

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE - DECEMBER 4 EDITION

United Methodists called to pray; South Georgia's week of prayer Jan. 14-21, 2018

As The United Methodist Church grapples with issues related to human sexuality and the future of the denomination, United Methodists are being called to pray intentionally and fervently.

The denomination-wide "Praying Our Way Forward" initiative launched New Year's Day 2017 with 75 weeks of focused prayer for The United Methodist Church. Each annual conference will take one week to pray for the mission of The United Methodist Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and for the work of the Commission on a Way Forward. The Commission was proposed by the Council of Bishops and approved by the 2016 General Conference to do a complete examination and possible revision of every paragraph of the Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and explore options that help to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church.

The effort began in the North Carolina Conference and will conclude in the West Angola Episcopal area in June 2018. The South Georgia Conference's week of prayer is Jan. 14-21, 2018.

During this week of prayer, South Georgia United Methodists are being asked to commit to worshipping and praying daily using a guide written by the Conference's deacons. A breath prayer is provided to help guide each day's worship.

"It's been a holy and sacred privilege for the deacons to come together for this common goal," said Rev. Meg Procopio, minister of congregational care at Isle of Hope United Methodist Church in Savannah and Chair of the Order of Deacons. "We have put our hearts into words and we are grateful to have been asked. We hope it will be used for wisdom and discernment."

The "South Georgia Prays" daily prayer guide may be found online here. Prayers will also be sent daily via email and posted on the Conference's Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram pages. [Click here to subscribe to the daily prayer emails.](#)

Bishop Bryan has also asked each congregation to take time during its Jan. 21 worship service to pray for the Commission on a Way Forward. He gave pastors and church leaders several ways to engage in corporate prayer for the work of the commission and the future of The United Methodist Church: through a prayer from the umcprays.org website, with an original prayer, or by hosting a special prayer vigil.

“We are called to a posture of prayer, praying for God’s leadership to guide us effectively in fulfilling the mission of the church,” he said. “All persons – clergy and laity, conferences and congregations – across the denomination are invited to pray for God’s guidance.”

During phase 1 of the “Praying Our Way Forward” initiative, 84 bishops of the church spent 15 minutes each day for four months in prayer for the selection and initial work of the Commission on A Way Forward.

Churches and individuals are invited to join the initiative beyond their annual conference’s week of prayer by praying daily and fasting weekly for the Church, its mission, and future. The Upper Room has developed umcprays.org, a website where prayers, information, and resources can be shared.

Cordele church’s crops help grow congregation

Midway United Methodist Church is in the heart of Cordele, the self-proclaimed Watermelon Capital of the World.

With deep agricultural roots, it makes sense that the church’s congregation, pastored by a former farmer, would begin a food and gleaning ministry in the acre-and-a-half field that sits next to the church.

What they didn’t necessarily expect, however, was how the small church would blossom right alongside the crops.

What started as a pumpkin patch several years ago now is a field full of 37 fruit trees and too many tomato, loofah, squash, sweet potato, watermelon, and strawberry crops to count.

The crops, planted - as an old wives’ tell dictates - on Good Friday, are harvested and given to Rev. Ed Eschmann to share with neighbors during his house calls. Additional fruits and vegetables are shared with senior citizens in the community.

“I farmed for 20 years; it gets in your blood,” Rev. Eschmann said. “This is an agricultural community, so the appointment is a good fit for me. The food and produce goes mostly to seniors in the community. It gives us a way to visit and get to know people.”

As Rev. Eschmann meets neighbors and delivers fresh fruit and vegetables to those he visits, he builds friendships and relationships and invites them to worship services and the church's monthly suppers.

As the crops have grown, so has the congregation. In just the past few months, they've welcomed seven new members. They have also seen dozens of new faces at their monthly community dinner, held on the third Friday of each month.

"They saw us reaching out to the community and came," Rev. Eschmann said.

Gardening and tending the crops have also brought the small congregation together, said Janis Summers, whose family owns the field. They loan the land to the church, and farming this small plot of fruit trees and crops has become her passion.

"It was truly an inspiration from God," said Summers, a self-professed former city girl (she moved from Marietta a few years after marrying husband, Carden). "I just felt like I had to do it; it wouldn't let go."

Rev. Eschmann originally wanted to plant watermelons, but found out "they're so plentiful in the county they can't be given away," so pumpkins were initially planted. After one fun but labor-intensive season planting and tending pumpkins, the congregation decided that low-maintenance fruit trees and vegetables would be a better idea.

Summers researched fruit trees that can thrive without much tending, and now the field has pear, plum, fig, loquat, and Japanese persimmon trees. With a cross and a bench under the old oak trees, the "Fruits of the Spirit Orchard," has also become a quiet retreat, a refuge and place of solitude for many in the congregation and community.

"It's unified our little neighborhood and our congregation," she said. "It's a way to minister to people and invite them in."

New Conference Center less than \$500,000 from being fully funded

After being revised and "right-sized," South Georgia's new Conference Center is \$492,000 from being fully funded. That's a \$700,000 savings from the original construction estimate.

"Anytime you can save \$700,000 and still fulfill a vision, it's a good thing!" said Bishop Lawson Bryan.

The cost savings are a result of a collaborative partnership with Wesleyan College, which recently built Pierce Chapel and the Corn Center, and their willingness to allow the Conference use of those conference and food-service spaces.

Several options were carefully considered before Bishop Bryan and the Conference Center Task Force revised the original architectural plans and decided upon this course of action: locating in an existing church (either active or closed); leasing or purchasing commercial property; or continuing the original plan to locate at Wesleyan College.

“In comparing the pros and cons of each option I found a distinct advantage of the Wesleyan College property,” Bishop Bryan said, noting that being located on the college campus would allow the Conference to pursue a missional partnership with the United Methodist-related college and give access to food service, security service, and meeting space of varying sizes. “There is one more very important consideration: cost. Since the original conference center plans were drawn, Wesleyan College has added a handsome new building, and having that space available for our use has allowed us to revisit the architectural plans for the conference center.”

The Conference is currently paying more than \$50,000 each year to rent the Episcopal Office and the Administrative Services Office in Macon. Both of these facilities are overcrowded, have inadequate parking, and are faced with security concerns. The 2009 Annual Conference voted on and approved the building of a new Conference Center in Macon on the grounds of Wesleyan College.

Bishop Bryan thanked those who have given and pledged his commitment to completing the project and raising the remaining funds.

“I want to thank the individual donors, churches, classes, groups, and foundations whose contributions have brought us to this point,” he said. “Thanks also to the Conference Trustees and the Council on Finance and Administration for their guidance in working with the New Conference Center Committee. I have learned just how much this center will serve the South Georgia Conference by bringing our staff together under one roof. We will truly be Alive Together in Christ.”

Bishop Bryan asks for prayers and assistance identifying those who can help close the gap on the building project. To support the new Conference Center, send checks to Dr. Derek McAleer, Administrative Services, PO Box 13145, Macon, GA 31208. Or [click here to give online.](#)

South Georgia UM students receive more than \$26,000 in scholarships from GBHEM

Eighteen South Georgia United Methodist students have received scholarships totalling \$26,550 from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM).

The students received the funds through the Rev. Dr. Karen Layman Gift of Hope Scholarship, the United Methodist General Scholarship, the Ethnic Scholarship, the E. Craig Brandenburg Scholarship, the Miriam Hoffman Scholarship, the HANA Scholarship, and the UM Allocation. Each scholarship recipient was awarded amounts ranging from \$500 to \$3,000 based on the scholarship.

“To have this support gives me confirmation that this is God’s plan for me,” said Ana Salgado, a freshman at Reinhardt University and a member of Lake Park United Methodist Church. The 18-year-old graduate of Lowndes High School in Valdosta is pursuing a bachelor’s degree in biological sciences and plans to attend medical school. Salgado says the GBHEM scholarship helps her attend her “dream school” and achieve her goals.

“I am thankful and grateful for this opportunity and for the scholarship,” she said.

GBHEM’s Office of Loans and Scholarships will award more than 2,500 students a total of \$5 million in financial assistance this year. Support of and giving through United Methodist Student Day, World Communion Sunday, and Native American Sunday help fund a portion of the scholarships. The remaining funds for the awards come from gifts, annuities, and endowments GBHEM has invested and administered for decades.

“For centuries, the people called Methodists have helped ensure all people have the opportunity to love God with all their hearts and their minds by building and supporting schools, colleges, and collegiate ministries,” said Rev. Michael McCord, executive director of the UM Commission on Higher Education and Campus Ministry. “Our commitment to financially supporting our students is one of the most powerful ways to bring about transformation in the world. It is evident, through the thousands of students supported, that our investment is also changing lives in the South Georgia Annual Conference.”

Students who are members of The United Methodist Church may apply for a Fall 2018 GBHEM scholarship online between Jan. 3, 2018 – March 7, 2018 at www.gbhem.org/scholarshipapplication.

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Delegate counts for 2020 General Conference announced

The Secretary of the General Conference announced today the number of delegates assigned to each annual conference for the 2020 General Conference has been calculated, and certificates of election are on the way to bishops and annual conference secretaries.

The computation involves applying a statistical formula contained in The Book of Discipline 2016, which is based on the number of clergy and professing lay members of each annual conference. Since the Book of Discipline caps the maximum number of delegates at 1,000—and the application of the formula resulted in a higher number—the Commission on the General Conference adjusted the number proportionately to reflect as closely as possible the number of delegates to the last General Conference. The adjustment of the formula resulted in 862 delegates to the 2020 General Conference, as compared to 864 in 2016.

For the first time ever, due to a change enacted by the 2016 General Conference, the statistics used for calculation were derived from annual conference journals submitted to the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) by annual conference secretaries.

An audit of the journal library at the beginning of the year revealed that 30 annual conferences had never submitted a journal, and the most recent journals for 39 annual conferences were dated 2012 or earlier, with one dating back as far as 1961. The most recent journal on record for 65 annual conferences dated from 2013-2016.

“Extraordinary effort and innovation on the part of Commission staff, staff at GCFA and other general agencies and annual conference leaders resulted in the collection of 100% of the necessary journals from around the world in less than ten months,” said the Rev. Gary Graves, secretary of the General Conference. “This was accomplished while also verifying data for five new annual conferences created during the 2016 sessions of the Africa, West Africa, and Philippines Central Conferences.”

Delegates to the 2020 General Conference will be representative of the five jurisdictions and seven central conferences throughout the world, as well as churches with which The United Methodist Church has a concordat agreement. The 862 delegates are distributed as follows:

North Central Jurisdiction: 88
Northeastern Jurisdiction: 84
South Central Jurisdiction: 102
Southeastern Jurisdiction: 182
Western Jurisdiction: 26
Africa Central Conference: 40
Central and Southern Europe Central Conference: 14
Congo Central Conference: 152
Germany Central Conference: 6
Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference: 20

Philippines Central Conference: 52
West Africa Central Conference: 86
Concordat:10

Prepare the way

**FROM THE BISHOP
R. LAWSON BRYAN**

“Prepare the way of the Lord” is the great rallying cry of the Advent season. The prophet Isaiah gives a vivid description of that preparation: hills and valleys made level, crooked places made straight, and rough places made smooth so that the glory of the Lord may be revealed and all people see it together!

Preparing the way is also a good description of the work of laity and clergy in the local churches and communities of South Georgia - we seek to focus attention and resources on doing those things that prepare the way for making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

As you work in your local churches, in your communities, and out in the world to prepare the way, I am working with fellow United Methodist bishops and members of the Commission on a Way Forward to prepare the way ahead for our Church.

We are preparing for the recommendations for a Way Forward that will come from the Council of Bishops in 2018 and will be acted upon at the special session of General Conference in February 2019.

The Commission on a Way Forward was formed by the Council of Bishops and charged with bringing recommendations that the council can use to help decide what to recommend to the General Conference. The 32-member commission includes both laity and clergy. They will make their final recommendations to the Council of Bishops in late spring 2018.

Recently, the Commission on a Way Forward presented three “sketches” to the Council of Bishops in order to get feedback. Now the Council of Bishops is encouraging each annual conference to design ways to help our members evaluate each sketch in light of the convictions and values of the annual conference.

I am happy to report the South Georgia Conference has already begun equipping our laity and clergy leaders to give strong leadership in this process. Recently the Leadership Forum met to consider how we want to lead. The senior ministers of the 25 churches with highest average worship attendance have also asked the same question of themselves. This week, several groups of lay and clergy leaders will meet Dr. Jorge Acevedo, lead pastor of a multi-site church in the Florida Conference and a member of the Commission on a Way Forward. Dr. Acevedo will

address the work of the Commission on a Way Forward and will describe the three “sketches.” Participants will then have an opportunity for small group dialogue about the three “sketches” in light of the convictions and values that keep us Alive Together in Christ in South Georgia. This will result in at least 100 laity and clergy who are equipped to lead similar dialogues throughout our conference.

I will be working with the district superintendents and the district lay leaders to define a process of engagement that will fit each district. The goal is to give as many persons as possible the opportunity to be informed about the three “sketches” and to evaluate them based on the convictions and values of our conference. This will give me valuable input to take to the Council on Bishops meeting in February 2018. Specific plans for each district will be announced as soon as they are finalized.

In January, we will hold a meeting of our elected delegates to general conference and jurisdictional conference. They too will be comparing and contrasting the three “sketches.”

It is important to note that these “sketches” are not yet full-blown models. That is why this is the right time for our conference to be studying the “sketches” and giving input to the Commission on a Way Forward. Having total engagement throughout our conference will go a long way toward addressing the anxiety that naturally arises when considering matters of such magnitude.

Please let me repeat what I have been saying for a year now: we are the South Georgia Conference. No one is going to invade our conference and force upon us a particular way forward. We have a voice in this decision. We have a voice in the entire process. This next 12 months can be a time when we demonstrate spiritual maturity, a non-anxious presence, firm trust in Christ, love for one another, and the vitality that comes when we truly are Alive Together in Christ.

For now, please read Tod Bolsinger’s book, *Canoeing The Mountains*, which is sub-titled, “Christian leadership in uncharted territory.” The book draws on the Lewis and Clark Expedition and what they did when they went as far as the maps could take them and then had to operate “off the map.” There are many useful insights in this book. I strongly encourage you to read it and discuss it with others. After all, whatever position we may hold on any issue the big question is: How will we lead so that we are faithful to the Gospel, open to the Holy Spirit, and Alive Together in Christ?

Mark’s Gospel says that “preparing the way” is actually “the beginning of the Good News of Jesus Christ” (Mark 1:1-8). That is our goal as we prepare the way for our Way Forward in The UMC. Thank you for your prayers and your personal involvement in preparing the way.

Alive Together in Christ,
Lawson Bryan

Faith to Discern

Winter Quarter: Faith in Action

Unit 1: The Early Church Proclaims Faith in Christ

Sunday school lesson for the week of December 10, 2017

By Helen and Rev. Sam Rogers

Scripture Lesson: Acts 13:1-12

The second lesson skips over several chapters in the Book of Acts describing how the church begins to spread out from Jerusalem, as Jesus had told them in his valedictory in Acts 1:7ff—“you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and unto the ends of the earth.”

Persecution and opposition were part of this dispersion. Today’s lesson focuses on the church in Syrian Antioch, one of the largest cities of the Roman Empire. The church in Antioch is where the followers of Jesus were first called “Christian.” (Acts 11:25) Five leaders of the church there are named.

We know two of the names very well—Barnabas and Saul/Paul, but the other three are unknown to us. From Luke’s information, whom they were is very significant. All are called prophets and teachers, titles Paul will later use when he lists the gifts of the Spirit in Romans and Corinthians.

We usually think of prophets as predictors of the future, but, in the biblical context, they were more spokesmen for God—a “forth-teller” rather than a “fore-teller.” Teachers were those who taught the faith to converts. Each task is important in the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church. In his call to ministry, Sam always felt God called him to do both—preach and teach. Helen answered a definite call to teach. Preaching relates the faith to the world in which we live, and believers need good teaching to be thoroughly grounded in the matters of the faith. Hopefully, we were faithful to our calls!

The three other leaders in Antioch were Simeon/Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, and most intriguing of all, Manaen, a childhood friend of Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. This man was tetrarch of Galilee and had John the Baptist beheaded!

The alternate name of Simeon—Niger—identifies him as being black and from Africa, south of the Sahara. Lucius was a Roman/Latin name and his home was Cyprus, also the home of Barnabas and the first stop on the First Missionary journey.

The ethnic and cultural diversity revealed in Acts 13:1 tells us much about the early church. People from every race and class were already followers of Christ. We also learn very soon of a third person who became part of the team—John, whose surname was Mark! John Mark's home in Jerusalem is where the early church gathered—the place of the Upper Room!!

These men were in earnest prayer, with fasting, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit for direction—and they got it! We don't know anything about the “how” of the answer, but we can surely see the results of the answer—obedience! Our response to the guidance of God through the work of the Spirit is always the critical dimension. Do we get up and go to the task before us? Barnabas and Saul did!

Barnabas is an important person for us to remember. He is the one who takes Saul to the church in Jerusalem to assure them he is a convert to the faith and a brother in Christ! They know Saul as a threat and are afraid of him. Barnabas—“the Son of Encouragement” – says the right word at the right time. Also, we know he was a generous man who shared his resources with the Jerusalem church when they were suffering deprivation and hunger. We also learn Barnabas is John Mark's cousin! (Colossians 4:10) How marvelous are God's ways when a man like Barnabas is open and trusting to the leadership of the Spirit.

After their commissioning, Barnabas, Saul, and Mark sail from Seleucia, the seaport 12 miles from Antioch, to Salamis on Cyprus. Salamis is the easternmost port on the island and closest to Antioch. Already, we can see a strategy at work in this beginning of the breakout of the faith to the west. Cyprus was where Barnabas was reared. He has many connections of family and friends. Moreover, they begin their work in the Jewish synagogue where persons who believed in God were gathered to worship. This pattern becomes habitual with Saul throughout his journeys.

Today, this pattern, used by these three, is called *affinity evangelism*. When the faith is shared with a person with whom you have a connection, the reception is much more likely than with a stranger. The Fellowship of Christian Athletes is a modern example of this pattern in practice. One athlete shares with another their faith. The reinforcement is very effective.

All kinds of patterns work just as well. Years ago in South Georgia, Ross Freeman urged us to use *frangelism—friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors!* Just think about your connections and use them for the glory of God and the spiritual well-being of those you touch. Remember, the gospel receives a better hearing when communicated to those known to have something in common with the messenger.

Luke's travelogue takes the missionary team from one end of Cyprus (Salamis) to the other (Paphos). They must have been doing a good job because both interest and opposition meet

them. The interest came from the pro-consul Sergius Paulus, an appointee of the Roman Senate, and the opposition from one named Bar-Jesus (Son of Jesus/Joshua), who was one of the pro-consul's advisors—and a sorcerer. Sorcery was a pseudo religious practice, using all kinds of deceitful acts to manipulate people.

At this point in Acts, Luke changes Saul's name to Paul – his Latin name—and the team is no longer Barnabas and Saul, but Paul and Barnabas, reflecting the leadership is being passed. It is Paul who confronts the evil represented by the sorcerer, who has another name as well—Elymas. Without hesitation he labels this man and his work as totally contrary to God's plan for “the right ways of the Lord.”

Paul also gives him a warning and a sign with which Paul himself is very familiar—blindness. We do not know the results with Elymas, but the pro-consul became a believer. The power of God working in Paul through the Holy Spirit won that battle...there would be many more.

We too are in a battle against forces opposed to God's plan for the earth and its people. Our faith should set the standard in discerning which battles to fight. Surely this decision is most difficult, and we will not always win, but we must draw the line when the obvious intentions and will of God are in jeopardy. We truly must become “Soldiers of the Cross.” Fight the good fight and keep the faith.

Helen and Rev. Sam Rogers are a retired clergy couple. They can be reached at sgr3@cox.net.

Faith to Persevere

Winter Quarter: Faith in Action

Unit 1: The Early Church Proclaims Faith in Christ

Sunday school lesson for the week of December 17, 2017

By Helen and Rev. Sam Rogers

Scripture Lesson: Acts 14: 8-11; 19-23

Background Scripture: Acts 14

We continue with Paul, Barnabas and Mark on what is now called the First Missionary Journey. The sacred travelogue moves us from the island of Cyprus to Perga on the mainland of Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. We believe it imperative to read chapters 13 and 14 in Acts in its entirety, or otherwise you will miss some important info!

Earlier (in chapter 13) we learn, on reaching Perga, John Mark left the team. Later this action of Barnabas' relative will cause a severe disagreement with Paul, resulting in a parting of the ways between these two stalwart Christian men. (Acts 15:36ff) For the time being, however, for the remainder of this journey, the team is now two—Paul and Barnabas.

They had been in Antioch of Pisidia and have moved inland to Iconium and now to Lystra, where today's lesson begins. A man who had been lame from birth, much like the one Peter met at the Temple in Jerusalem, was in the synagogue listening intently as Paul preached the good news of Jesus—who He was and what He had accomplished on earth. Paul discerned faith in the man and ordered him to stand and walk. Like the cripple in the temple, not only did he stand, he jumped (NIV)!

Although Greek was the common language, those who lived in the cities of Iconium and Lystra had a dialect of their own. In their tongue they proclaimed Barnabas and Paul gods—Zeus and Hermes! Yes, here these men are proclaimed incarnate gods. Paul and Barnabas were incensed! They indeed had a message about the Incarnate One, Who came to give His life for all humanity, and the pagan priest of Zeus was about to offer sacrifices to them! Astounding! Unbelievable! Yet it happened!

Then, emissaries from Antioch and Iconium arrived. They had been upset by the team's witness in their cities. The gospel always creates opposition wherever preached. Usually, someone's pocketbook is impacted, or some sensitive pet prejudice is touched—anger is the result. Paul and Barnabas had left these cities because opposition was growing to a violent level, and now the voices of hatred are raised in Lystra! From being worshipped as a god, Paul is now stoned to near death. How fickle we human beings can be! Reminds us of Palm Sunday and Good Friday!

Perceptions can make a huge difference. We have found many different understandings of what it means to be a Christian. The culture defines us in terms that can be totally wrong or warped. Can you name some? When we enter the world of partisan politics, what can be a profound witness to the truth of Christ can be twisted into a political conundrum. Often we faithful church-goers can bring the misunderstanding upon ourselves as we allow attitudes and actions to betray the very nature of Jesus as He related to people to show God's universal love. Narrowness, bigotry, and prejudice become the norm rather than expressions of grace and mercy. Iconium was little different from South Georgia! Today we don't stone those with whom we disagree, but the anger and vitriolic language is present nonetheless.

Paul is left for dead outside the city. A wonderful affirmation occurs in verse 20: "...when the disciples gathered around him..." he returned to the city. In spite of opposition, the seeds have

been planted and have flourished! There are new followers of Jesus who take care of Paul, and, when he has healed sufficiently, he and Barnabas continue their mission to the next city of Derbe.

Later, in his letter to the Galatians, which geographically includes this area, Paul declares that he bears on his body “the marks of Jesus.” (Galatians 6:17) He will bear those scars from the stoning the rest of his life!

Before ending the mission and returning home, the team returns to the very cities where they had met such serious opposition and threats. Why? Their return was based on a very basic truth about discipleship. We need encouragement and growth in the Spirit and in understanding. Later, after the Council in Jerusalem (chapter 15), Paul again wants to revisit these churches for the same reason.

Paul understood the church as a fellowship of worshipping, of learning, of growing, of sharing, and of suffering together for the joy of serving the Lord. A very sad situation occurs when a disciple tries to travel the faith journey alone. We are NOT “Lone Rangers!” Paul would describe the church many times as a body with many parts—none of which can exist without the others.

Barnabas and Paul return to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch to reinforce the fledgling congregations in their infancy. They shared their personal affirmations, their knowledge of the scriptures, their experiences in their own faith journey, and their understanding of the constant presence of threats to each believer and to the individual churches.

Ongoing teaching is vitally important, even for those of us “who grew up in the church,” but even more so for new brothers and sisters in the faith. Never assume you can’t learn and grow, regardless of age. We are in our eighth decade of life, and we still read, study, write, and share our faith—and receive encouragement and learning from others. We believe this pattern will continue as we move from this life to LIFE!

Paul and Barnabas innately understood this truth, and their return to the scenes of hostility and violence is a witness to these new Christians of their own faith. Where is your witness needed today to encourage others who see you stand tall in the face of opposition to the love and compassion of Jesus? Just stop, look, and listen!

Two actions of this missionary team are important to note. They chose leaders who took time to pray, fast, and listen for the guidance of God through the Holy Spirit. The discernment to pick the right people for leadership in the church is an ongoing challenge. As pastor, Sam always took the work of the nominating committee as an opportunity, not a chore required by the Discipline.

Character, habits, commitment, talents, and willingness to give the time to the task are critical in choosing the right persons to lead.

Their second action was a word of caution about suffering. In verse 22 they spelled it out: “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” This suffering is not pointless. We are living in step with Jesus, and it is the result of following Jesus and not conforming to the pattern of the world. God’s kingdom is always cross shaped!

Helen and Rev. Sam Rogers are a retired clergy couple. They can be reached at sgr3@cox.net.

Leadership is caught more than taught

LEADERSHIP REALLY MATTERS

ANNE BOSARGE

REV. JAY HANSON

We’ve entered cold and flu season. This is the time of year when germs seem to be lurking, powerful and invisible on every surface. Because of the nature of these sneaky germs, it’s nearly impossible to go through a cold and flu season without at least once coming down with a case of the sniffles.

Have you ever thought about the fact that great leadership is caught more than taught? Just by being around a great leader others can “catch” the desire to build strong character, influence those around them, and live a life of intentionality and purpose. Imagine the possibilities if our leadership went viral and a leadership ripple starting in South Georgia produced a tidal wave of positive God-centered leadership around the globe! Does that excite you? Read on to learn how you can become contagious!

1. **Choose your attitude:** Did you know our brains are hardwired to get in sync with those around us? That means when we’re with people who are positive, excited, and passionate, we tend to feel the same way. Even the simple act of smiling is contagious! When someone smiles at us, it’s a natural response for us to want to mimic their facial expression in an attempt to connect and understand them better. Unfortunately, however, this concept works both ways. Bad attitudes are also viral and can quickly create a culture of toxicity.
2. **Be relationally generous:** When leaders pay attention to the needs of those around them and take time to care and invest relationally, this creates team members who care about

the needs of others. Those whose lives have been invested in then invest in others. When people feel cared for they are able and willing to care for others in turn. However, when those around you are lacking love, acceptance, and understanding, or do not feel known, they will operate from a scarcity mentality and won't have the reserves they need to offer love and grace to others.

3. **Be unshakable:** A leader who remains calm under pressure and isn't tossed around by hardship or public opinion spreads a general sense of peace to all those around. "I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With Him at my right hand, I will not be shaken" (Psalm 16:8). How can you genuinely maintain your composure and respond to tough situations with a quiet spirit? Put your situation into perspective. Ask yourself, how will this affect me in one hour? One day? 10 days? One year? Sometimes the things that cause us to lose our peace are small things, insignificant in the long run. If no one is hurting or suffering except your pride and comfort, consider setting aside your preferences for the sake of your witness to those around you.
4. **Invest heavily:** Own 100 percent of the effort and results in the completion of whatever you're called. Colossians 3:23 says it this way, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." A leader who is completely invested and has ownership of both successes and failures demonstrates to her team that failure is a normal part of life and is not fatal. This balance approach to failure invites others to take risks and follow their passion and calling as well.
5. **Lead with courage:** "The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (Psalm 118:6). God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, has a plan for you. But He doesn't leave you to accomplish it on your own - He walks beside you every step of the way, working in and through you to accomplish His will and bring glory to His name. Take courage! Every time you take a step of faith, especially in the midst of turmoil and uncertainty, you model courage to others. Your example provides the motivation they need to faithfully walk out God's plan for their lives. Your courage encourages others.

These are just a few of the ways our leadership can be contagious! This cold and flu season, keep your germs but spread your leadership! Share your passion and live out your calling in a way that makes people want to join you on the journey and catch the vision of what God is calling us to do as leaders in His church.

Jay Hanson, Lead Pastor, and Anne Bosarge, Multi-Campus Director, serve at The Chapel Ministries in Brunswick. They love sharing about the ways God is moving in their church. Contact them at jay@thechapelministries.com and anne@thechapelministries.com for more information.

Susanna Wesley's Rules for Raising Godly Children

JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS
DAVE HANSON

Susanna Wesley's Rules for Raising Godly Children:

- Eating between meals not allowed.
- Take medicine without complaining.
- Obey parents (break their self-will). How will they ever obey God if they do not obey their parents?
- Teach them to pray as soon as they can speak.
- Require all to be still during Family Worship.
- Teach them to cry softly so as not to disturb others.
- Give them nothing that they cry for.
- To prevent lying, punish no fault which is first confessed and repented of.
- Never allow a sinful act to go unpunished.
- Never punish a child twice for a single offense.
- Comment and reward good behavior.
- Any attempt to please, even if poorly performed, should be commended.
- Preserve property rights, even in smallest matters.
- Strictly keep all promised.
- Teach children to fear the rod.

Retired Clergy Birthdays - December 2017

- 12/01 – Virginia Connelly: 2525 Norris Rd., Apt. 125; Columbus, GA 31907
12/06 – Charles Adams: 301 Island St.; Lake Park, GA 31636
12/06 – Eugene Cariker: 102 Ingham St.; Simons Island, GA 31522
12/09 – Mollie Danner: 1415 Sunrise Ave.; Moultrie, GA 31768
12/09 – Clifford Wallace: 136 Pineworth Pointe Dr.; Macon, GA 31216
12/09 – Don Warren: 450 Cove Dr.; Marietta, GA 30067
12/10 – Charles Cox: 9800 County Line Rd.; Midland, GA 31820
12/10 – Britt Priddy: 109 Churchview Dr.; Leesburg, GA 31763
12/10 – Joe Stevens: 892 Dublin Hwy.; Eastman, GA 31023
12/10 – Cephaz Williamson: 4815 Tirol Pass; Ft. Wayne, IN 46835
12/12 – Richard Aultman: 120 Timber Ridge Blvd.; Byron, GA 31008
12/12 – Alan Miller: 2099 Corsica Way SW; Marietta, GA 30008

12/15 – Paula Lytle: 102 Hazelwood Dr.; Statesboro, GA 30458
12/16 – Pat Holbert: PO Box 1004; Louisville, GA 30434
12/19 – Charles Dennis: PO Box 56; Donalsonville, GA 39845
12/19 – Morgan Johnson: 5000 Fairbanks Ave. #148; Alexandria, VA 22311-1227
12/22 – Larry Giles: 214 Jasmine St.; Sandersville, GA 31082
12/22 – Lenton Powell: PO Box 42986; Atlanta, GA 30311
12/26 – F. Wayne Mitchell: 431 Oak Ridge Dr.; Nashville, GA 31639
12/26 – Diane Shedd: 515 Meadow Green Dr.; Davenport, FL 33837
12/28 – William Blalock: PO Box 187; Vidalia, GA 30475
12/31 – John Carroll, Jr.: 4663 Wesleyan Woods Dr.; Macon, GA 31210
12/31 – William A. Smith: 102 Pierce Rd.; Reynolds, GA 31076

OBITUARIES

William Homer “Billy” McCoy

William Homer “Billy” McCoy, 75, of Moultrie, GA, died Monday, Nov. 27, 2017, at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital.

Services were held Wednesday, Nov. 29, 2017, at Cobb Funeral Chapel with the Rev. Stephen Grantham and the Rev. Robert McCoy, Jr. officiating.

Born Nov. 1, 1942, in Waycross, he was the son of the late John F. McCoy, Sr. and Margaret Brasington McCoy Dethman. Mr. McCoy was a United States Army veteran and retired from Newton County as a school teacher. He was the preacher at Lenox United Methodist Church.

Survivors include his wife, Michelle Davidson McCoy of Moultrie; two sons, William Brasington “Bo” McCoy of Orange, Texas and Alexander Morrison “Alex” McCoy and Patty of New Castle, Penn.; step-son, Joseph Davidson Fowler and Cassidy of Moultrie; step-grandson, Jax Davidson Fowler; brothers, John McCoy, Jr. and Barbara of Winston Salem, N.C.; Robert McCoy and Toni of Moultrie; sister, Ann Lindell and Ollie of Jesup; grandson-to-be-born, Hudson Frank McCoy; and several nieces and nephews and other family members.

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Events in the South Georgia Conference – 12/4/2017 edition

Bishop Bryan's calendar

It's now easier than ever to find out when and where Bishop Bryan will be preaching in your district and around the conference. Visit the updated [calendar and events page](#) on the conference website and look for the red highlighted dates.

Early Response Team and Chainsaw Training, Roberta – Dec. 9

An ERT and Chainsaw training will be held Saturday, Dec. 9 at Roberta UMC. [Register here](#). Early Response Team Trainings help equip individuals and teams to respond in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The cost for the training is \$25 per participant. At the training, participants will receive an ERT Training Manual and upon completing the course will receive an UMCOR ID Badge and a T-shirt. Background checks are required before receiving badges. Please provide proof of background check. Safe Sanctuaries background checks are applicable. Lunch is also included in the cost. *Chainsaw training requirements: complete and pass ERT training offered in the morning or hold current ERT badge. Cost for chainsaw training only is \$12. If taken following the ERT class in the morning \$6. The cost includes your textbook and badge. This chainsaw training will be demonstration and lecture style. There must be 6 participants for a chainsaw course to make. ERT training time: 8 a.m. - 1 p.m.; Chainsaw training time: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m. To schedule an ERT training/chainsaw training, please contact Luis Morales at morhill@gmail.com.

Human Relations Day - Jan. 14, 2018

Sunday, Jan. 14, is [Human Relations Day](#), one of six churchwide Special Sundays with offerings for The United Methodist Church. Human Relations Day strengthens United Methodist outreach to communities in the United States and Puerto Rico, encouraging social justice and work with at-risk youths. [Click here to learn more.](#)

Praying Our Way Forward: South Georgia Conference Week of Prayer - Jan. 14-21, 2018

The denomination-wide 'Praying Our Way Forward' initiative launched on New Year's Day 2017 with 75 weeks of focused prayer for The United Methodist Church. Each annual conference will take one week to have intentional prayer for the mission of The United Methodist Church to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world and for the work of the Commission on a Way Forward. The effort began in the North Carolina Conference and will wrap up in the West Angola Episcopal area in June 2018. The South Georgia Conference's week of prayer will be January 14-21, 2018. **Thanks to the deacons of our annual conference, led by Rev. Meg Procopio, resources will be available soon to guide our week of prayer.* Visit umcprays.org to sign up to receive daily prayers.

Winter Conference - Jan. 28-31, 2018

Winter Conference, sponsored by Epworth By The Sea, is set for January 28-31, 2018. Bishop James Swanson and Bishop Lawson Bryan will participate in leading the conference. Dr. Ben Witherington, III, Professor of New Testament at Asbury Theological Seminary, will be the Bible teacher. More information: epworthbythesea.org/events/.