CONNECTION

...serving older adults in the spirit of Christian love.

SPRING 2026

They Gave. Now They Belong.

How a lifetime of quiet faithfulness comes full circle for L.C. & Betty McGee

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ~Galatians 6:9

A Personal Message From **Christie Vance** ***PRESIDENT/CEO***

Recently, my pastor preached from Philippians 3:12–21 in a sermon titled "No Coasting Allowed." One statement has stayed with me: "Live today like you will leave tomorrow." That is a powerful reminder of our calling at Methodist Senior Services. It is an honor to serve as the hands and feet of Christ in caring for older adults. We are not here to go through the motions – we are called to serve faithfully and with intention each day. With that calling comes great responsibility, and I am grateful we do not do this work alone.

Our newsletter, *The Connection*, is one way we can stay connected to the meaningful work God has entrusted to us. This edition will reflect the lives we touch, the blessings we witness, and the opportunities to grow in service and purpose. I know you will enjoy the stories of Mrs. Betty McGee and Mrs. Dottie Hudson.

I do not remember a Methodist Senior Services without Mrs. Betty McGee. She and Mr. L.C. have been faithful supporters of this mission for many years, and today, they are part of Trinity Retirement Community, the organization Mrs. Betty helped to build. There is something sacred in walking alongside individuals like Mr. L.C. and Mrs. Betty – locking arms to provide comfort and quality in their daily lives. It is also a way to give thanks for the time, energy, and resources these two have given freely to MSS.

In the same way, Dottie Hudson reflects the true spirit of joy. She brings light to those around her, and I am personally grateful for the impact she has had on so many lives, including my own. Her story reminds us that joy is not only something we experience, but something we share.

As we look ahead, we are preparing for the future of this ministry – building on a strong foundation while responding to the evolving needs of those we serve. Just as Paul's joy in Philippians was rooted in his mission, the joy of MSS is rooted in our calling: ***to serve older adults in the spirit of Christian love***. This work is made possible through the support of families, team members, donors, volunteers, and partners like you.

THANK YOU *for being part of this ministry and the role you play in shaping its future.*

It is my prayer that this newsletter encourages and unites us as we continue to carry out our mission together, grounded by faith and a commitment to those we serve.

With heartfelt joy and gratitude,

Christie W. Vance

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CONNECTION

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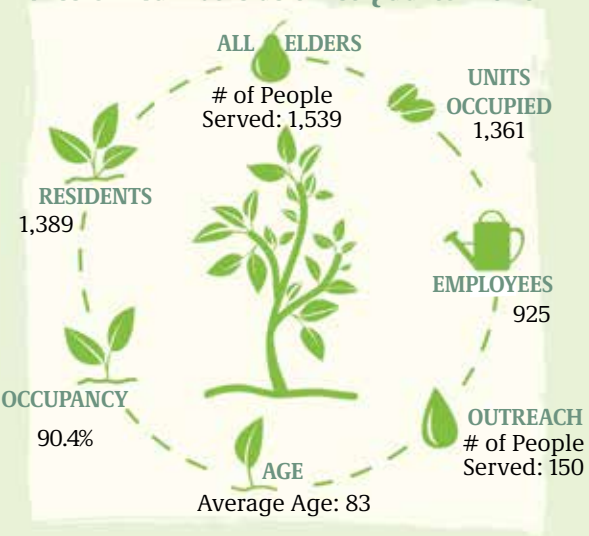
Mission Numbers as of 1st Quarter 2026



MSS & Trinity Team Members celebrate L.C. & Betty's birthday.

They Gave. Now They Belong:

How a lifetime of quiet faithfulness comes full circle for L.C. & Betty McGee

After 74 years of marriage, Betty McGee now lives at Trinity alongside her husband, L.C. – the same community she supported faithfully for decades. These days, much of her time is spent watching others care for him.

"I wish I could do more." she admits softly, and yet, in the same breath, she adds, "He's in good hands."

But to understand Betty's story, you have to go back to the beginning.

"Old age is not for sissies," Betty McGee says with a quiet smile.

A Faith That Started Small

Betty did not set out to live a "generous life." She simply lived the life she was shown. One of her earliest memories is of a small jar in her family's kitchen cabinet.

"My daddy kept a tithe jar," she says. "He would put money in it from his weekly pay, and on Sundays, we'd take from it to give at church."

That weekly routine was enough to shape herunderstanding and views on giving back. There was no recognition attached to it. No sense that it was anything unusual. Just a quiet understanding that what she had was to be used for God.

Showing Up, Year After Year

Years later, while working as a secretary at the Social Security office, Betty began typing letters to Methodist Senior Services for her boss. Through those letters, she became familiar with its mission and ministry. That connection led her to serve on the board during Trinity's early days. She helped in the ways she knew how – taking notes, staying organized, paying attention.

"Not only did you need money," she recalls, "you needed services."

And so she gave both.

A Life That Doesn't Ask for Attention
Even after her board service ended, Betty kept showing up. She and L.C. began helping with birthday celebrations in assisted living. What started as one cake each month quickly turned into two.
"He'd say he got up at four in the morning to bake them," she laughs.
But the cakes weren't really the point. "It was just something we did," she says. What mattered most was that they stayed, they visited and they served.
They did not have a lot of money over the years. But they gave consistently – of their time, their attention, their resources – because that is how they had learned to live.
"I never really thought about it as generosity," Betty says. "It was just... part of life."

When the Story Comes Full Circle
Now, that same ministry is caring for them.
"It's been very difficult," she says of watching others tend to L.C. "But it's good that Trinity is here – and that we can take advantage of it."
Even now, her posture has not changed. She meets this season the same way she's met every other – with quiet faith and a willingness to accept what comes.
"People ask me if I like living here," she says. "And I tell them – I intend to like it. What is not to like? This is what we have chosen."
What Betty may not say out loud – but what her life makes clear – is this: The care she is receiving today did not appear overnight. It was built – over years – by people who simply chose to give. People just like her.

A Legacy She Wouldn't Name
When asked how she hopes to be remembered, Betty hesitates. "I do not know... maybe as a good influence."
She does not say more than that. But those who have walked closely with her over the years would agree with that statement.
Her longtime friend, John East – who still helps take her and L.C. to appointments – has seen it up close. The way she notices people. The way she quietly steps in. The way she gives without ever drawing attention to herself.
He says Betty never would seek attention. "She has spent a lifetime putting others ahead of herself. Her generosity of time, of care, and spirit has shaped the people around her."

"Anyone who has known her has been better for it." ~ John East

An Invitation
And in many ways, that is her legacy. Not something she set out to build. Just a life lived faithfully, one small act at a time.
Because of friends like Betty and L.C., Trinity exists today as a place of compassion, dignity, and care – for them, and for so many others.
And because of continued generosity, that care will be there for the next person who needs it.
When asked what she would say to someone who wants to make a difference, Betty smiles and keeps it simple:

"Try it," she says.
"You might like it."

Dottie hugs a new orange corduroy dress to her chest, a gift from her MSS/ Traceway family, after learning her video had been viewed 25 million times.

The Orange Corduroy Dress:

Dottie Hudson's Simple Story That Touched 25 Million Hearts

A simple story, shared from the heart, has blossomed into something extraordinary for one resident at Traceway Manor Retirement Community in Tupelo, Mississippi. What started as a sweet moment during the MSS 60th Anniversary Celebration has now reached more than 25 million people. It really shows how joy, humor and authenticity can connect with people everywhere.

Dottie Hudson, who many at Traceway know and love, never imagined that her simple story would resonate on such a large scale. In the now-viral video, filmed and edited by MSS partners TaleGate4Joy and Dash Media and posted to the Senior Living Stories TikTok page, Dottie shares a memory about how she met her husband. She talks about how he asked her out on a first date because she was wearing an orange corduroy dress. To him, anyone bold enough to wear such a dress had to be fun. As Dottie put it, "We had fun the rest of our lives."

That lighthearted story struck a chord with people. The video took off, reaching 25 million views and generating thousands of comments. People connected with the story in a meaningful way, often sharing their own experiences, including grandchildren remembering conversations about their grandparents' love stories. Many others even said they were going out to buy their own orange corduroy dress in hopes of capturing a little of that same magic.

To celebrate Dottie's newfound fame and the joy she has sparked, the team at Traceway planned a special surprise. They surprised her with a new orange corduroy dress inspired by the original that started it all. Her reaction was genuine and touching. As she held the dress, she reflected on how something so simple ended up meaning so much in her life. "When I wore an orange corduroy dress, I didn't know how important it was," she said. "But it colored my whole life."

"When I wore an orange corduroy dress I didn't know how important it was, but it colored my whole life."

~ Dottie Hudson

When she was told that 25 million people had watched her story, she could hardly believe it. She laughed and said it was beyond what she could even comprehend. Yet, even in that moment, her focus remained on others. She expressed hope that her story might inspire someone to do something fun, to take a chance, or to bring a little more joy into their own life. "If you buy a fun dress, maybe it's going to bring you fun," she said.

Dottie continues to be an inspiration right at home within the Traceway community. You can often find her leading an exercise class or hosting a Bible study, always encouraging others and bringing people together. It is truly remarkable how a simple story like this can reach so many people. Dottie's story is a reminder that no matter your age, your experiences matter. Sometimes the smallest moments can spark the biggest impact.

To view Dottie's Videos, scan the QR Codes Below.

Scan Me

Original Story Shared on Senior Living Stories

Scan Me

Reaction Video to 25 Million Views

Zuelzke Named Vice President of Operations/COO:

10 Years of Dedicated Service Leads to New Position

Methodist Senior Services is pleased to announce that Jim Zuelzke has been named Vice President/Chief Operations Officer for Methodist Senior Services in Tupelo, Mississippi.

Jim has been with Methodist Senior Services (MSS) for ten years, having served first as Director of Accounting and then Vice President of Finance/CFO. He will be filling the role that was vacated by Christie Vance when she was named the President/Chief Executive Officer for MSS in February 2025. Prior to joining MSS, Zuelzke served as the supervisor of financial reporting, planning, and analysis for another healthcare organization.

During his tenure at MSS, Jim has overseen the daily accounting operations and record keeping as well as the annual audit reviews and organizational budgeting. As Director of Accounting, he helped select and implement new HR/Payroll software and was instrumental in adapting MSS campuses to the new payroll-based journal reporting system required by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. In addition, Jim has led the organization through some of the most financially challenging periods brought on by COVID. His steady leadership was critical as the senior housing and health services industry navigated unprecedented change and uncertainty.

"He brings a genuine heart for our ministry and a clear understanding of our mission, values, and people."
~ Christie Vance

"Beyond his technical expertise and experience, Jim brings something equally important to this role," stated Christie Vance, MSS President/CEO. "He is a dedicated team member and a natural fit to serve as Chief Operations Officer. No one understands our culture and heartbeat of Methodist Senior Services quite like Jim Zuelzke."

Zuelzke received his Bachelor of Accountancy from Auburn University and his Master of Business Administration from the University of North Alabama. He is married to Lauren Waldrip Zuelzke, and they have two children, Mary Lyle and Bo, and a goddaughter Amyah. He is an active church member at The Orchard Tupelo. In his spare time, Jim enjoys watching Auburn sports and spending time with his family outdoors and on the water. Jim proudly supports his children in competitive sports such as tennis and baseball. One of his favorite responsibilities is coaching his son's Rangers baseball team.

2026 Sunday Fund Campaign

The HEART of MSS' mission. . .

You Make A Difference!

- Benevolence Fund for residents who outlived financial resources through no fault of their own.
- Every dollar given to **Sunday Fund** goes to residents in need of assistance.
- For 60 years, no resident has had to leave their MSS home from running out of money, thanks to the **Sunday Fund**.
- **Last year's assistance totaled $604,246!**

To learn more about THE SUNDAY FUND, check out our latest video.

SCAN ME

"Do not cast me away when I am old;
Do not forsake me
when my strength is gone."
- Psalm 71:9

Methodist Senior Services

www.mss.org

MSS STRATEGIC PLANNING

"Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." ~Proverbs 16:3 (ESV)

The MSS Strategic Planning Meeting, held the last week of February at Kingfisher Lodge in Tupelo, Mississippi, marked an important step in shaping the future of Methodist Senior Services. While much of the work of MSS is visible in the care and services provided each day, strategic planning happens behind the scenes and has historically been held every five years to ensure the organization continues to grow, adapt, and serve with excellence.

This two-day gathering brought together leaders from across MSS communities along with Board of Directors and Members of the Corporation. Together, they focused on thoughtful discussion and shared insight to help guide the direction of MSS for the years ahead. Strategic planning is an intentional process that looks at where the organization is today and where it is called to go in the future. It helps ensure that services remain strong, responsive, and centered on the needs of residents and their families, while also supporting a culture where team members can thrive.

The session was guided by Dana Wollschlager, Partner and Practice Leader with Plante Moran Living Forward, whose experience helped shape meaningful and forward looking conversations. Throughout the meeting, participants engaged in honest and mission driven dialogue, reflecting a commitment to those MSS serves each day.

At its heart, this planning effort is about people. It is about strengthening the care and services provided to residents, supporting families with confidence and trust, and equipping

"As we begin our strategic planning process to define the strongest path forward for MSS, I want to underscore the significance of the work ahead and your role in it. This is pivotal work that will influence the future direction of Methodist Senior Services for decades to come." ~ Christie Vance, President/CEO in a pre event email

employees with the tools and environment they need to continue their important work. It also reflects the faithful support of donors whose generosity and shared belief in caring for God's older children continue to sustain and advance the mission of Methodist Senior Services.

Methodist Senior Services has been serving older adults in the spirit of Christian love since 1962, an unwavering mission that continues to guide every aspect of its work. As the organization looks ahead, this strategic planning process helps prepare MSS to meet the evolving needs of those it serves, ensuring that its care and services continue with strength and purpose for the next 60 plus years and beyond.

"I want you to know how much I enjoyed being a part of the recent strategic retreat. There were a lot of great ideas that came out of the meeting."

~Dave Vincent, MSS Board Member

"Congratulations on what I believe was the most productive and targeted planning session I have participated in with MSS!"

~Bill West, MSS Board Member & Past President of the Board

Approximately 60 Board Members, Members of the Corporation, and Team Members attended the 2-day session February 26-27, 2026 at Kingfisher Lodge in Tupelo, MS.

A Recipe for Purpose at

How Unidine chef, Tyrece Higdon, found his calling

In 2009 while performing on stage, Tyrece Higdon had an epiphany to become a chef. In 2012, he made the decision to enroll in culinary school.

"When I enrolled in culinary school I gave it my all - I worked hard," says Ty. "I walked in on crutches at the time and walked out Valedictorian."

Ty's first job was at a fine dining resturant in downtown Memphis, Tennessee. He remembers it clearly as they "made me shave my mustache and beard."

After a while, Tyrece had the opportunity to enter the world of Senior Living. He was given a job as Chef Manager. He began in Memphis, where he lived, and moved to Texas where he received a lot of support and guidance.

"I did a lot of great things in Texas," says Ty. "It was where I realized 'I can be an executive chef'."

By 2018, Ty was on his way and working very hard. But he soon faced an obstacle that changed his life direction.

"When the pandemic struck in 2020, I said, 'You know, I need to be back around my people,' so I moved back to Memphis.

Ty worked in Memphis for two years before deciding to join the Wesley Meadows Dining Team on March 8, 2022.

"I decided it was time for me to keep growing and I ended up in Mississippi," he said.

"My smile is a part of my daily uniform."

~ Executive Chef Tyrece Higdon

That move turned out the be "one of the greatest decisions of [his] adult life."

"My journey has been amazing and I look forward to the next chapter in my story," says Higdon. But he's quick to tell you that "Mississippi is where I'm gonna end. This is where I want to be."

Ty enjoys working for the residents at Wesley Meadows and appreciates the camaraderie with his fellow Unidine

Wesley Meadows:
serving others through food

Dining Team Members as well as the staff at Wesley Meadows.

“The people out here are nothing but love and support,“ he said. “It‘s a good place for me to grow.“

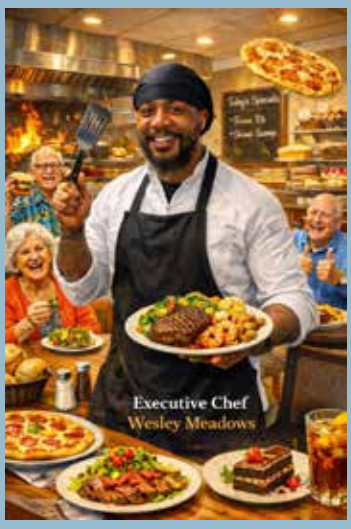
And grow he did, Tyrece is now the Executive Chef Director, which affords him the time to cook the foods he loves, but also spend more time with the residents to discover what they like best.

Ty has been known to come in on his days off and test recipes before introducing them at the community. He works extra hard to ensure each meal time is special and the special days are reminiscent of home.

“Ty has always been a shining light in our community,“ said Wesley Meadows Executive Director, Jamie Cliett. “When you walk in the kitchen you can hear music and singing and laughter. His positive attitude inspires everyone around him. We are blessed to have him here at Wesley Meadows.

Some may know Ty as the “dancing chef“ as he routinely posts videos on social media of him and his team in the kitchen cooking up delights at Wesley Meadows while they sing and dance. The media team at Wesley Meadows enjoys sharing the videos to show off the tasty meal that is being prepared and entice the residents to “eat-up“!

When asked about his job, Ty said that “it isn‘t work when it‘s your passion. I really enjoy it and it is all guided by love.“



When the team created AI photos of themselves and what they do, we think they got it right with Ty!

Chef Ty’s Sweet Southern Cornbread Recipe:

1 pound of butter
1/2 cup of sugar
1 cup of milk
3 large eggs
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
2 cups of white corn meal
2 cups of all purpose flour
1/2 teaspoon of salt.

Preheat oven to 350°.
Melt butter in pot, whisk in sugar, until smooth, turn off heat. First whisk in milk, then whisk in eggs. Mix all of the dry ingredients together. Pour liquid mix into dry mix and blend together until all the dry is mixed. A few lumps are fine, then pour batter into sprayed pan and bake for 30-33 mins.... rub butter on top then cut.

Serving Grace Resale Shop Celebrates Grand Opening

New store supports Meals on Wheels of Lee County and Methodist Senior Services

Serving Grace Resale, a unique shopping destination with a meaningful mission, celebrated its grand opening on Friday, April 10, 2026, at the Tupelo Furniture Market.

Serving Grace features 3,000 square feet of treasures, offering something for everyone, from collectors and bargain hunters to those searching for home décor, furnishings, clothing, and shoes. Every item has been generously donated by the community. Serving Grace Resale is a not-for-profit resale store dedicated to supporting Meals on Wheels of Lee County and the ministry of Methodist Senior Services.

"The mission remains as important today as ever," said Christie Vance, President/CEO of Methodist Senior Services. "As the senior population grows, so does the need for reliable and nutritious meals, safety checks, and connection. Programs like Meals on Wheels help older adults remain in their own homes with dignity and independence."

Seashore Highlands Retirement Community
A MINISTRY OF METHODIST SENIOR SERVICES

12170 Highland Way
Gulfport, MS 39503
(228)831-7000

Understanding Dementia Panel Discussion

June 9
10 AM to 1:30 PM

First United Methodist Church Gulfport
2301 15th Street
Gulfport, MS 39501

Understanding dementia can feel overwhelming – but you don't have to navigate it alone. Join us for a community discussion where you can learn from individuals who have walked alongside loved ones with dementia who will share personal stories, practical advice, and encouragement for those navigating similar journeys.

- Lunch provided.
- **FREE** Limited number of respite care spots available during event. (***Offered by Home Under The Dome - MUST pre-register.***)

Scan Me

Scan the QR code or call 228.831.7000 to register.

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Be Part of the MSS Story

As you've read, Betty McGee never set out to be extraordinary.

She simply gave—faithfully, consistently, and quietly—over a lifetime.

And today, that same spirit of generosity is what makes places like Trinity possible.

A place where:
- Residents are cared for with dignity and compassion
- Families find peace in difficult seasons
- Faith is lived out in everyday acts of service

Betty's story is still being written. And so is the story of every person who calls an MSS campus home. Your gift helps continue that story.

Like Betty, you don't have to do something extraordinary— just something faithful.

www.mss.org/give-today

Give today and be part of a story that comes full circle.

Our Mission:
to serve older adults in the spirit of Christian love

Our Vision:
to ensure Mississippi elders and our team members are safe, secure, supported and loved

Our Core Values:
- *Servant ministry*
- *The dignity of elders*
- *Compassion for those we serve*
- *Equity and empowerment*
- *Operational excellence*
- *Innovative service*