

## **SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – FEBRUARY 19 EDITION**

### **GSU Wesley Foundation student serves Statesboro children, families**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Listen to God. Do what he says.

That's what Georgia Southern University senior Konner Smith did two years ago when she and her roommate bought a few bags of food and drove around Statesboro until they ended up at Butler Homes.

They saw a friendly looking apartment – one with frog stickers on the door – and knocked.

Since then, a beautiful friendship has blossomed and a ministry has been born. Smith and the woman who opened the door, Grace, have become great friends. And twice a week for more than two years Smith and several others from the GSU Wesley Foundation have been visiting the children who live at Butler Homes to tutor, play, and pray with them.

“(Grace) made it very clear that their primary need was nothing monetary, but rather someone to consistently love these kids through their hardships and to help break the cycle that comes with poverty and violence and abuse,” Smith said. “I thought, I can do that, I can love anyone!”

She went back the next day, cooked hotdogs, and invited everyone in the apartment complex to a cookout. More than 30 kids showed up to eat and play. She's been going back ever since.

“I just loved these kids from the first day and knew this place would be super important to me.”

Every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, Smith and a team of about 20 volunteers arrive at Butler Homes apartments ready to help with homework, hang out, and play with the kids. They also spend time with the parents, building relationships and getting to know them.

“Money can't fix or heal people. Money isn't the answer. Jesus is. Relationships are,” said Smith, a GSU senior who has been invited to countless Butler Homes birthday parties, cookouts, and family gatherings. “I never wanted to put a Band-Aid on things. I wanted to invest my time in people. I wanted to break the cycle.”

The ministry has no overhead and no programming, says GSU Wesley Foundation director Dr. Jonathan Smith. Students and volunteers are merely loving people and sharing resources, and that's exciting to him.

“God put a vision in her heart to make a difference in this neighborhood,” he said. “And it's opened students' eyes to see that there are people in our backyard who need to experience the love of Christ. If we as the Church can begin to be present in those places, the whole world begins to look different.”

The Wesley Foundation's desire is to see Statesboro different because the students are there and are making an impact in the city for Christ, Dr. Smith said.

“We believe that college students shouldn’t just pass through Georgia Southern or Statesboro and never have experienced the city or seen its needs,” he said. “Statesboro should be better because Wesley’s here and because local churches are here.”

One day, Konner Smith hopes to travel overseas to spread the gospel to unreached people groups. But until then, she’s living out the gospel across town, spreading the love of Christ by reading and playing with children.

“I can’t go across the world right now, but I can go down the road to where people aren’t getting reached by the gospel,” she said. “If everyone just did something, the world would be a lot different. This is a way to live out the gospel. I experience God through scripture and prayer, but I also experience Him through service and obedience and doing when He says to do. By serving, I’ve become more the person Jesus wants me to be.”

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## **Local ministry builds wheelchair ramps for those in need**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Thanks to help from a local ministry, Agnes Futch can now enjoy sunshine, birds, and fresh air again.

In January, Fitzgerald’s Imagine Ministries built Futch a new wheelchair ramp. Her old one was dangerous, too steep, and caused her to careen out of control and break her ankle in three places.

“I’m so grateful,” said Futch, who had polio twice and relies on her wheelchair to get around. “I’m not scared to go down or come up anymore. It opens up entire worlds, and I can get out and enjoy fresh air and hear the birds and see the beauty of the trees and sky. It means everything to me.”

Begun 12 years ago after a mission trip, Imagine Ministries started as a home repair and yard work ministry and has evolved into a wheelchair ramp ministry that serves the entire Ben Hill County area. In the past few years they’ve built hundreds of ramps, sometimes three or four a month, said Susan Hughes, administrative coordinator of adult ministries at Central United Methodist Church in Fitzgerald and the director of Imagine Ministries.

“It’s been a beautiful thing, and I couldn’t be prouder,” she said. “This is one thing that has pulled us together; it’s a community ministry.”

There’s a need for well-built, ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps, says Tommy White, who helps run Imagine Ministries. Many people don’t have the resources to pay for them, and even if they do, they can’t always wait for a contractor.

“We saw a need in the community and realized how big the need was,” said White, a member of Arbor Baptist Church in Fitzgerald. “It’s really helping a lot of people. We’ve never built one that we didn’t get a blessing from.”

It takes about two to three hours for White and his team of mostly retired men to build a ramp. The Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, and others have a great time together, serving and sharing God's love.

"It really changes folks' lives, and I love to see that because that's the name of the game, trying to help somebody and put a smile on their face," White said. "It's a major change in folks' lives, a simple little ramp. It only costs a few hundred dollars, but you can't put a price on it."

Futch says that the ramp has given her a new outlook on life and the ability to enjoy the beauty God has created.

"These men have really helped me enjoy God's creation more by what they're doing," she said. "It's one of the most important things that has happened to me lately, that ramp, and it's all made possible by that group of men. I can never thank them enough."

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### **Delegation prepares for General Conference, request prayers**

The [South Georgia Conference's delegation](#) to the [2019 Special Session of General Conference](#) has been meeting and preparing for the Feb. 23-26 meeting for more than a year.

As they pack and plan to leave for St. Louis this week, they ask that South Georgia United Methodists join them in prayer.

"It's been a real wonderful experience to serve as a leader of this delegation," said Bill Hatcher, a member of Statesboro First United Methodist Church. "You can be very proud and know that this delegation has taken to heart its responsibilities."

In a [video](#), several members of the delegation thanked the Conference for its support and asked for continued prayers.

"As we prepare for the called General Conference, we realize that there are challenges, but we realize that, with the help of God, we will be able to overcome these difficulties," said Richard Shinhoster, a member of ConneXion Church in Savannah. "To do this, we ask for the prayers of all of the congregations around the South Georgia Conference. We want to make sure that we are led by the will of God and that will come through your prayers."

While nobody yet knows what the future holds for The United Methodist Church, the delegation remains prayerful and hopeful, said delegate Dr. Bob Moon, development director at the Methodist Children's Home.

"We find ourselves at a crossroad, but I am grateful that, as the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church, whatever the journey holds, we're going to walk it together," he said. "I believe, and dare to believe, that in Jesus the best is always yet to come."

**[WATCH VIDEO HERE](#)**

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## Following General Conference 2019

Eight hundred and sixty-four delegates from around the world will convene in St. Louis, Missouri, February 23-26, 2019, to attend a special [called session of General Conference](#). [Twelve delegates](#) - eight voting delegates and four alternates, half clergy and half lay - will represent the South Georgia Conference at this conference.

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church, typically meeting every four years. At the request of General Conference 2016, the Council of Bishops set a plan for addressing the overwhelming number of proposals related to same-sex marriage, the ordination of gay clergy, and related topics. The bishops' plan involved creating the [Commission on a Way Forward](#) and setting a [Special Session of General Conference in 2019](#).

The South Georgia Office of Communications will be on-site, sharing daily videos and news updates via the [conference website](#) and [social media channels](#). **Make sure you are signed up to receive General Conference emails:** [sgaumc-email.brtapp.com/subscribe](mailto:sgaumc-email.brtapp.com/subscribe). The official hashtags for social media are #umcgc and #GC2019.

Since the work of the General Conference will be done as a single group rather than breaking into the typical legislative subcommittees, the event will be streamed by United Methodist Communications in its entirety - beginning with worship on Saturday, Feb. 23 at 10 a.m. EST and adjourning at 7:30 p.m. EST on Tuesday, Feb. 26. That [livestream will be available online](#) in both English and French.

Below are links related to the special called conference that will help you follow the session:

- [South Georgia Conference website](#)
- [About General Conference](#)
- [General Conference Primer \(FAQs\)](#)
- [GC Agenda](#)
- [Advanced Daily Christian Advocate](#)
- [Live Stream Link](#)
- [Video message from the Delegation: We are grateful for your prayers](#)
- [Video message from Bishop Bryan: What Defines Us](#)
- [March 9 Information Session Details](#) (a video and bulletin insert are available)

Bishop Bryan will communicate with the conference at the conclusion of the General Conference session. In addition, South Georgia United Methodists are invited and encouraged to attend a

[post-General Conference information session](#) Saturday, March 9 from 1-4 p.m. at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center in Tifton.

[Please be in prayer for the delegates](#), our Bishops, leaders, and staff traveling to this conference in the coming days.

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## **2019 appointment-making season begins in the South Georgia Conference**

It's appointment-making season in The United Methodist Church, and last week Bishop Bryan and the Appointive Cabinet met for several days to pray, worship, and begin the decision-making process of appointments. [The 2019-2020 appointment-making schedule is available here.](#)

“Each year as we approach the appointment-making season, I always do it with a sense of freshness, because every year it is fresh and a bit different ... but we are all in this together,” said Bishop Bryan in a [video](#). “I want to remind us, as we approach appointment-making season, of our vision: that we want to be Alive Together in Christ, as Paul says in Ephesians.”

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

The Appointive Cabinet will meet regularly now through the first week of April to make decisions and to prayerfully seek God's guidance. Throughout the process District Superintendents will continue to be in conversation with congregations and clergy.

In the video, Bishop Bryan said that he does not anticipate the special [called session of General Conference](#) impacting South Georgia's appointment-making process.

“We know how to do this process, and it has served us well,” he said.

It is anticipated that appointments will be released to local churches Sunday, April 7 and to the public, via the [Conference website](#), that afternoon.

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## **Boundaries**

### **OUR CONNECTION MATTERS**

#### **NITA CRUMP**

*<sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. <sup>28</sup>There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. <sup>29</sup>If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:27-29, NIV)*

Our third annual multicultural luncheon was held last Saturday in Cordele. People from across the conference gathered to celebrate unity in diversity. Looking across the room as we all moved to the front to share the bread and wine of the Lord's supper, it occurred to me that this must be

what heaven looks like: a multitude of people from different backgrounds with different skin colors and different accents all focused on Christ.

During the meeting, several pastors spoke about their congregations. The Rev. Dr. Nora Colmenares from the General Board of Global Ministries was the keynote speaker. One pastor spoke of living into what seemed like contradicting challenges – honoring the uniqueness of each culture while coming together to be one body. Another pastor spoke of our need to put aside the culture that formed and informed us in order to live into God’s vision for his kingdom.

I’d like to share several thoughts I had during the luncheon and worship service.

First, I’ve drawn boundaries around my life and anything that crosses those boundaries causes me discomfort. As I say this, I’m not making a judgement about the boundaries I’ve drawn or who or what might cross those boundaries. I’m just stating a fact. I have created boundaries. So, what did Jesus do about boundaries? He spent three years crossing boundaries. He defied the social norms of his time by talking to the outcasts, by touching the unclean, by eating with the crooks, and by praising the faith of gentiles as they responded to his presence. What can I learn from his example?

Second, my discomfort with other people, cultures, etc. is not their fault. I am the one who’s created the boundaries in my life. I need to acknowledge the boundaries I’ve created and ask Christ which boundaries are appropriate and which need to be changed rather than blaming others for my discomfort. When Christ tells me to stand firm, I stand firm. When Christ calls me to put aside my discomfort in order to reach others for his sake, I know it’s time for me to change.

Third, when I push people away because they are from a different culture, I am pushing Jesus away. If he lives in their hearts or desires to live in their hearts and I push them away, then I’m pushing him away also.

And, finally, change starts with me. When my boundaries are pushed or crossed in such a way that I become aware of my prejudices against others, I can react in several ways. I can become defensive. I can seek to reinforce my boundaries so that people or situations who make me uncomfortable are less likely to be able to cross my boundaries. Or I can look to see what I might learn about myself and what might need to change in me to help me be more welcoming to those who are different.

I pray that next year’s multicultural luncheon will be bigger and more diverse so I may get another glimpse of heaven. But more than that, I pray that the day soon comes when diversity is so common in our church that we won’t have to have a luncheon to celebrate.

*Dr. Nita Crump serves as Director of Connectional Ministries. Contact her at [nitac@sgaumc.com](mailto:nitac@sgaumc.com).*

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## Put faith into action on #ServeSouthGA Day

What would South Georgia look like if every local United Methodist church spent an entire day serving its community?

Hungry people would be fed.

Lonely people would find friends.

Schools could be beautified.

Rivers could be cleaned.

Homes could be repaired.

And so much more.

The Conference's Discipleship Teams are hoping that the Annual Conference's inaugural [#ServeSouthGA](#) volunteer day inspires congregations throughout South Georgia to move outside the church building and into their communities on March 23. If that day isn't convenient, they hope church leaders can choose another day to serve.

"We want to intentionally bridge our churches and communities in real and tangible ways," said Stacy Avera, chair of the Conference's Nurture Team. "We want our communities to realize the United Methodist Church is present and a real, involved part of their community! There is an old saying that asks, 'If your church ceased to exist, who would notice, besides the members?' We want our churches to be vital parts of their communities so that they would be missed and so that the communities know our UMCs can be counted on!"

Designed for people of all ages, [#ServeSouthGA](#) allows people of faith to put their faith into action as they serve those in need in their own towns, neighborhoods, and communities.

The [#ServeSouthGA webpage](#) gives examples of volunteer opportunities and project ideas, has a downloadable media kit, and invites those who have participated in the service day to fill out a short form to share how they have served in their community.

Avera said that while the Discipleship Teams know [#ServeSouthGA](#) is only two months away, they hope that the [planning tools and resources](#) they've provided will help congregations feel confident to go out into their communities to serve.

"Sometimes we have to meet needs before we can share Jesus and His love with people," she said. "It's showing them the love of Christ."

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## Living with God's Loving Assurance

### Winter Quarter: Our Love For God

### Unit 3: Songs that Glorify the God of Love

Sunday school lesson for the week of February 24, 2019

By Helen and Rev. Sam Rogers

**Lesson Scripture: Psalm 91: 1-8, 11-16**

**Background Scripture: Psalm 91**

Before we begin this lesson, allow us a personal word. We complete eight years of writing the Winter Quarter lessons for the Advocate. When we began writing in September, there were no United Methodist printed materials with which to work. However, with this last lesson, the Student Book is available and we urge you to study the lesson written by Stan Purdum. It is excellent!

Every commentator suggests when you read Psalm 91, read also Psalm 90. In some ways, they are companions. Psalm 90 begins the Fourth of Five sections of the Psalms. The message laments the difficulties of life, its brevity, and frustrations. Psalm 91, on the other hand, is a psalm of trust through every kind of difficulty, with the assurance God will see us through. In a way, 91 is an answer to the questions 90 raises. The hyperbole of the psalmist's assurance needs to be heard in the light of the realities Psalm 90 identifies.

We in America have had all our illusions about safety shattered in recent years: 9/11, school shootings, mass killings in various venues, threats stated and unstated, and the list continues. Now our leaders insist on making us afraid of any strangers who are different from us. Fear indeed makes us a different people from whom we have been across the years.

Like our hymns, Psalm 91 has four stanzas/verses: 1-2; 3-8; 9-13; 14-16. Again, like our hymns, the Psalms are poetry, and the defining feature of Jewish poetry is *parallelism*. A good way to think of *parallelism* is the "rhyming of ideas" rather than the "rhyming of words." The second line repeats the ideas of the first in different words, or, sometimes, in contrasting ideas.

In the opening line, "whoever dwells – rests" and "in the shelter...in the shadow" are classic examples of Hebrew poetry. The important message here is we are active participants in seeking God's shelter, not waiting for God to come to us. Covenant-keeping is a two-way street! Throughout this Psalm, there is a dynamic relationship between the worshipper's actions and God's.

The worshipper speaks affirming God is his "refuge and fortress." The words of Martin Luther's hymn, "A Mighty Fortress," immediately come to mind. Have your class sing! Prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and the ensuing Babylonian Captivity, Jerusalem, its walls, and the Temple had been Israel's protection. All was destroyed, and they learned the hard lesson – only God could be their "refuge and fortress."

In the next stanza, the Psalmist begins with two metaphors of danger from which God will save: the fowler's snare (traps of our enemies), and deadly pestilence (plagues and epidemics of disease which can ravage whole populations.) A beautiful picture of God's protection is drawn from wildlife, with the wings of the mother bird protecting her young. Jesus used this same imagery in his lament over Jerusalem in Matthew 23:37 and Luke 13:34. Jesus is emphasizing the Father's desire for His people to trust Him and His providence.

Sam was playing golf one day and sliced his drive into the rough. While seeking his ball, a large bird flew at him, making loud noises, flapping her wings, and generally being a nuisance. When he located his ball, there was a nest with several baby birds on the ground. He moved the ball without penalty!

God is then described in military terms as a "shield" or "rampart" – part of a wall. These defenses will protect from "night terrors" and those dangers of the day when the "arrows" fly or "the pestilence stalks," when the storms come, when we are attacked on every side with situations we cannot control. Again, Jewish poetry is clearly seen in these combinations of "rhyming ideas."

Fear is not a sin, but a powerful defense mechanism God has placed in us. However, our God is greater than anything we have to fear. In Romans 8, Paul lists all that could separate, but then declares: "Nothing in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." John writes in I John 4:18 "Perfect love casts out all fear."

The statement about a thousand or ten thousand is the hyperbole mentioned earlier, but the exaggeration does grab our attention. God is present in every conflict, every storm, every temptation – everywhere – all the time!

As is often the case in these lessons, the first two verses of stanza three are skipped, but there is a very important condition described before the promise of this stanza is stated. "If you make the Most High your dwelling ... your refuge ... then no harm can come near." In fact, angels to lift up are promised! Surely, you recognize this is the verse Satan quoted Jesus when he tested his identity. "If you are God's Son, then throw yourself down from here because...." The tempter then quotes Psalm 91:11-12.

The critical factor is the word "dwelling" and because Jesus worked constantly to dwell with God, the Father, he knew he did not have to prove anything. More importantly, this relationship was not to be tested – Jesus trusted God and this knowledge would take him to Calvary and beyond!

Hopefully, no one takes verse 13 literally. In so many places in scripture we must use, as John Wesley defined in the Quadrilateral (scripture, tradition, reason, and experience), reason as one of the measures of our faith. The lion and the cobra are used figuratively to represent any and all persons and powers who threaten God's people.

In the closing stanza, the Psalmist is no longer speaking – God is. The reason God is our refuge, fortress, dwelling, rest, and strength is our love for God. God knows our hearts, and the love is reciprocal. We don't make a "deal" with God. His love flows stronger as the relationship

deepens. We relate in the dialogue of prayer, in the practice of loving as Jesus loved, in showing to Whom we belong by how we live and express the Divine love to others. (See lesson for Dec. 30!!) Aloofness is not the nature of our God.

As John Wesley declared on his death bed: “The best of all – God is with us.”

*Helen and Rev. Sam Rogers are a retired clergy couple. They can be reached at [sgr3@cox.net](mailto:sgr3@cox.net).*

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## **Called to Serve**

### **Spring Quarter: Discipleship and Mission**

#### **Unit 1: Call to Discipleship**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of March 3, 2019**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

**Lesson Scripture: Luke 14:7-14**

**Key Verse: Luke 14:11**

#### **Lesson Aims**

1. Describe Jesus’ view of humility.
2. Distinguish between behaviors that indicate humility and those that don’t.

The theme of the Spring Quarter is “Discipleship and Mission.” When the question is asked, “What do you do?” typically the answer is related to one’s job or career. Our culture tends to identify people in those terms. But for the believer, a person’s true calling has nothing to do with earning a living. Rather, it has everything to do with following Jesus.

So, our true vocation begins when we heed the call of Jesus to be a disciple, the issue of Unit 1 of this quarter. And as you know, a disciple is a learner, and to be successful in our ultimate calling we have to be shaped, trained, and changed in the laboratory of Christ.

That Luke 14:7-14 promotes a call to humility is rather obvious. But actually developing a humble spirit and living humbly is more difficult than it initially appears. One reason is that it goes against our own tendency to desire strokes of affirmation. It is difficult not to seek the honored role, to move down a few seats voluntarily or to pay attention to those who may not be able to give back.

Our culture loves to tell us to go for what is ours by right, to promote yourself and to “go for the gold.” We are encouraged to cater to the wealthy and well-known, the powerful, the movers and the shakers. It is acclaimed to minister to such individuals or groups. However, while ministering to these circles is not essentially wrong, they should be pursued in a way that reflects God, who does not show favoritism” (Romans 2:11).

But back to the theme of humility! Jesus taught that under God’s reign, the way up, the way of honor and exaltation is actually down. It is down in lowly self-giving service to others. Those

who seek self-exaltation and things of that sort will actually be brought low. However, those who forget themselves in humble service to others, God will exalt.

We understand this “lowly honored exaltation” best when we see Jesus, the Divine Lord, giving his life in humility for undeserving sinners on the cross. Thus, in advocating humility, Jesus was only advocating what he himself was exemplifying in his own life and ministry. And when we observe the numerous characteristics which depict Jesus’ role as the Suffering Servant of God, it is his lowliness, meekness, and humility that stand out.

The context of our scripture lesson today is an occasion where Jesus was invited to a Sabbath day meal at the home of a powerful religious leader. As in most cases, Jesus was watched very critically by the Pharisees. They were looking for reasons to find fault with him. Prior to the meal, Jesus healed a man who was suffering from “abnormal swelling of the body.” Anticipating criticism for healing the afflicted man on the Sabbath, Jesus received only silence. Apparently, however, there was some hostility around the table, not a pleasant environment for a shared meal.

So we arrive at today’s scripture lesson (Luke 14:7-14). It is in this somewhat hostile environment that Jesus tells the two parables before us – advice given to the guests at a banquet (Luke 14:7-11) and advice given to the host at a banquet (Luke 14:12-14).

### **Advice Given to the Humble Guest**

#### **Luke 14:7-11**

Jesus tells this parable at a grand meal, “a wedding feast.” It is understood that shared meals in Jesus’ culture are occasions for the display of social status. The wealthy could display their abundance on such occasions, and places at the table closest to the host are regarded as carrying the greatest honor.

Jesus obviously speaks to those persons present with him at the table. But by calling them guests (those invited), the writer Luke emphasizes that Jesus speaks to people who are in position of prestige. None of these guests are in positions of weakness like the seriously ill man whom Jesus has just healed.

Now, in response to the invitation, as people generally do, these guests seek a prominent position at the table (place of honor). And this is not as foreign to us as we might think as we stalk the best seats at the theatre, or the ballgame, or church or wherever we go. After all, no one is more deserving than we are.

The end result, however, of seeking the highest, most honored place as this story indicates, is the opposite: humiliation. Here Jesus asked his hearers to picture a man arriving before some of the VIPs who picked out a choice seat for himself. In fact, he chose one of the seats of honor. But then unexpectedly, another more important guest arrives, and the host was forced to ask the man who had arrived early to go to the seat at the end of the table. How utterly embarrassing it must have been to the man who chose for himself a seat of honor to have been relegated to the lowest seat.

I read about a pastor who was voted the most humble pastor in America. And the congregation gave him a medal that said, “To the most humble pastor in America.” Then they took it away from him on Sunday because he wore it. How embarrassing!

At this point, it is important to recall the context of this parable (Luke 14:1-6). Just prior to telling our story Jesus had honored an uninvited guest. He had honored the man with the swollen body who humbly sought healing, by acknowledging his suffering and restoring him to wholeness. Thereby, Jesus accepted the criticism and scorn of the religious leaders who saw his actions as a violation of the Sabbath. But like the host in our text, Jesus exalted the one who took a low position. And like the wise guest in his story, Jesus willingly takes the lowest place, serving others instead of himself.

Thus, Jesus’ counsel is to seek the lowest place at the banquet table. By doing so, the humble guest will avoid the potential shame or embarrassment of being moved to a lower place because there will be no lower place. Jesus adds to this image by having the host address the humble guest as “friend.” At this banquet, the true friend of the host is not the person who seeks status but the one who acts in lowliness. And it is from this new position of lowliness that the humble guest will receive due recognition. Note here that the host reverses the guest’s situation so that the humble guest receives the honor that the self-seeking guest had sought.

In summarizing this first parable, Jesus repeats what he has stated on other occasions (see Matthew 23:12 and Luke 18:14). He makes it clear that God does not grant glory to those who exalt themselves, but to those who humbly take the lowly servant’s position of sacrificing themselves for the sake of others as Jesus did.

Leonard Griffith, noted Canadian minister, points out four characteristics of a person with a servant’s heart. I will mention his four characteristics and add one additional characteristic.

1. A servant is someone who works in somebody else’s house.
2. A servant is someone who ministers to somebody else’s needs.
3. A servant is someone who works at somebody else’s convenience.
4. A servant is someone who does not expect to be thanked.
5. A servant is someone who does not care who gets the credit as long as the mission or job gets done.

In reality, Jesus has status that belongs only to God, but he willingly takes the lowly position of servant, even to the point of death, for the sake of those in need. His actions reveal the nature of God and of true humanity made in God’s image. Amazingly, God seems to always turn upside down our ideas of strength and status.

### **Advice Given to the Humble Heart**

#### **Luke 14:12-14**

This second or related parable also has something to do with dinner etiquette, for it specifically refers to a luncheon and dinner invitation. It is noteworthy that Jesus now moves beyond

worrying about what seats we get as guests at a table. In this parable, Jesus calls us to serve those who cannot repay our kindness. Jesus' teaching on humility is for all, host as well as guests.

Invitations to meals in Jesus' time are part of a culture of what might be called "returning the favor," the idea of being "repaid." Therefore, receiving an invitation to a luncheon or dinner carries the unspoken obligation to offer an invitation in return. The shrewd host simply invites those from whom he/she expects a similar invitation. Naturally, friends and family would head this kind of list. But for extra returns on this investment, invitations to the rich might be in order for a return invitation.

Jesus, however, rejects all such expectation. Without doubt, Jesus seeks and accepts friendship with all kinds of people. However, giving in order to receive is the opposite of Jesus teaching of gracious generosity (Luke 6:27-30). Jesus' point is that loving and hosting those who love us and are our friends is not inherently morally commendable. One expects that to be the case.

Rather we are told to invite "the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind." An invitation to such people would be completely gracious, made with no consideration for returning the favor. It is a gift with no strings attached. Hear me now! The best hospitality is that which is given, not exchanged.

What is the basis of such generosity? The basis for such generosity is nothing less than God's own graciousness (Matthew 5:46). Though humans may think of themselves as strong, we are all weak, poor and vulnerable in the eyes of God. In the eyes of God, our strength is unimpressive and our wealth cannot last. Yet God gives freely to us, as he gave freely to Israel when they were enslaved in Egypt. For all weak, poor, helpless, unworthy humans, Christ came to die, providing an incomparable gift that can never be repaid. It is only when we understand that we are weak like those whom Jesus describes that we can rightly receive God's gift. And when we truly understand, we cannot help but respond with a likeminded generosity.

In 1980, my wife and I had the privilege of attending the Passion Play in the Bavarian town of Oberammergau, Germany. The story was that the man who played the part of Christ in one of the presentations used a heavy cross in the crucifixion scene. When he was asked why he didn't use a lighter cross, he replied, "I could not play the part of Christ without feeling the weight of His cross." And neither can we.

Now, the divine commendation spoke of in Luke 14:14 will come. Though those invited to the meal cannot repay, God will reward such care in the resurrection to come (I Corinthians 4:5). Notice that the promise of reward is expressed in the passive voice ("will be blessed"), which means that God gives the response. He commands those who reach out to the needy and minister to them.

However, real generosity does not look for a payback of any kind, period. Real generosity is offered free of charge, graciously, just as God in Christ has forgiven us with no strings attached (Ephesians 4:32; 5:2).

### **Humility Bullets**

1. Humility sees oneself realistically! We are a team member with a part to play, and we are pleased to do it.
2. Humility refrains from tooting one's own horn!
3. Humility celebrates the success of another!
4. Humility sacrifices one's own agenda for the greater good.
5. Humility is the lowly spirit that puts others before self.
6. Humility is following a lowly master who willingly surrendered his life for the weak and undeserving. It is Christ-like love put into action for those in need.

### **Action Plan**

1. Explain Jesus' understanding of humility.
2. What are some of the ways your church can model gracious humility as a whole?
3. How can you demonstrate humility in the week ahead?

Information in this lesson was drawn from the following resources:

“2018-2019 Standard Lesson NIV Commentary, Uniform Series, International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching,” pages 233-240

“The NIV Application Commentary, Luke,” Darrell Bock, pages 391-399

“Seeing Ourselves in the Parables,” Harold Lawrence, pages 135-139

*Dr. Hal Brady is a retired pastor who continues to present the Good News of Jesus Christ and offer encouragement in a fresh and vital way through Hal Brady Ministries ([halbradyministries.com](http://halbradyministries.com)).*

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## **A Memory Worth Having**

### **PATHWAY TO HIS PRESENCE**

#### **BJ FUNK**

My dear friend Suzanne went to heaven this week. She was the daughter of Reverend Bernard Brown and his wife, Elizabeth. I met Suzanne when her family moved one summer into the District Superintendent's parsonage on the street where I lived. We became friends that same summer, and we remained good friends until God called her Home.

One memory I have of her remains with me always. We were in high school biology class together. When our teacher handed out our graded papers, my heart sank because I had not made the grade I wanted. I did not think I could keep back the tears, so as soon as the bell rang, I ran out of class and hid in one of the stalls in the girls' bathroom.

Soon, I heard Suzanne's voice calling my name. Softly and sweetly, Suzanne came to me. She took out her powder compact and covered the red splotches on my face. She stayed with me until I felt I could go to the next class. What Suzanne taught me was that no matter if you know what to say or not, go anyway. People who are hurting are not so interested in what you have to say. But, they are interested in you showing up. Suzanne showed up.

And isn't that what Jesus does when we are sad or hurting? He comes softly to us, takes out his giant compact of grace, and covers the red splotches on our face. It isn't so much what Jesus says. It's that He shows up.

I loved all of Suzanne's family, and spent countless hours through the following years in their various parsonages. Before Reverend Brown died, he asked me if I would come for Suzanne when he passed. I did. I showed up for this friend who had shown up for me so many years ago.

When Elizabeth died, I was not there, but when she was recognized at the memorial service at Annual Conference, I stood up in honor of this woman I loved. What a privilege to have just that tiny moment in time to show up for her.

And now, because of obligations, I am not able to attend Suzanne's funeral in Tennessee. But, a tribute I wrote will be read. It's the best way I can show up for my friend. She would be the first to understand.

That day in high school, I learned from Suzanne that we must always show up for others in pain.

That's a memory I will have forever.

It's a memory worth having.

*The Rev. B.J. Funk is associate pastor of Central UMC in Fitzgerald. Email Rev. Funk at [bjfunk@bellsouth.net](mailto:bjfunk@bellsouth.net).*

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## **Retired Clergy Birthdays - February 2019**

2/01 – Rodney Body: 1205 North Palm Dr.; Plant City, FL 33563  
2/02 - Paul Buckhiester: 3820 Pearl St.; Columbus, GA 39886  
2/03 – Eugene Barlow: 605 Victoria Circle; Warner Robins, GA 31088  
2/03 – David Barton: PO Box 497; Talbotton, GA 31827  
2/03 – Wesley Jones, Jr.: 122 Woodland Terrace; Moulton, AL 35650  
2/04 – John Bagwell: 5300 Zebulon Rd., Apt. 2226; Macon, GA 31210  
2/04 – Bob Dixon: 1808 E. Washington St.; Thomasville, GA 31792  
2/06 – Robert Buckles: 5429 Sirius Dr.; Wilmington, NC 28405  
2/07 – George Anderson: 3227 Dundale Road; Vestavia Hills, AL 33216  
2/07 – Bill Brown: 109 Woodlawn Dr.; Statesboro, GA 30458

2/09 – John O’Connor: 247 Jim Nash Ct. NW; Lilburn, GA 30047  
2/10 – Paul Best: PO Box 747; Social Circle, GA 30025  
2/10 – Bill Reinheld: 102 Arthur J. Moore Dr.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
2/10 – Tommy Veal: 340 Pine Hill Rd.; Dublin, GA 31021  
2/11 – Robert Poston: 105 Hawk Hammock Dr.; Springfield, GA 31329  
2/12 – Robert Bean: 326 Wildsmith Dr.; Brunswick, GA 31525  
2/14 – Jim Jensen: 4323 15th St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
2/15 – Mark Carter: 1741 Stevens Rd.; Ellaville, GA 31806  
2/16 – Bill Lee: 480 Bostwick Circle; Vidalia, GA 30474  
2/18 – Don Black: 13553 Highway 171 N; Avera, GA 30803-5234  
2/19 – Don Proctor: 106 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
2/20 – C.G. Haugabook, Jr.: 215 Walters St.; Plains, GA 31780  
2/20 – David Hudson: PO Box 521; Portal, GA 30450  
2/20 – Lee Pulliam: 16702 Olliffstown; Metter, GA 30439  
2/21 – Jim Duvall: 10502 Regal View Loop; Clermont, FL 34711  
2/22 – Wayne DeFore: 107 Chestnut St.; Bloomingdale, GA 31302  
2/24 – Tommy McCook, Jr.: 93 Edgewater Dr.; Midway, GA 31320  
2/24 – Marcelle Myers: 110 Arthurs Ct.; Kingsland, GA 31548  
2/25 – Wesley Jones: 5942 Plantation Villa Dr. N.; Macon, GA 31210  
2/27 – Ed Cadle: 163 Robin Rd.; Guyton, GA 31312  
2/27 – Jim Osborn: 310 Slash Pine Dr.; Broxton, GA 31519  
2/27 – Donald Sparks: PO Box 407; Portal, GA 30450

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**Scripture Readings – Feb. 19**

**Feb. 24**

***Seventh Sunday After the Epiphany***

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalms 37:1-11, 39-40 (UMH 772)

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38

**March 3**

***Eighth Sunday After the Epiphany***

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalms 99 (UMH 819)

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

**March 6**

***Ash Wednesday***

Joel 2:1-2

Psalms 51:1-17 (UMH 785)

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

### **March 10**

#### ***First Sunday in Lent***

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 (UMH 810)

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

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## **Events in the South Georgia Conference – 2/19/2019 edition**

### **Sexual Ethics Workshop, Statesboro – Feb. 21**

According to the Conference Sexual Ethics policy, this workshop is required every three years for any person serving under appointment by the bishop (clergy, local pastors, extension ministers, appointed lay speakers). The Sexual Ethics Workshop will be held Thursday, Feb. 21 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Pittman Park UMC in Statesboro. [Register here](#). Cost is \$35, which includes lunch (collected at the door). Checks can be made payable to South Georgia Conference. For questions, email [cpcassistant@sgaumc.com](mailto:cpcassistant@sgaumc.com). Please note that spouses and lay employees who are not appointed by the bishop are not eligible to attend the workshop.

### **Kingdom Builders Promotion Sunday – Feb. 24**

***You are blessed to be a blessing.*** We have been blessed to travel roads that were paved by those that went before us. Our lives have been changed by the investments they made. Now the torch has been passed to us to make the investments that will pave the road for the generation that will follow us. In 1962 the Kingdom Builders Club was started to change lives by funding new ministries and new congregations. Several of the largest congregations in South Georgia were started with funds from Kingdom Builders. In fact, the #1 and the #2 fastest growing United Methodist Congregations in the U.S. over the past 10 years are both in our conference and you started them. Way to go South Georgia! **PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL!** The Kingdom Builders Club is about far more than starting churches. It is about CHANGING LIVES! We have published a new daily devotional book entitled “Pray for 5.” This 40-day devotional is a tangible tool to help you and your friends change the lives of your family and friends. To obtain copies for all the people in your congregation simply ask your District Superintendent. Our hope is that this daily devotional book will ignite a movement of prayer that unlocks a wave of relational evangelism that helps new people come to know Jesus like we have. **Funding is important.** God sends people to congregations who are ready to minister to them. We need to be starting new ministries to connect with these new people. To reach people no one is reaching, we must start doing things no one is doing, which requires funding. Pray for your friends AND become a

Kingdom Builder by making a financial investment today to the Kingdom Builders Advanced Special. [Click here to download a Kingdom Builder support form.](#)

### **Campus Crawl – Feb. 28-March 3**

The 2019 Campus Crawl is set for Feb. 28 - March 3, 2019. During the Campus Crawl weekend, high school students from both the North and South Georgia Conferences will meet representatives from United Methodist Colleges and Universities in Georgia as well as meet several Wesley Foundations on public university campuses. Stops on this year's tour include: Oxford College, Young Harris College, Reinhardt University, Kennesaw State Wesley, Clark Atlanta, Georgia Tech Wesley, Emory University, LaGrange College, Andrew College, Wesleyan College, Mercer University Wesley, Augusta Wesley, Paine College, UGA Wesley, and more. The cost of \$125 per student includes a tour bus, meals, lodging, and a t-shirt. [Click here to reserve your seat on the bus.](#) For more information, contact Suzanne Akins at the Office of Connectional Ministries at [suzanne@sgaumc.com](mailto:suzanne@sgaumc.com) or (912) 638-8626 ext.107.

### **Join the Journey Confirmation Retreat – March 1-March 3**

Designed for students in the fifth grade and above, the "Join the Journey" Confirmation Retreat will provide churches of all sizes an opportunity to connect with others through worship, study, and fellowship. The event will also include large group gatherings around the church seasons and breakout sessions with topics of grace, United Methodist History and United Methodist lingo as well as Holy Clubs throughout the weekend. Not meant to be the only confirmation youth go through, the Confirmation Retreat should be complementary to what a church is or will be doing. For more information, please contact Event Coordinator Suzanne Akins at [suzanne@sgaumc.com](mailto:suzanne@sgaumc.com) or (912) 638-8626 ext. 107. Registration is now CLOSED and the event is full.

### **Post-General Conference Informational Session – March 9**

An informational session will be held at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center in Tifton, GA to talk about the outcome of the 2019 called General Conference Session.

### **Marriage Enrichment Retreats at Lake Junaluska – March 10-12**

Lake Junaluska invites you to their Marriage Enrichment Retreats. The retreats are perfect for pastors who regularly do marriage counseling, or anyone who wants to strengthen the bond in their marriage. Three retreats will be held at Lake Junaluska, March 10-12, Aug. 18-20, and Sept. 29 – Oct. 1. Learn more at [www.lakejunaluska.com/marriage](http://www.lakejunaluska.com/marriage) or call 800-222-4930.

### **Lay Speaker Training, Pittman Park UMC – March 15-16**

The Basic and Advanced Lay Speaking Courses will be taught Friday, March 15 and Saturday, March 16 at Pittman Park UMC in Statesboro. A lay speaker is a professing member of a local church who is ready and desirous to serve the Church, and who is well informed on and committed to the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church. A lay speaker has completed the required training courses in lay speaking and

has been approved by a district or annual conference committee on lay speaking. Lay speakers serve the local church by witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication, church and community leadership, and caregiving ministries. When certified, the lay speaker may conduct services of worship, preach, and lead study sessions as requested by the pastor or the district superintendent. Registration fee for the class is \$25 which covers all materials and lunch on Saturday. (Note: The Basic Lay Speaking class must be completed before taking Advanced Class). [Register here](#).

### **Minister Spouses Retreat – March 15-17**

South Georgia's minister spouses are invited to "Come to the Waters" to refresh, rekindle, and remember at their annual retreat, March 15-17, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Please direct any questions to Lisa Crosby at (706) 392-6673 or [lisamcrosby@msn.com](mailto:lisamcrosby@msn.com). [Download the flyer](#)

### **#ServeSouthGA Day – March 23**

#ServeSouthGA is our Annual Conference's volunteer day, set aside for churches all over South Georgia to move outside the church building and into our communities. An event for all ages, #ServeSouthGA Day allows us to put our faith in action as we serve those in need in our very own town, neighborhood, and community. One Saturday each year, we set aside our personal agendas and head out into the community on a mission to serve others. It is truly a great day of sharing our time and talents with the charitable agencies the South Georgia Conference and your local church supports. [More information](#)

### **Wesley Glen's Cherry Blossom Road Race – March 24**

Join hundreds of runners for the 17th annual Cherry Blossom Road Race for Wesley Glen Ministries. It will be held in a very special location this year - Downtown Macon! Plan to enjoy the 5k or Fun Run while parade spectators cheer you on. Please check the race website soon for more updates: [www.cherryblossomroadrace.com](http://www.cherryblossomroadrace.com) and [www.wesleyglenministries.com/cherry-blossom-road-race](http://www.wesleyglenministries.com/cherry-blossom-road-race).

### **Antioch UMC's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration – March 24**

Antioch UMC in Clinch County is turning 175 years old! The congregation will host a special celebration on March 24 at 3 p.m. Rev. Henry Bass, superintendent of the South Central District, will be one of the featured speakers. There will be lots of singing and good food afterwards. Past preachers, their families, and members are invited to share memories and photographs by calling or emailing Lori Miller at 912-286-5807 or [lorihowellmiller@gmail.com](mailto:lorihowellmiller@gmail.com).

### **Lay Speaker Training, Richmond Hill UMC – March 29-30**

The Basic and Advanced Lay Speaking Courses will be taught Friday, March 29 and Saturday, March 30 at Richmond Hill UMC. A lay speaker is a professing member of a local church who is ready and desirous to serve the Church, and who is well informed on and committed to the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church. A

lay speaker has completed the required training courses in lay speaking and has been approved by a district or annual conference committee on lay speaking. Lay speakers serve the local church by witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communication, church and community leadership, and caregiving ministries. When certified, the lay speaker may conduct services of worship, preach, and lead study sessions as requested by the pastor or the district superintendent. Registration fee for the class is \$25 which covers all materials and lunch on Saturday. (Note: The Basic Lay Speaking class must be completed before taking Advanced Class). [Register here](#).

### **UMCOR Sunday – March 31**

**UMCOR Sunday** (fourth Sunday in Lent) enables the United Methodist Committee on Relief to reach out through worldwide ministries of food, shelter, health and peace. A special offering is taken on this day to support humanitarian aid through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). You can be assured that when catastrophes cause suffering, your church, impelled by Jesus' love and compassion, will be in the lead to ease the pain. Gifts to the UMCOR Sunday offering underwrite UMCOR's "costs of doing business." That helps them keep their promise that 100 percent of every other gift you make to a specific UMCOR project can be spent on that project - not on home office costs. To learn more about UMCOR or to order resources to promote the offering, visit [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org) or call 888-346-3862. [Click here for resources to help promote this offering in your local church](#).