

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

### **Bishop announces two Cabinet appointments**

Bishop Lawson Bryan has announced the projected appointments of two new District Superintendents to the Cabinet, effective June 2019.

Rev. Steve Patton will be appointed to serve as superintendent of the Northwest District and Rev. Paula Lewis will serve as superintendent of the South Central District.

Rev. Patton will succeed Dr. Buddy Cooper, who will retire at the 2019 Annual Conference session. Dr. Cooper has served on the South Georgia Cabinet for seven years. Rev. Henry Bass, current South Central District Superintendent, will retire at the 2019 Annual Conference session. Rev. Bass has served on the South Georgia Cabinet for eight years and will, in retirement, serve as Vice President for Church Relations for Magnolia Manor.

Rev. Patton currently serves as senior pastor of Wesley United Methodist Church at Frederica on St. Simons Island. He has been a minister in the South Georgia Conference since 1987, serving pastorates in Newington, Leslie, Striplin Terrace in Columbus, Trinity in Waycross, and Pine Forest in Dublin. For the past five years, he has served as senior minister of Wesley at Frederica. He has served in leadership roles on the district and annual conference levels, including the Board of Ordained Ministry, Committee on Equitable Compensation, and Congregational Development.

Rev. Lewis currently serves as senior pastor of Hawkinsville First United Methodist Church, where she has served for the past three years. A graduate of Asbury Theological Seminary, Rev. Lewis is currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry degree from Candler School of Theology, Emory University. She has previously served as Associate Minister at Tifton First and as senior pastor at Hartsfield/Burns Memorial Charge and Pinson Memorial UMC.

“I am excited to have Steve and Paula join the cabinet,” Bishop Bryan said. “They each have a passion for winning people to Jesus Christ and for connecting the church to the community. The Northwest District and the South Central District will greatly benefit from their leadership.”

Rev. David Thompson will continue as the Coastal District Superintendent, Dr. Rick Lanford will continue as the North Central Superintendent, Rev. Chris Ramsey will continue to serve as the Northeast District Superintendent, and Rev. Doreen Smalls will continue serving as the Southwest District Superintendent.

Bishop Bryan and the Appointive Cabinet continue their work to prayerfully discern the pastoral appointment changes. They will meet nearly weekly through 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 as needed.

They began the appointment process by reviewing scripture and the disciplinary passages related to appointment making, Bishop Bryan said, studying the Church’s core values and praying for all of South Georgia’s churches and pastors.

“Thank you for your prayers for me and for the Cabinet as we fulfill our responsibilities in the appointment-making process,” Bishop Bryan said. “Our goal is to seek appointments that best enable our local churches and our clergy to be Alive Together in Christ.”

As they were last year, appointments will be released at the same time, to local churches on April 7 and later that afternoon to the public, via the [Conference website](#).

All appointments are considered firm projections pending the official announcement at the conclusion of the Annual Conference session on June 5, in Columbus.



## **Conference gathers to learn about General Conference, future of South Georgia Conference**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Nearly 1,000 South Georgia United Methodists gathered Saturday, March 9 at the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center in Tifton to learn more about the 2019 General Conference session and the future of the South Georgia Conference.

The meeting began with worship and prayer and both were woven into the day. Prayer was a focal point and scripture was incorporated throughout the two-hour session. Ben Drennan, Minister of Music and Worship Arts at Cordele First United Methodist Church, led worship along with the Cordele First UMC choir. Revs. Teresa Edwards and Josh Bizzell guided the times of prayer.

After introducing the delegation and thanking them for their service, Bill Hatcher and Rev. Don Adams, delegates to General Conference, gave reports on the outcome of the special session of General Conference.

They shared that General Conference [delegates passed](#) by a 438-384 vote the [Traditional Plan](#), which retains restrictions against “self-avowed practicing homosexual” clergy and officiating at or hosting same-sex marriage ceremonies and requires stricter enforcement for violations of church law.

“What exactly does that mean?” Hatcher said. “The present language in the *Discipline* remains unchanged.”

Rev. Adams shared details of the Traditional Plan and two pension petitions that were passed. He also explained that a passed “gracious exit” plan’s constitutionality is in question and is being looked at by the Judicial Council.

There is a “breathtaking division” in The United Methodist Church, he said, and it was felt and seen at General Conference.

“Everyone left feeling grief for the church,” Rev. Adams said. “The reality that we cannot keep trying things in the same way and expect a different outcome should be obvious.”

Revs. Jay Hanson and Ben Gosden presented a report from the Foundations for the Future of South Georgia Task Force and announced that a “gracious exit plan” will be presented for vote at the upcoming Annual Conference session.

The details of the South Georgia Exit Plan are still being worked out and will be released in the coming weeks, but they generally follow the disaffiliation plan that was passed at General Conference and would allow a local church to exit the conference if two-thirds of the church conference votes for disaffiliation. Churches would be able to keep their property if they meet pension and apportionment obligations. This exit plan would be needed if the Taylor Petition passed at General Conference is found unconstitutional.

“The power of The United Methodist Church truly is found in its diversity,” Rev. Gosden said. “And the grace of the Church is found when that diversity is met with love.”

Bishop Bryan welcomed everyone to the gathering, calling it a launch event for the future of the South Georgia Conference.

“This is the beginning of South Georgia time,” he said. “The time when we begin discerning South Georgia’s future.”

He also reiterated that all are welcome, loved, and needed in the South Georgia Conference.

“Whoever you are and from whatever part of the annual conference you have come, you are welcome. We need you. Every one of you. Every person. Every church,” Bishop Bryan said as he stressed the Conference’s “Aliveness Together in Jesus Christ,” found in Ephesians 2:5.

He outlined the Conference’s next steps and emphasized that they would be rooted in scripture and prayer. The process used will be the same one that has guided conference leaders for the past three years, the 4-D process: Discover, Dream, Design, and Deliver.

Bishop Bryan asked everyone to fully engage in the process as God uses it to take the Conference into the future.

“We are not doing this for ourselves,” he said. “We are doing it for the entire denomination and for future generations in South Georgia.”

As each person left the main session and headed into one of four breakout sessions, they were given the gift of a prayer book, [“Patches of Prayer,”](#) that can serve as a guide between now and Annual Conference. The [book contains prayers](#) for each of the 12 weeks between now and the June 2-5 Annual Conference session.

“As we lay the foundation for God’s future in South Georgia, stretch out your hand,” Bishop Bryan said, referencing the opening service of the 2018 Annual Conference session. “Stretch out your hand to the passionate fellow followers of Jesus who are alive together in this room. Stretch out your hand to the God who made us alive and who is able to do far more than we can ask or imagine. ... What’s the next step? Stretch.”

United Methodist Communications has put together a summary of the results of the decisions made at General Conference. [You can view the summary here.](#)

**[WATCH: Bishop Bryan shares a brief video recap of the meeting](#)**

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## **Prayer Guide leads South Georgia towards Annual Conference**

During the special session of General Conference, Bishop Bryan said, “Prayer is the work of the people.”

With that in mind, a [prayer book](#) has been created to serve as a guide to prayer in the 12 weeks between now and the June 3-5 Annual Conference session.

“We are the people and prayer is our work,” said Rev. Teresa Edwards, who helped write the prayer book, along with Revs. Meg Procopio and Josh Bizzell. Margaret Mathews, a member of Trinity United Methodist Church in Warner Robins, provided the artwork.

The title, “Patches of Prayer” was chosen because the word “patch” has multiple meanings and applications. A patch is a place where something can grow and flourish, it’s something that holds that which is fraying together, and a patch is an act of beginning to mend.

“It is our work together in this moment of time,” Rev. Edwards said. “Patching is all three movements guiding us toward God.”

The guide, divided into three, four-week sessions, includes a guiding word, a scripture reading, an invitation to prayer, space for journaling, and a closing prayer.

“Our hope is that as we pray together, the power of prayer will multiply in an abundance of grace among us,” Rev. Edwards said. “As we pray together, my deepest hope is that we would realize all the beautiful, powerful, and amazing ways we are and can be alive together in Christ.”

[Download Patches of Prayer: A Guide for the Soul in Love with God](#)

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## **70 years after first visit, Epworth By The Sea still a sacred place**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Holy ground.

That's how Wallace Twiggs describes Epworth By The Sea.

A teenager in the late 1940s, Twiggs was one of the first youth to visit the future site of South Georgia's conference and retreat center, which was purchased on Oct. 29, 1949.

One Saturday afternoon that fall, Twiggs, then a member of Brunswick First United Methodist Church, and several other youth went with their counselor to what is now Epworth.

Stomping through waist-high grass, they chased snakes and field mice out of the overgrown fields, watched the sun set over the Frederica River, and held a vespers service.

"I always claim that we were probably the first organized group to go over there," Twiggs said. "I don't know if that's true or not, but I claim it!"

Epworth By The Sea opened its gates in 1950, but Twiggs didn't return to Epworth for 20 years. By then, the property had expanded to include a dining room, hotels, and more.

"To see how much it had grown was a shock to me," he said.

Almost exactly 70 years after his first visit, Twiggs returned to Epworth By The Sea. Again, he came with a group of youth, but this time he was the counselor.

He came to help chaperone a group of students from Columbus' Wynnton United Methodist Church at this year's Join the Journey Confirmation Retreat.

Involved in children and youth ministry through the years, Twiggs and his wife still help and serve when they can.

"We've tried to, over the years, give back a little bit of what's been given to us," he said.

Strolling through Epworth, he marveled at the changes and gave thanks to those who made it what it is today.

"I enjoy going to see Epworth as it has grown over the years. It was nothing but scrub grass and mice running around back then," Twiggs said. "I'm amazed every time I go back. We need to keep it going, and we are so blessed here in South Georgia to have it."

Back at home in Columbus, Twiggs remembers his time at Epworth By The Sea and Confirmation Retreat fondly ... but laughs and says he's still itching from gnat bites.

"It's holy ground," he said of Epworth. "Even with the sand gnats!"

.....  
**We still have work to do**

## **OUR CONNECTION MATTERS**

### **NITA CRUMP**

*<sup>8</sup> Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20, NIV*

Have you ever noticed that sometimes we get so caught up in the busyness of the church that we forget about the business of the church? We can become so attentive to the structure and processes of the church that we forget to be the church. Please understand I'm not saying that structure and process are unimportant. We are Methodists. Our very name tells the world that structure and process are an important part of the way we live together as a church. However, attending to those methodical practices should not cause us to neglect the work Christ gave us to do.

Our work is simple: go into all the world and make disciples so that the world is transformed. Jesus tells us to go. Go is an action word. Look around you. If you have neighbors who don't belong to a church, go to them. If the persons sitting next to you at work don't know Jesus, go to them. Share your story. Tell them what Jesus has done for you and why you trust him with your life. Invite them to come to church. Don't be discouraged when they find excuses at first. Keep loving them with the love of Christ as you pray that he will give you the words and deeds to share his love with them. And remember to smile when you talk to people about Jesus. Having the joy of the Lord show on your face goes a long way when talking to someone about Jesus.

Jesus tells us to go into all the nations. Many of us will never travel to the ends of the earth to make disciples. And, yet, we do just that every day of the week through the missions and ministries of The United Methodist Church.

"Make disciples" is the next part of the great commission. In order to make a disciple, you first have to be a disciple. How is your relationship with God through Christ his son? Are you a part of regular worship, Bible study, and prayer? Are you growing in grace and going on to perfection?

We are in the season of Lent right now. This is time to ask what needs to be different, if anything, so that you can draw closer to Jesus and represent him better to the world. You may feel that you aren't far enough along on your personal faith journey to do the work of making a disciple. You are. If you love Jesus, you have a story to tell that will touch someone's heart and help them start their journey of faith. Remember, you are not alone in this disciple-making process. Jesus is with you always. And so is his body. You have an entire church with you as you do the work Jesus has given all of us to do.

I say all the above in order to say this: General Conference is over. The doors of our churches are still open. There are still people all around us who don't know Jesus. We still have work to do.

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

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## **This Saturday is #ServeSouthGA Day**

[#ServeSouthGA](#) this Saturday! It's time to move outside the church building and into our communities, putting our faith into action. Whether it's just you, your small group or Sunday school class, or even your whole congregation, let's see what needs we can meet in South Georgia! For ideas or help planning, [click here](#).

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## **Called to Repent**

**Spring Quarter: Discipleship and Mission**  
**Unit 1: Call to Discipleship**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of March 24, 2019**  
**By Dr. Hal Brady**

**Lesson Scripture: Luke 19:1-10**  
**Key Verses: Luke 19:10**

### **Lesson Aims**

1. Recall details of the story of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus.
2. Illustrate the transforming effect of God's grace through the example of Zacchaeus.

What is the measure of your life? A number of people help you in this determination. An accountant can assist you in your wealth. A physician can assess your health. Your employer can state your value to the organization. Your résumé can detail your accomplishments. Family or friends can tell you how much you mean to them. But which of these, if any, is the best measure?

As you think about this, you may also ask how the choice of measuring instruments has possibly changed for you during your lifetime. What was once a major measuring instrument in your younger days may not be so today, as you assess your life differently.

Now, this change in assessment is central to what the Bible labels "repentance." Repentant people revalue their lives, and with renovated values, set out with changed behavior. And this is the subject of today's lesson.

Our text is part of Luke's narrative of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. Jesus had warned his disciples that he would be put to death but raised to life again (Luke 18:31-34). Having arrived in Jericho, the setting of today's lesson, Jesus was only about 15 miles from Jerusalem and its momentous events.

Like the blind man whom Jesus healed while entering Jericho, the Zacchaeus episode, which is unique to Luke, portrays response to salvation. Here is a man who is sought and saved by the Son of Man (Luke 19:10).

Zacchaeus is a "chief tax collector," which means he stands at the top of the collection pyramid. Taking a cut of commissions from those who collected taxes for him, he is therefore a wealthy man, though many consider his wealth ill-gotten.

Tax collectors were despised for two main reasons. One was the unfair and burdensome taxes they charged to enrich themselves. After paying Rome its due, these tax collectors were free to charge as much as they could get. The other reason they were despised was the fact that such Jews were collaborators with the occupying force of pagan, oppressive Romans.

This cultural background is important to our understanding of the upcoming crowd's reaction to Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus.

### **Determined Glimpse**

#### **Luke 19:1-4**

As Jesus moves through Jericho, Zacchaeus longs to see this well-known teacher so he can evaluate him. However, Zacchaeus' short stature prohibits him from looking over the crowd, and his outcast status makes it unlikely that anyone will make space for him. But Zacchaeus is resourceful, so he dashes ahead and climbs a sycamore-fig tree. This is one of the fig trees that flourishes in Jericho, with its hot climate and abundant spring water.

We need to note here that in biblical times, powerful men do not run. They have other people who do that for them. But Zacchaeus accepts the humiliation of running ahead of the crowd that is following Jesus. Another bit of Zacchaeus' humiliation is climbing that tree. In Jesus' time, powerful men did not climb trees. So, for the moment, Zacchaeus has humbled himself in hopes of seeing Jesus (Luke 18:14).

A life of humility begins in the mind. It starts with how we perceive ourselves. As someone observed, "Humility is not thinking less about ourselves; it's thinking about ourselves less." At the moment, that is happening with Zacchaeus.

### **Surprise Announcement**

#### **Luke 19:5, 6**

Jesus breaks the ice by noticing Zacchaeus in the tree. He stops and tells him to come down out of the tree, because he "must" stay at Zacchaeus' home today.

To address Zacchaeus by name is an astounding personal note. Minor characters in the gospel story are seldom addressed by name. In any case, it is astonishing that Jesus recognizes and calls

by name a man he has never met. Simply put, this is one of the many examples in the gospel story in which Jesus exhibits supernatural knowledge, knowledge that can be rightly expected of God alone (see Luke 5:22; 6:8; 7:36-50; 19:29-34).

Jesus says to Zacchaeus, “Come down at once. I must stay at your home today.” One who has sought simply to get a glimpse of the teacher now gets to meet him face to face. Zacchaeus’ development of intimacy with Jesus underscores how one who approaches God on the Lord’s terms gets much more than he or she may have expected.

Zacchaeus had climbed the tree to see Jesus, but now, having humbled himself, he will need no such undignified posture. Jesus will come to be a guest at Zacchaeus’ home.

Though Jesus will be Zacchaeus’ guest, it is Jesus who initiates the invitation. It is as if he were the host. The added note of time (today) stresses the urgency of the invitation. In addition, the word “must” signifies something that has to take place to fulfill God’s purpose. Despite Zacchaeus’ being despised by his contemporaries as a traitor, Jesus’ visit to the man’s home is a divine necessity.

Almost needless to say, Zacchaeus readily submits to Jesus’ greater authority and comes down. He does not come down fearfully or grudgingly, but joyfully. Hoping to catch a glimpse of Jesus, he has been chosen to be Jesus’ host. And Zacchaeus seems to recognize the invitation as one of divine grace, representing some kind of new opportunity.

### **Varied Attitudes**

#### **Luke 19:7-10**

Now, the reaction to Jesus’ choice for a host signifies that his choice does not meet popular approval. The crowds that accompany Jesus include many who recognize Zacchaeus as a notorious tax collector, and therefore evil. Disloyal to God and his people, tax collectors were seen as traitors who had linked their wealth with the ill-gotten fortune of their pagan oppressors.

Consequently, the crowds, including religious leaders, determine that Jesus has chosen to be “the guest of a sinner,” and they began “to mutter.” Importantly, however, their complaint or muttering is both right and wrong. Zacchaeus is indeed a sinner, as his own remarks will attest, but he is not beyond the redemptive touch of God or his call.

Though this crowd has written off Zacchaeus, Jesus never writes off those who are open to God. It’s called grace! Jesus’ very visit with Zacchaeus reveals his acceptance of the tax collector.

Grace! What a beautiful word! It signifies God’s active and unmerited favor in our behalf. Grace is utter generosity that acts on another’s behalf regardless of whether they are worthy or not.

My favorite definition of grace is the following, “Grace is doing for someone what they do not deserve, have not earned, could not ask for and cannot repay.”

Repeating, Jesus’ very visit with Zacchaeus reveals his acceptance of the tax collector. And Jesus doesn’t worry about the crowd’s criticism of his being with a sinner, because Jesus’ overwhelming concern is that the lost may come to know the grace of God.

Zacchaeus stopped and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anyone, I repay them four times as much.”

Luke draws our attention to the importance of the pronouncement by indicating Zacchaeus stands up to speak and begins with the word “look.” This expression draws attention to what is to follow. Further, Zacchaeus addresses Jesus as “Lord.” Possibly this indicates high respect (as in “sir”), if not Jesus’ divine, supreme authority.

But it is here we see that Zacchaeus expresses his appreciation of Jesus’ acceptance of him by stating his intent to be a different person. Whether Zacchaeus speaks these words immediately on the spot, walking to his home with Jesus, or when the two are inside his home, doesn’t really matter. Time and place are not nearly as important as the content of Zacchaeus’ words.

Because of his new relationship with God, he pledges to do two things. First, he will give half of his possessions to the poor. This is an exorbitant gift! And, this act of generosity reflects the generosity that God is now showing him through Jesus.

The second result of Zacchaeus’ changed life in Jesus is that those he has wronged will receive restitution at four times the amount taken. This will be to any and all, not just to some, who he has wronged. The Mosaic Law called for restitution between two and five times when theft or fraud is committed (Exodus 22:1-14). Note that Zacchaeus does not debate the proper number. Rather, he openly promises a higher level of restitution. He is aware of his sin and desires to right the wrongs he has done. Such giving as Zacchaeus determines is not required by God’s law, but does reflect a changed heart given over to God.

The question is whether Zacchaeus’ promise is unreasonable. Since he begins by promising half of his wealth to the poor, does he not run the risk of running out of his resources before completing all his promised restitution? However, it is this very extravagance that seems to be Luke’s point. Zacchaeus is no longer the profit-minded opportunist. Rather, he is now the recipient of the extravagant grace of God, so he responds with a similar extravagance.

Repentance! Zacchaeus now displays the true meaning of repentance. Repentance is a change of mind, heart and life in response to God’s gracious gift. Repentance is authentic when an individual’s life increasingly reflects God’s goodness and grace. In that regard, Zacchaeus is now on his way. In Zacchaeus’ changed heart, love for God expresses itself in love for neighbors.

At this point, we see Jesus’ affirmation of Zacchaeus repentance. He endorses Zacchaeus’ response and states that “Today, salvation has come to this household, because he too is a son of Abraham.”

Writing in his book “Surprised by Hope,” N.T. Wright says that “the work of salvation, in its full sense, is (1) about whole human beings, not merely souls; (2) about the present, not simply the future; and (3) about what God does ‘through’ us, not merely what God does ‘in and for’ us. If we can get this straight, we will rediscover the historic basis for the full-orbed mission of the church.”

To be saved by the Lord, of course, is to be graciously granted life with the Lord beyond death. But it is also to be restored to God's blessed life in the present, to begin the experiences the authentic life for which humans were made, and that's what N.T. Wright seems to be stressing.

However, the latter does not imply an easy or materially prosperous life. Salvation comes by the cross and calls the saved to take up their own crosses daily and follow Jesus (Luke 9:22-26). But salvation also transforms our perspective to realize that the life of humble service in the Lord's name is the divinely blessed life for which God has made us.

Then Jesus says, "Because this man, too, is a son of Abraham." While the contemporaries of Zacchaeus consider him a traitor who forfeited his citizenship in Israel, God's people, Jesus now pronounces the opposite: Zacchaeus is a "son of Abraham." God's promise is to bless all nations through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). Having been considered by his neighbors to be part of the pagan nations, Zacchaeus is now reclaimed for God's people according to God's promise.

Luke concludes, "For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." As exciting as everything is in this story before us, even more exciting is what the tax collector's return represents in Verse 10. Jesus, as Son of Man, has come to seek and to save what was lost. He has taken the initiative to point to Zacchaeus as a man who can know God's acceptance, and the tax collector has claimed the opportunity. And as Luke 15:1-10 makes clear, there is joy in heaven over his return.

Nothing or no one is ever really lost until someone looks for it or them. Persons without Christ are lost for a number of reasons but primarily because God is looking for them – actively seeking them. Thanks be to God!

### **Action Plan**

1. Define repentance and when is it authentic?
2. What is meant by the word "salvation?"
3. What changes will you make to better prepare to pursue the calling to seek and save the lost?

Resources for this lesson:

"2018-2019 Standard Lesson NIV Commentary," Uniform Series "International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching," pages 257-264

"The NIV Application Commentary, Luke" by Darrell L. Brown, pages 478-483

"The Interpreter's Bible, Volume VIII, Luke-John," pages 320-327

"Surprised by Hope," N.T. Wright, pages 194-201

*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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## **Called to Follow**

**Spring Quarter: Discipleship and Mission**  
**Unit 2: Call to Ministry**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of March 31, 2019**  
**By Dr. Hal Brady**

**Lesson Scripture: Matthew 4:12-22**  
**Key Verse: Matthew 4:19**

### **Lesson Aims**

3. Recall the reason for the need to repent.
4. Explain the relationship between repentance and the kingdom of heaven.

It is commonly understood that Matthew is the gospel which was written for the Jews. It was written by a Jew in order to convince Jews. One of the great objects of Matthew is to demonstrate that all of the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus and that every detail of Jesus' life was foreshadowed in the prophets. Therefore, Jesus must be the Messiah.

Using more than 60 quotes from the Old Testament, Matthew explains the life of Jesus from birth to resurrection. The flight to and from Egypt is reminiscent of the nation of Israel's enslavement and delivery from Egypt. Herod's opposition to Jesus echoes that of Pharaoh to Moses. The parallels are many. Matthew makes clear that John the Baptist's preaching is also according to Scripture, preparing the way for Jesus.

In addition, Matthew's Jewishness is also evident in his use of the phrase "kingdom of heaven" rather than "kingdom of God." The former expression occurs more than 30 times in the New Testament, and all of them are in the book of Matthew. "Kingdom of heaven" is a respectful Jewish way of saying "kingdom of God" since God's name was not spoken by devout Jews of the day. The practice was to substitute other words for the divine name so clarity would be maintained. Thus, the use of the word "heaven."

Still, another point regarding the Jewishness of Matthew's Gospel is Jesus' time in a wilderness, which immediately leads into today's scripture lesson. Of course, the parallel is with the nation of Israel's experience in the wilderness after leaving Egypt. The 40 years of Israel's story is mirrored in Jesus' story of 40 days (Numbers 14:33,34; Matthew 4:2). But unlike that case, Jesus did not suffer defeat as a result. Instead, he faced Satan's temptation victoriously defeating him three times with the faithful and proper use of Scripture. We will now proceed with today's lesson.

## **Transitions (Matthew 4:12,13)**

The writer of Matthew says, “When Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, he returned to Galilee” (Matthew 4:12). The motivation for Jesus’ return to Galilee is that John the Baptist is put in prison. Matthew does not explain why John was arrested, apparently because this was a well-known story to his audience.

All four Gospels report that Jesus begins his public ministry by preaching in Galilee. These accounts portray Jesus as resolute. To be sure, Jesus does not react without prayerful consideration, given his previous 40 days spent in the wilderness.

Initially, we might assume that Jesus travels to Galilee because of safety concerns. But when we realize that Herod Antipas ruled the region of Galilee, the ruler who had John the Baptist arrested and later put to death, we know Jesus is not going to Galilee to escape danger from him. Besides, in instances where Jesus escaped danger (Luke 4:28-30; John 8:59; 10:39), the issue is one of timing. “They tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come” (John 7:30). The point is that there is no safety in Galilee.

Though Nazareth does not have a good reputation (John 1:46), that doesn’t seem to be the reason Jesus leaves his hometown after living there these three decades. More likely, it was his divine insight that causes him to realize in advance that he will have no credibility there (Luke 4:16-30; John 4:44). Consequently, because of their hard-hearted rejection of the man who grew up among them, the people of Nazareth will not see their town become the center of Jesus’ ministry (Matthew 13:53-58).

After leaving hostile Nazareth, Jesus made Capernaum his headquarters for ministry. Capernaum is a typical working-class village and has a population of about 1,500. Capernaum means the “Village of Nahum,” quite possibly a reference to the Old Testament prophet Nahum. “Nahum” means “compassion.” Isn’t it amazing that Jesus who himself embodied compassion made the “Village of Compassion” his new mailing address?

Situated in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, Capernaum is about 20 miles northeast of Nazareth. Zebulun and Naphtali are regions named for two of the sons of Jacob and the borders of their land grants go back to the days of Joshua (Joshua 19:10-16, 32-39).

If there was a backward place in the Roman Empire, this is it! Yet Jesus chooses insignificant Capernaum as the base of operations from which to launch his public ministry.

Yet it is noteworthy that Jesus himself is a nobody by outward appearances (Isaiah 53:2). He was not born in a palace but in a stable with animals. His hometown was not the enchanting Jerusalem but in the backward town of Nazareth. He was born to parents who were poor and in his early experience he was a refugee. His occupation was carpentry. No doubt, his life had been shared by common humanity.

## **One Light (Matthew 4:14-17)**

The prophet Isaiah had a prophetic ministry that lasted from roughly 740 to 680 B.C. The four Gospels quote from the book of Isaiah more than 20 times. Therefore, the book's vital prophecies of the coming of the Messiah has earned it the designation "the fifth Gospel" to a number of Bible students.

Jesus' arrival in Zebulun and Naphtali (Nazareth was in the territory of Zebulun, while Capernaum was in Naphtali), provides a fertile place of ministry and fulfills that Old Testament prophecy from Isaiah. Matthew 4:15-16 quotes from Isaiah 9:1-2.

The phrase "Galilee of the Gentiles" in verse 15 recognizes that region has been conquered by foreigners. Ever since the Assyrian campaign reduced it to a province under an Assyrian governor in 732 B.C. (2 Kings 15:29), this region has experienced turmoil and forced infiltration of Gentile influence. The inhabitants are called "the people sitting in darkness" (Matthew 4:16). This designation is a description of Jews who await deliverance while living among the hopelessness of the Gentiles. Thus it is here where the darkness is the most pronounced and where the center of religious life in Jerusalem is so far away that these Jews are the first to see the great light of God's deliverance in Jesus. For sure, this is a messianic message of grace, for it comes first to those least expecting it.

Note here that the "way to the sea" (Matthew 4:15) was the trade route that ran through this region to the Mediterranean Sea. Matthew recognizes that Jesus' ministry will extend far beyond the physical locality of Jewish Galilee. Jesus' ministry will touch travelers from beyond the Jordan, and ultimately the Gentiles.

Matthew states in verse 17, "From that time on Jesus began to preach, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is near.'" The preaching ministry of Jesus now begins in earnest. Moving forward from where John the Baptist left off, Jesus continued to call sinners to repentance. As Isaiah had predicted, spiritual darkness had settled upon the land (v:16).

Now, what Jesus expects as a result of his preaching is succinctly summed up in the single word "repent." When most of us hear or see that word, our first thought (which is not wrong) is probably to think in terms of leaving a life of sin (John 8:11), and embracing righteousness (Matthew 3:8). More to the point, however, repentance is grounded in a change of thought and heart (refer to 1 Kings 8:47-50; Matthew 3:9; Acts 8:20-22). Genuine changes in behavior result from changes in the heart.

When Jesus died on the cross, He took on our identity as a sinner. When we believe in Him we take on His identity as the righteous Son of God. And we receive this righteousness the moment we believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of our sin, and ask for forgiveness.

Writing in his book "John Wesley's Message For Today," Steve Harper says that John Wesley called repentance, "A change of heart from all sin to all holiness." Wesley meant "that whereas we once lived in sin with little thought of God, now we have had a change of mind. Now we know that sin matters: it must be forsaken. Now we know that God matters. He must be followed. We have made a 180 degree turn."

Matthew goes on to declare in verse 17b, "for the kingdom of heaven is near." The kingdom of heaven refers to the fulfillment of God's promise to reverse the course of history, a history tainted by sin. That reward involves establishing his reign in place of the tyrannous, selfish reign of sin and death (Romans 5:14, 21). And as Jesus later told Pilate, "it is not of this world" (John 18:36).

History, as it has unfolded since the days of Jesus, reveals that the kingdom he announces supplants all others, but not in the way anyone in the first century A.D. expects.

For Jesus' audience, God's promise of a kingdom to come includes a strong nationalist focus on Israel. Devout Jews expect God's promised kingdom to result in the defeat of Israel's enemies, especially the Roman Empire (Acts 1:6). Thus, God's kingdom is commonly expected to be political and military in nature, like any other, with the exception that it would be righteously ruled by God. At any rate, when people hear Jesus announce that the kingdom of heaven is near, they expect Jesus to inaugurate the kind of kingdom consistent with their hopes.

But Jesus has his own agenda! One of the ways Jesus will challenge these human expectations of the kingdom of heaven is through parables. These stories of Jesus project a very different vision of God's promised kingdom than commonly anticipated.

Scholars inform us that the exact meaning of the verb that is translated "has come near" (along with its closely related adverb form) is the subject of much debate. One clear way it is used in the New Testament is to specify that something is physically near, or approaching something else (examples: Matthew 21:1; Luke 24:28; John 6:19). This is known as a "spatial sense."

Another way the word is used is in referring to something that is near, or getting nearer, in time (examples: Matthew 21:34; 26:18; John 6:47). This is known as a "temporal sense."

And a possible third meaning speaks of closeness of a relationship (examples Romans 10:8; Ephesians 2:13; James 4:8). This is called a "relational sense."

All of these may be true for the occasion at hand. Wherever Jesus is, the kingdom is. Those standing near Jesus are standing next to the perfect representation (incarnation) of the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus arrives when "the defined time had full come" (Galatians 4:4) to put right our relationship with God (Galatians 4:5). Therefore, the spatial, the temporal, and the relational senses all have merit.

However, the crux of Jesus' inauguration of the kingdom of heaven has to do with how people respond to him as their Messiah. As Jesus remains faithful to his mission, people are forced to make decisions. They will either be with him, requiring that they adjust their expectations to accept what He reveals as God's program, or they will be against him. When the people chose Barabbas over Jesus, it was a "telling" day.

#### **Four Responses (Matthew 4:18-22)**

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 22:19). And all four fishermen immediately left their mats and followed Him.

Now, before concluding, I want to make three brief points. First, it is important to note that the call and response of these four disciples is based on an extended prior relationship that they had enjoyed with Jesus. This experience is not their first encounter with Jesus. For example, Andrew was one of the two disciples of John the Baptist who left him to become a disciple of Jesus, and he immediately brought his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:35-42). The point is that all four fishermen had plenty of time to consider Jesus' mission.

Second, we see the significance of a personal commitment to Jesus. While the emphasis of the story is primarily on calling the four to join in Jesus' kingdom mission, that task is accomplished above all as an outgrowth of their relationship to Jesus. "Come, follow me," Jesus said. Allegiance to Jesus makes everything else possible.

The late E. Stanley Jones, an author and missionary to India, once said, "The great secret of the Christian faith is summed up in two words: "in Christ." Live in Christ. Let Christ live in you.

Third, we note that Jesus' mission regains both action and preparation. When Jesus invited Peter, Andrew, James and John to join him in ministry, he was inviting men who knew the importance of both the "boat activity of casting nets" (Matthew 4:18) and the "dock-time activity of preparing those nets to be cast (Matthew 4:21).

Effective ministry today must recognize the same two requirements. Undergirding the boat time (preaching, teaching, etc.) should be a lot of dock-time – time spent preparing. When the opportunity to speak a word for Jesus presents itself, the question is, will we be prepared?

Those four responding disciples of today's lesson had no higher priority than Jesus' call on their lives.

### **Action Plan**

4. Were you to receive a call from Christ to a certain ministry tomorrow, how would you test the validity of that call?
5. How would you best explain the meaning of the kingdom of heaven to someone else?
6. What steps can your church take to help its members avoid equating allegiance to any particular nation with allegiance to the kingdom of Heaven?

Resources for this lesson:

"2018-2019 Standard Lesson NIV Commentary," Uniform Series "International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching," pages 266-272

"The NIV Application Commentary, Matthew" by Michael J. Wilkins, pages 170-180

"Overcomer" by David Jeremiah, pages 61-69

*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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## **What about our legacy?**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

How are we going to live? How will we be remembered? What legacy will we leave behind?

Sometimes we can tell about the legacy a person leaves behind simply by walking through the cemetery. View several of these epitaphs and see what they tell us about the person who died.

On a tombstone in Cambridge, England, these words were written about an Anglican priest: "Here lies Father William who served as vicar of this church for more than 30 years without the slightest bit of enthusiasm."

From a cemetery in Nova Scotia: "Here lies Ezekiel Ikle, age 102. The good die young."

On a tombstone in a Georgia cemetery: "I told you I was sick."

Now, these tombstones tell us a lot about the lives that were led and the legacies that were left behind.

As "Biography" magazine had it on its cover a few years ago, "Every life has a story." And it does. But what is the story that is left behind?

Abraham Lincoln was once asked how he would like to be remembered.

It is interesting that he did not ask history to recall him as president or as the leader of his country in troubled times. He said he hoped it would be said that, "He plucked a thistle and planted a flower where a flower would grow." It is little wonder that Abraham Lincoln is remembered with great fondness and appreciation. People who plant flowers where thorns have grown can be sure their epitaph will read: "Gone, but not forgotten."

We are talking about legacy. Most normal human beings want to leave something worthwhile as they depart this world. For best results, we take our cue from Jesus. You see, it is his legacy to humankind that overshadows and dwarfs all other combined legacies of humankind. And note that his legacy is not a marble statue or anything like that but a living force.

Needless to say, Jesus' legacy reflects his life. It was and is a legacy of love, and it cost him his life.

For a moment, I want to mention four practical guidelines for a legacy of love. First, be aware! There's a chapter in the late Bishop Bevel Jones' book, "One Step Beyond Caution," called "A Mother's Influence." In that chapter, Bishop Jones spoke of some of the things his mother gave him.

“Mother took every opportunity to create awareness and a sense of wonder in me. I can hear mother now bemoaning the fate of a crippled animal or fallen sparrow. She would have me virtually in tears over the plight of a neighbor in trouble or some person who was down and out. But that compassion was coupled with the compulsion to exceed. Mother was allergic to mediocrity.”

Then Bishop Jones said, “The longer I live the more I think about what my folks bequeathed to me and what I am passing on to my children and grandchildren. It is no disgrace not to leave an estate. But it is tragic to leave no legacy.”

Second, be engaged! We will never leave a legacy of love if we don’t stay engaged with the world. Someone observed, “Wherever you are, be all there. Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God.”

Personally, I don’t know of a life worth living or a loving action taken that can be reduced to a sound bite. Stay engaged!

Third, be humble! Prideful people never leave a legacy of love. It’s the humble people that we remember and admire.

As has been stated, “Humility is not thinking less of ourselves; it is thinking about ourselves less.” Love’s challenge is making life less about “me” and more about others.

Fourth, be kind! Kindness is many things. It’s how we treat friends and strangers and clerks. It’s how we drive our automobiles, respond over the telephone and remember an important date in someone’s life. It’s a thoughtful word, a warm smile and a little more patience. Kindness makes the sandwich!

What Jesus left for us is the love of the Father. I’m talking about the forgiving, creative and consistent love that will stand forever in a world of prejudice, division and discord. It’s a legacy that values highly the godly nature of our relationships with our fellow human beings.

So what is the legacy that we will leave behind? Jesus left a legacy of love and so can we.

*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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## **Retired Clergy Birthdays – March 2019**

- 3/01 – Ralph Bailey: 9650 Lehigh Ave.; Savannah, GA 31406
- 3/01 – Buddy Whatley: 2153 Bold Springs Rd.; Ochlocknee, GA 31773
- 3/02 – William Whipple: 2247 Eastway Rd.; Decatur, GA 30033
- 3/02 – Gene Yates: 705 Curl Rd.; East Dublin, GA 31027

- 3/03 – Richard Bishop: 292 Timberwind Dr.; Byron, GA 31008  
 3/03 – Thomas Williams: 1072 Lee Rd. #292; Smith’s Station, AL 36877  
 3/04 – Irie Cyree: 4402 Bridgewater Dr.; Phenix City, AL 36867  
 3/05 – Tim Paulk: 104 Lee Rd. 2153; Salem, AL 36874  
 3/06 – Ellison Whitt: 443 Lee Smith Rd.; Ellaville, GA 31806  
 3/08 – Jerry Lillard: 253 Paul Lockley Rd.; Lyons GA 30436  
 3/09 – Grover Bell: 333 E. 53rd St.; Savannah, GA 31405  
 3/15 – Brenda Iglehart: 316 Palm Club Circle.; Brunswick, GA 31525  
 3/16 – Joel Dent: 1819 Pine Forest Circle; Dublin, GA 31021  
 3/16 – Truett Leveritt: PO Box 15893; Savannah, GA 31416  
 3/16 – Vance Mathis: 305 Jasmine Way; Bonaire, GA 31005  
 3/17 – George Durham: 844 Woods Hole Circle; Statesboro, GA 30461  
 3/17 – David Seyle: 304 Causton Harbour Dr.; Savannah, GA 31404  
 3/18 – Tom Oliver: 511 Victory Dr.; Waynesboro, GA 30830  
 3/19 – James Snell, Jr.: 1590 Piney Grove Rd.; Loganville, GA 30052  
 3/20 – Ronnie Culpepper: 2848 Sue Mack Dr.; Columbus, GA 31906  
 3/20 – Dan MacMinn: 95 Hardin St.; Waverly Hall, GA 31831  
 3/21 – Delia Steffen: 128 Cambridge Way; Macon, GA 31220  
 3/22 – Beverly Flowers: 390 Brook Hollow Dr.; McDonough, GA 30252  
 3/22 – Tommy Mason, Jr.: 7321 US Highway 41; Vienna, GA 31092  
 3/23 – Dwight Bishop: 133 Purple Magnolia Dr.; Alapaha, GA 31622  
 3/23 – James McIlrath: 555 Jenkins Farm Rd.; Brunswick, GA 31523  
 3/23 – Jimmy Pennell: 2257 S. Lakeshore Dr.; Lake Junaluska, NC 28745  
 3/24 – Larry E. Bird: 325 Langston Chapel Rd.; Statesboro, GA 30458-3773  
 3/28 – Hal Brady: 36 Lullwater Estate; Atlanta, GA 30307  
 3/30 – Allen Brooks: 535 Hendley Circle; Nashville, GA 31639



## **OBITUARIES**

### **Mrs. Betty Freeman**

After a well fought battle with Alzheimer’s Disease, Betty Ruth Sellers Freeman, age 89, went to her heavenly home on Wednesday, March 6, 2019. Funeral services were held at 2 p.m. Saturday, March 9 at Tennille United Methodist Church. Reverend Randall Smith and Mr. Scott Fuss officiated.

Betty was the seventh of eight children born to the late Walter Simeon Sellers and the late Emma Kathleen Moore Sellers in Waycross, Georgia. On June 26, 1946, she married Ramus Guy Freeman.

Betty was a beloved wife for 70 plus years, loving Mama to four children (Robbie, Karen, Steve and Kristi), Granny to 12 grandchildren, and GiGi to nine great-grandchildren.

Betty was an active member of the Methodist church all of her life. At the age of 16, she became a Methodist preacher’s wife and was a true partner in ministry throughout the 40 plus years that

Ramus was in active ministry. As part of her ministry, she often taught Sunday school and provided the program for many UMW meetings. After Ramus retired and they moved into the house where Ramus grew up, Betty became an active member of the Tennille United Methodist Church where she served wherever needed, often making cakes and casseroles to take to those who were sick or grieving.

Betty is survived by her daughters, Karen (Glenn) Watson of Bonaire, Georgia and Kristi (Scott) Fuss of Covington, Georgia; son, Steve (Sallie) Freeman of Woodstock, Georgia; daughter-in-law Pennie Freeman; 11 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren, many nieces and nephews.

She is preceded in death by her husband, Ramus Freeman; son, Robbie Freeman; grandson, Sean Freeman; and three brothers and four sisters.

[May and Smith Funeral Directors](#) in Sandersville is in charge of these arrangements.

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## **Scripture Readings – March 19**

### **March 24**

#### ***Third Sunday in Lent***

Isaiah 55:1-9

Psalm 63:1-8 (UMH 766)

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Luke 13:1-9

### **March 31**

#### ***Fourth Sunday in Lent***

Joshua 5:9-12

Psalm 32 (UMH 766)

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

### **April 7**

#### ***Fifth Sunday in Lent***

Isaiah 43:16-21

Psalm 126 (UMH 847)

Philippians 3:4b-14

John 12:1-8

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## **Events in the South Georgia Conference – 3/19/2019 edition**

### **#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.](#)

### **Sexual Ethics Workshop – April 9**

According to the Conference Sexual Ethics policy, this workshop is REQUIRED EVERY (3) THREE YEARS for any person serving under appointment by the bishop (clergy, local pastors, extension ministers, appointed lay speakers). 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.

### **Eagles' Spring Picnic – April 25**

The South Georgia Eagles (the Conference's retired ministers and spouses) will host a Spring Picnic for all retirees at McRae First UMC Thursday, April 25 at noon. The men of McRae First UMC will prepare a fish dinner for all and attendees are asked to bring dessert or salad fixings. The program will be the hilarious Jacki Beasley impersonating "Miss Busy Body." Come as you are and enjoy the food and fellowship. Contact Dr. Charles E. Cravey at [drrev@msn.com](mailto:drrev@msn.com) for more information.

### **United Methodist Men Annual Retreat – April 26-27**

The South Georgia United Methodist Men will gather for their annual retreat April 26-27 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. [Download the brochure](#) | [Click here for housing registration](#)

### **Wesley Glen Ministries' Fish Fry – April 27**

Wesley Glen's annual Fish Fry event is the place to be for good food, music, and great fellowship. Join them for a fun-filled day on April 27 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.! For more information, visit [www.wesleyglenministries.com/fish-fry](http://www.wesleyglenministries.com/fish-fry).

### **Witnessing Through The Storm – April 27**

The South Georgia Conference has experienced multiple catastrophic events in the past three years and churches have been actively engaged in their own communities and beyond to meet the needs of those impacted by these storms. United Methodists have been a beacon of light during dark skies by being the hands and feet of Jesus Christ – before, during, and after the storms. Join the Conference Discipleship Teams Saturday, April 27 for "Witnessing Through The Storm," a day of exploring the many ways individuals and churches can be prepared in the event of a natural disaster and "be the church" in their communities and throughout the world. This will be a day of equipping, inspiring, building capacity and preparing for our future impact in disaster

response ministry. Special guests include Cathy Earl, UMCOR, US Disaster Response & Partner Relations, and Jenny Phillips, Global Ministries, Creation Care Program Manager/Sustainable Development. The training will be held from 10 am. – 4 p.m. at Cordele First United Methodist Church. The cost is \$25 per person and includes lunch. [Click here for more information, including the day's schedule.](#)

### **Early Response Team Training, Columbus – May 4**

An ERT Training (only) will be held Saturday, May 4 at Epworth UMC in Columbus. The training will run from 8:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. 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. (UMCOR background checks are required before receiving badges—participants must register [here](#) at no cost to participants.) Lunch is also included in the cost. Pre-registration is required. To schedule an ERT training/chainsaw training, contact Luis Morales at [morhilll@gmail.com](mailto:morhilll@gmail.com). **[REGISTER](#)**

### **Native American Ministries Sunday – May 5**

On Native American Ministries Sunday, United Methodists cultivate and support urban missions with Native Americans and fund scholarships for Native American seminarians. Your annual conference retains 50 percent of the offering is to strengthen and develop Native American ministries. However, if no Native American ministries exist in the conference, the entire offering is remitted to the General Council on Finance and Administration for Native American ministries in other areas. The remaining 50 percent of the offering expands mission work with the Native American Urban Initiative and provides scholarships for Native Americans attending United Methodist and other approved schools of theology. Is it easier to learn Native American traditions from a Native American or an Irish American? This is why the Native American Ministries Sunday offering is critical – to continue the traditions and nurture the gifts of Native Americans. [Click here for resources to help promote this special Sunday.](#)

### **Magnolia Manor Sunday – May 12**

Magnolia Manor is a South Georgia Conference ministry that serves older adults of all faiths in eight locations throughout South Georgia. On this Special Sunday, South Georgia United Methodists are asked to take up a special offering to support this vital ministry. To learn more about Magnolia Manor visit [www.magnoliamanor.com](http://www.magnoliamanor.com).

### **South Georgia Annual Conference session, Columbus – June 2-5**

The 2019 South Georgia Annual Conference session will be held June 2-5, 2019, at the Columbus Georgia Convention & Trade Center in Columbus, Ga. All information related to the annual conference session will be posted on the conference website, [www.sgaumc.org/annualconference](http://www.sgaumc.org/annualconference).