

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – APRIL 16 EDITION

Statesboro First UMC member's art enhances worship

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Jewell Dabbs is an artist, but she doesn't use watercolors or acrylics to create her masterpieces. Her canvases are fabric, and brocades, tassels and beads are her brushstrokes.

Dabbs creates banners – beautiful, artistic displays that proclaim the majesty and message of Jesus Christ and his love to all who see them.

A member of Statesboro First United Methodist Church, Dabbs is a great supporter of music and worship. For years she has spearheaded the effort to provide banners for Statesboro First UMC's sanctuary. As a result, the church has a collection of handmade, one-of-a-kind banners that grace the sanctuary and enhance the congregation's worship experience.

Dabbs first learned to sew on a treadle, or non-electric, sewing machine. Taught by her mother, she grew to love the art, and once she mastered it she graduated to French and heirloom sewing.

"I have been sewing for what seems like forever," said Dabbs, who also crochets and knits prayer shawls for the church's prayer shawl ministry. "I love the challenge of designing and creating a new piece and I love seeing the finished product."

Since 2010, she's made 10 banners. Most are specific to Easter or Christmas, but some aren't seasonal. The first banner she and two friends created is called, "I am the Vine."

Designed by another church member and translated to fabric by Dabbs, the finished banner measures 33 inches wide and 11.5 feet long and was used during the church's stewardship campaign.

"We had the best time (making it) and it was beautiful," Dabbs said. "It was on a brocade fabric and had grapes on it. It was really, really pretty. I had blisters on my fingers from the hot glue!"

This Easter, the church will display a banner that they've used before, but Dabbs says she'll make a new one for the Christmas season. She'll discuss this year's Christmas cantata theme with Pierce Dickens, Statesboro First UMC's music director, to make sure the banner's theme aligns with the cantata's theme, and then she'll begin to dream and design.

"Usually she brings to me a sketch of her concept to ask if I think that it fits," Dickens said. "Without fail it does! And the final product never disappoints; they are truly works of art."

Her banners are such masterpieces that they have attracted attention outside of the church and community. Statesboro native and former church member Claire Bowen, now a resident of Atlanta and a member of Peachtree Road United Methodist Church, saw one of Dabbs' Christmas banners during a visit home a few years ago. She was so awed by its beauty that she asked if she could borrow a banner for Peachtree Road UMC's Christmas Carols by Candlelight service.

“Everyone was so impressed,” Bowen said. “My pastor said, ‘I have banner envy.’”

While the accolades are abundant, Dabbs doesn’t make the banners for any human recognition or glory. She sews and creates because she loves it and because it brings glory to God.

“God gave me this talent,” she said. “I can’t sing. I can’t play piano. I’m not musically inclined at all, but this maybe is my talent, and I want to use it the best way I can, and I love doing it. It makes me feel really good to go in there and see it hanging.”

Brunswick ministry offers hope, healing to sex trafficking victims

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Just like a dilapidated former crack house in downtown Brunswick has been transformed into a beautiful, bright spot in the neighborhood, a ministry in Brunswick is working to shed light on the growing and pervasive issue of sex trafficking, bring hope and healing to victims, and transform lives.

Faithful Love, a ministry founded by United Methodist Carrie Nellis, helps rescue women from sex trafficking by giving them resources, providing a safe place to rest and recover, and fostering relationships to help them know there is hope and life beyond what they currently see.

An adoption attorney, Nellis has seen an increase in sex trafficking in recent years, especially among the birth mothers with whom she works. Unable to turn a blind eye to the issue, she began walking Brunswick’s streets, going into the brothels and drug houses, and building relationships with women she’d meet.

Through the relationships, she learned about the women, their lives, and the issues they face.

“Their chains are different than what a lot of people imagine,” Nellis said. “A lot of people believe that the women being trafficked are literally being chained to a wall or something like that, but what we are dealing with here in Brunswick is that men get them addicted to drugs and they trade drugs for prostitution.”

The goal of Faithful Love, she said, is to love the women as they are, just as Jesus does.

“It’s to do life with these women. To build trust with them. To love them,” she said. “They know we want them out, and when they’re ready, they’ll let us know and we’ll help them find and get into a program.”

Many people don’t believe or refuse to believe that sex trafficking is a problem in the community, but it’s a “huge problem,” said Nellis, a member of The Chapel in Brunswick.

Faithful Love Executive Director Judi Riccio says sex trafficking is a pervasive problem, prevalent in every community and in every zip code.

“We may not see it, we probably won’t see it, but it’s everywhere,” she said. “It’s behind closed doors and it’s everywhere.”

At Faithful Love, Nellis, Riccio, and a handful of faithful volunteers work tirelessly to rescue women and restore hope.

The former drug house is now a haven for women who need a safe place to rest, recover, and find hope. It’s not an overnight facility, but does have a few bedrooms, bathrooms, and laundry facilities where women can sleep for a few hours, shower, and wash their clothes.

Currently open two days a week, the home offers a hot lunch on Mondays and coffee and art therapy on Thursdays. Faithful Love hopes to soon have the resources to be able to open and offer lunch each weekday.

They believe that, through building relationships and friendships, trust will begin to build and that hope and new life will begin to grow.

“Our hope is that they see Jesus,” Nellis said. “That it’s not what we say, but it’s in the mundane tasks of helping them with their laundry or making brownies with them or pouring a cup of coffee and sitting with them. I hope that they see Jesus and then, in that, that they see that there is hope. That’s our prayer.”

The problem is widespread and rampant, and Faithful Love can’t do it alone. They rely on partnerships with local ministries, agencies, and churches to serve the women. One partner is the Remedy Project, a faith-based counseling and education organization. Another is The Chapel, a United Methodist congregation in Brunswick.

“Faithful Love shares Jesus’ compassion, good news, and hope with women who are being sex trafficked. What a purpose and inspiration,” said Bryan Kelso, The Chapel’s director of deployment and groups. “At The Chapel, we rely on all of our mission partners, like Faithful Love, to help equip us with knowledge and resources in a variety of faith, justice, and mercy causes, and to help us engage people we would not have reached otherwise. We are so grateful for the creativity, passion, and determination of our mission partners.”

The answer won’t be quick or easy, Nellis and Riccio say, but they are making strides in some of the darkest corners of the community.

“Our heart is to walk with these women as long as they need,” Riccio said. “We want them to see that there is hope for something else and realize that hope is in Jesus Christ.”

A Holy Week Message from Bishop Bryan: Reflections on Psalm 22

Holy Week is a journey to the cross, the center of our faith. Meditating on the crucifix connects us with the wounds of Jesus, “... by his stripes we are healed.” Meditating on the empty cross,

the Resurrection Cross, connects us to God's victory over sin, evil, and death. As we make this journey, please join me in focusing our hearts and minds on Psalm 22.

The first verse of Psalm 22 is familiar to us because Jesus prayed it from the cross: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Anyone who reads all 31 verses will recognize that this is not a "feel good" psalm. It is, however, a tremendous resource for those times in our lives and in the lives of our churches and communities when everything seems out of joint. From Palm Sunday to Good Friday I encourage us to pray Psalm 22 with the conviction that God has something personal to say to each of us.

In addition to the opening line about feeling godforsaken, verse two amplifies the anguish by saying, "I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest."

Then comes a surprise in verse three: "Yet you..." Here the psalmist shifts from personal pain to the holiness of God and how "our ancestors trusted and you delivered them." This is not "positive thinking" but is based on remembering the real story of God's deliverance throughout the history of Israel.

By verse six, however, the psalmist is back in the dark valley of the immediate situation: "I am a worm, and not human ... scorned by others and despised ... all who see me mock at me ..."

This sense of doom and gloom multiplies for three verses. At this point we are thoroughly depressed. But then the psalmist repeats in verse nine the surprise first found in verse three: "Yet it was you..." Earlier the psalmist remembered God's faithfulness to the ancestors but now comes a more personal memory: "Yet it was you who took me from the womb ... you kept me safe ... on you I was cast from my birth ..."

Notice the back and forth movement in Psalm 22. One set of verses expresses the groaning of human anguish. But this is followed by a vision of God's great faithfulness. Then the sequence repeats itself. This back and forth movement is the story of real life: ups and downs, a roller coaster ride.

The psalm continues, "All my bones are out of joint ... my heart is like wax ... my mouth is dried up ... I can count all my bones ..." Everything in life seems out of joint.

"But you, O Lord ..." At last we come to the saving insight, the Lord "does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty ... the poor shall eat and be satisfied, and those who seek the Lord shall praise him."

Poverty has many dimensions: lack of basic needs such as food, clothing, or shelter; lack of a sense of meaning in life; lack of healthy relationships; lack of hope for any improvement in life. Rather than running away from our own poverty, Psalm 22 takes us even more deeply into it. And just when it seems that despair is going to overwhelm us we find that word, "Yet ..." In the midst of recognizing our own poverty - physical, emotional, or spiritual - we discover the divine "Yet." We hit bottom and discover the God is the bottom. We have fallen into the arms of God.

Where does it seem to you that everything is out of joint? Is it in physical health, mental or emotional stress, relationships, your spiritual life, or the challenges we face in discerning God's

future for South Georgia and for The United Methodist Church? How blessed we will be if we use Psalm 22 to open us to our own poverty so that we can join the Psalmist, and Jesus, in a Holy Week pilgrimage that lands us in the arms of God.

Alive Together in Christ,

R. Lawson Bryan

2019-2020 Projected Appointments

Bishop R. Lawson Bryan has announced projected appointment changes as of April 14, 2019. The appointments will be set at the South Georgia Annual Conference and will be effective in June.

[Click here to download the list of projected appointments.](#)

Start small, trust God

OUR CONNECTION MATTERS

NITA CRUMP

Therefore, go and make disciples ... (Matthew 28:19a)

There was a party in Atlanta last week. Actually, it was more than a party. It was a grand celebration. The General Board of Global Ministries celebrated 200 years in mission and ministry. 200 years of sharing the good news of Jesus. 200 years of building medical clinics and homes for widows and orphans. 200 years of feeding and clothing people and visiting the sick and imprisoned. 200 years of following John Wesley's example of caring for people holistically – mind, body, and spirit.

GBGM offers this simple explanation of the beginning: "On April 5, 1819, the Missionary Society was formed in New York City in response to the mission work of John Stewart, a freeborn African-American, among the Wyandotte Native American people in Ohio."

There's a lot we can learn from this statement about how we can be involved in mission and ministry today. One thing we can learn is that large endeavors often begin as small, humble events. Even the largest Live Oak tree in South Georgia grew from a very small acorn.

Are you wondering what you can do for God's kingdom? Ask God what simple act he would like you to accomplish. Then do it. Who knows what might grow out of one simple, local, and

uncomplicated act. God may be calling you to plant a seed that will grow far beyond anything you might imagine.

Another thought comes to mind. I seriously doubt John Stewart began his work with the Wyandotte people thinking, “200 years from now people will remember the work I’m doing.” Actions that are servant-oriented and start with a desire to serve God by serving others often seem humble, lowly even. Jesus set the example by washing the feet of the disciples, eating with sinners, and sharing the good news that God wants people to draw close to him with everyone who had ears to hear. We should follow his example of service to others without seeking reward or recognition, trusting that God the Father will see our loving hearts displayed in our work.

Another example we can learn from the GBGM statement is the fact that a man reached out to people who were different from him. A man of mixed African and European heritage reached out to Native American people during a time in our country when neither group was valued as human beings. It is human nature to want to remain in our comfortable setting with people we know, people who look and think like us. But God calls us to think outside our self-created boxes and reach out to everyone around us.

An old preacher once told me that if all my friends were Christians, I needed to add some new friends. In order to share the gospel, we have to be in relationship with people, and many of those people won’t look or think like we do. Step outside your comfort zone and open the door to a relationship with someone you would not normally spend time with. You might find that you’re the one drawing closer to God as you learn to love a new-found neighbor.

As we consider the 200th anniversary of our global work in mission and ministry, remember to start small, step out of your comfort zone, and trust that any reward or recognition that comes will come from the God who knows the secrets of every heart, including yours.

Dr. Nita Crump serves as Director of Connectional Ministries. Contact her at nitac@sgaumc.com.

Campers will turn the world Upside Down for Jesus. Register for Camp Connect today!

Don’t miss out on the opportunity for your child to spend a week away from normal everyday life in the beauty of God’s creation with people who seek to share Christ in the everyday. Register today for [Camp Connect](#), the camping ministry of the South Georgia Conference.

With an “Upside Down” theme this summer, a week at Camp Connect will teach campers how to turn the world upside down for Jesus. Diving into scripture and sharing life stories will show them they are can make an impact for Christ in their own schools and communities.

“My prayer, as each camper registration comes through, is that everyone will have the opportunity to encounter Christ in a powerful, life-changing way during their week at camp,” said Suzanne Akins, Camp Director. “There is something so rare and unique about shutting down technology, looking eye to eye with people, sharing meals, laughing, playing, and worshipping together day after day, night after night.” [More information](#)

Each morning at camp begins with a Morning Show, an interactive high-energy gathering with music, skits, and announcements for the day. From there, each team's day is filled with swimming, marsh walks, trips to the beach, fishing, Bible studies, art, and indoor/outdoor games. Each evening is a camp-wide activity bringing out the best of competitions. Camp closes each night with a worship service of meaningful skits, powerful music, testimonies and relevant speakers.

College students who are committed to serving Christ through working with children and youth during the summer are the full-time camp counselors. Each staff member has been interviewed by the Camp Ministry Team, passed a background check, attended 10 days of training, and is supervised by Camp Director Suzanne Akins.

For more information, visit www.campconnectumc.org or call [\(912\) 638-8626](tel:9126388626).

Denman Award Nominations Sought

Every year, the South Georgia Conference honors clergy and laity who exhibit outstanding efforts for the work on Christian Evangelism with the Harry Denman Evangelism Award.

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award program recognizes United Methodists in each annual conference whose exceptional ministry of evangelism – expressed in Word (what), Sign (why), and Deed (how) – brings people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

Evangelism happens in many contexts and many settings; impacts and engages all generations; and requires relationship among a variety of persons. Persons who demonstrate the spirit of this award are ones whose life and ministry exemplifies the teaching of Christ and the Great Commission.

Recipients of these awards, nominated by individuals, churches, or districts and selected by the Conference Witness Team, live their call to “Offer Them Christ” daily as modeled by Dr. Harry Denman, founder of The Foundation for Evangelism that sponsors these awards.

Neither the size of the local church with which the person is affiliated, the age or gender of the person, nor the length of their service limits a person’s eligibility. What is important are the persons whose lives have been changed by the life and ministry of the nominee. (Note: the youth award is limited to individuals who would be considered students - college age or younger.)

The award is named for the late Dr. Harry Denman, who was a distinguished lay evangelist. The awards are made possible by The Foundation for Evangelism, which was founded in 1949 by Dr. Denman, who felt it was the business of every Christian to be an evangelist. It is most fitting that annual conferences today honor persons who carry on the spirit of Harry Denman.

Nominations

The South Georgia Annual Conference Witness Team is now accepting nominations for the Denman Award for Clergy, Lay, and Youth.

To learn more about the award or to download nomination forms [click here](#) or contact the SGA Conference Witness Chair, Karen Forrester, at karenforrester65@gmail.com.

Nominations must be received no later than April 25.

Cantore comes to town for Conference Disaster Response event

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

A popular meme states, “It’s never a good sign when Jim Cantore comes to town.”

Cantore, a meteorologist and on-air personality for The Weather Channel, is a famous figure in hurricane reporting and is well-known for being in the middle of the worst weather.

But on April 27, South Georgia residents have nothing to fear from Cantore. Instead of reporting from the eye of a hurricane he’ll be the keynote speaker at the Conference Discipleship Teams’ “Witnessing Through The Storm” event.

“Based on our experiences these past several years with hurricanes, straight-line winds, tornadoes, and flooding, responding to natural disasters feels like it has become our ‘new normal,’” said Allison Lindsey, Associate Director of Connectional Ministries. “During these times, churches have a tremendous opportunity to be a witness in their communities, and this event is designed to equip both individuals and congregations to be prepared and explore what their niche can be in their communities and throughout the connection.”

“Witnessing Through The Storm,” set for Saturday, April 27 at Cordele First United Methodist Church, will be 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. An all-day event, it begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m.

“This will be a day of equipping, inspiring, building capacity and preparing for our future impact in disaster response ministry,” Lindsey said. “The Conference Outreach and Missions teams are organizing this event for those who are seeking to learn more and are also offering advanced training for those who have been engaged in response ministries.”

In addition to Cantore, the day's other special guests include Cathy Earl, UMCOR's Director of Disaster Response and U.S. Partner Relations, and Jenny Phillips, Global Ministries' Creation Care/Sustainable Development Program Manager.

The Conference Disaster Response Team will be collecting UMCOR hygiene kits and school kits the day of the event. [Click here](#) for information and instructions on assembling these kits.

[Click here for more information about the "Witnessing Through The Storm" event.](#)

[REGISTER HERE](#)

[Click here to download a PDF promotional flyer](#)

Called to Believe the Resurrection

Spring Quarter: Discipleship and Mission

Unit 2: Call to Ministry

Sunday school lesson for the week of April 21, 2019

By Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 4:12-22

Key Verse: Matthew 4:19

Lesson Aims

1. To celebrate the joy and hope of Easter as we proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
2. Compare and contrast the reactions of those who became aware that Jesus' body was missing.

It has been noted that an online search for the 10 most significant discoveries in history will reveal many lists. Most include such things as penicillin, oxygen, gravity, fingerprints, etc. Eventually, however, death comes to everyone (Hebrews 9:27). That is why the greatest discovery of all time happened on the day we celebrate Easter Sunday.

The great discovery that was made by those who came to Jesus' tomb after his crucifixion was the absence of something: Jesus' body. Never before or since that morning has the absence of something conveyed such an earth-shattering message. Today's lesson introduces us to that message.

Before proceeding, however, we need to be reminded that Jesus' resurrection figures prominently in all four Gospels. While we cannot resolve all of the differences between the resurrection accounts, their variations strengthen the truth that these Gospel writers are independent witnesses and are not attempting to reproduce a concocted deception.

As Bible scholar M. Eugene Boring points out, Jesus' resurrection "is the ultimately decisive event for human history, not merely something spectacular that happened to Jesus." The

disciples believed it, and that belief changed their lives and transformed the world. That cannot be denied. We measure the calendar BC, before Christ, and AD, “anno domini,” in the year of our Lord.

“The Easter stories,” Boring says, “are not to be harmonized, but each is to be interpreted as mediating some dimension of an Easter faith.” The Gospel authors did not set out to write a historical account. They were each providing a declaration of faith for the church.

An Amazing Sight

Matthew 28:1-4

The Resurrection accounts we read in Mark and Luke indicate that the women went to the grave hoping to anoint Jesus’ body. They took spices in order to do so. In that day, bodies were anointed postmortem primarily to mask the stench of decay. However, Matthew leaves this out of his account. For him, the body had already been anointed with expensive perfume by the woman at Simon’s house in Bethany (Matthew 26:6-13).

Now, there are several women named Mary in the New Testament, and it’s easy to get them confused. The designation Magdalene is not a last name, but indicates a village she comes from that is located on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

The other Mary is likely “the mother of James and Joseph” (Matthew 27:56). Scholars tell us if we combine Matthew 13:55; 27:56; and Mark 15:40, 47, then this Mary may be the mother of Jesus but this is not certain.

Matthew’s account is the only one that mentions an earthquake. But this earthquake is not caused by the slippage of subterranean tectonic plates. Rather, this earthquake is caused by an angel descending from heaven and rolling the stone from the entrance of the tomb.

As you may recall, an earthquake occurred at the moment of Jesus’ death (Matthew 27:50, 51). Now one takes place as part of the unfolding drama here. A.T. Robertson, biblical scholar, quotes Jesuit priest Cornelius Lapide as saying, “The earth which trembled with sorrow at the Death of Christ as it were leaped for joy at His Resurrection.”

Important to note! This angel did not open the tomb to let Jesus out; he opened the tomb to let the women in!

“His appearance was like lightening, and his clothes were white as snow.” Such a description as this is fitting for a being whom the previous verse says has just come “down from heaven!” The brightness of both the angel’s “appearance” and “clothes” is reminiscent of how Jesus appeared at his transfiguration (Matthew 17:1,2).

So the elite, heavily armed, highly trained Roman guards stationed at the tomb experience both the sight of an angel of the Lord and the sudden terror of the earthquake. They shake as much as the earth does! The overall shock of what they witness leaves them paralyzed with fear or unconscious. The phrase “become like dead men” does not mean they actually died, because some of them later reported this stunning news to the religious leaders in Jerusalem (Matthew 28:11).

Assuring Words

Matthew 28:5-6

As you know, we live in a scientific age that looks for proof and questions the idea of miracles. The early followers of Jesus lived in a different time. Perhaps it was less difficult for them to accept the idea of the Resurrection. Nevertheless, part of the human condition is our need for hope. Those early Christians believed in the Resurrection, and it did change their lives and their world. Of course, the lessons of Jesus can change one's life, but the story of his resurrection was what drove the rapid growth of the early church.

The angel calms the women (28:5). For the first time the angel speaks to the women: "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified." Then the angel goes on to announce the reason for the empty grave. Jesus is not there. He has been raised from the dead. While other stories will be concocted to try to cover up the truth (Matthew 28:11-15), God's word of revelation through the angel tells the real story – Jesus has indeed been raised from the dead. Thus, the angel bears testimony to the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecies of his death and resurrection (16:21; 17:23; 20:19), which forcefully verifies Jesus' words about his mission and identity.

Astonishing Appearance

Matthew 28:7-10

The "come and see" of the previous verse gives way to the "go and tell" we see here (v.7). The women had arrived as seekers (Matthew 28:1-5). They then transitioned from seekers to finders (28:6) – but find something much better than expected. Now they must make the transition from finders to tellers. When it comes to knowledge of Jesus there's no such thing as God's being content with those who never progress out of the seeker stage.

Only time will tell whether the disciples will believe the women's testimony. According to the Jewish historian Josephus (AD 37-100), women of that time are not allowed to testify in court. Thus, the affirmation by the angel of the women's role flies in the face of a first-century practice. However, the first witnesses to the evidence of Jesus' resurrection are indeed women.

While the women seek the tomb as soon as enough light allows, the 11 disciples are still quaking in fear underneath tables and behind locked doors. They fear retribution at the hands of the same man who crucified Jesus (John 20:19).

"... and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him! Now I have told you." These phrases repeat and reinforce Jesus' promise in Matthew 26:32 and Mark 14:28 that he is to go before the disciples "into Galilee."

As we remember, Matthew tells us that the angel said, "Don't be afraid" (v.5). He then instructed the women to hurriedly go and tell the disciples what they had discovered. With fear and excitement, they started on their way, but suddenly they encounter Jesus himself. He also told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (v.10).

Neither Mark nor Luke reports this appearance of Jesus. However, we should keep in mind that Matthew's Gospel is a call to mission for the early church. Therefore, this passage serves as a reminder that Jesus calls us as his followers to go and tell. In fact, it has been suggested that today's text makes for a great Easter sermon with this simple outline: (1) Don't be afraid! (2) Believe! (3) Rejoice! (4) Go and tell!

At this juncture, I want to reiterate two key points in the lesson. First, as these women dutifully and excitedly ran to deliver their message, Jesus suddenly appeared to them with the comment, "Rejoice!" The women, understandably overcome with emotion, fell at his feet and worshiped their risen Lord and Savior. They worshiped Him!

Second, Jesus said, "Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me" (v.10). A distinction is noted in Jesus' referring to the disciples as "my brothers." This indicates the special closeness that still exists despite their recent desertion (compare Matthew 26:56; John 20:17). In other words, they are forgiven.

Naturally, these men had planned to return home to Galilee anyway. But now there is reason to hurry back: the promise of seeing Jesus back there.

Arranged Cover-up Matthew 28:11-15

Terrified of the impact of the news of the Resurrection, the religious leaders financed a cover-up with a sizable tribute paid to the soldiers. The soldiers were to spread the news that the disciples stole Jesus' body.

But isn't this what these religion leaders were afraid of in the first place? That the disciples would indeed steal the body? Ironic to say the least!

Now, the telling of this lie required a large sum of money because if Pilate got word of it, that the disciples had stolen the body, the soldiers who guarded the tomb would have been executed for dereliction of duty. So, with the money, the chief priests had to promise they would personally appease Pilate if the need arose.

The cover-up might have succeeded except for one thing: Jesus was seen alive by too many people in too many places for too long a period of time. As Paul put it, "and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born" (1 Corinthians 15:8).

The late William Sloan Coffin was speaking for a number of us when he said, "I myself believe passionately in the resurrection of Jesus Christ because in my own life I have experienced Christ not as a memory but as a presence."

A lady who regularly attended the church I was serving wrote this note to me: "I am writing you at this Easter time to let you know of the resurrection of one continuing visitor – me."

Conclusion

So why would men who were slow to believe news of a resurrection (like Thomas) end up trying to make it appear as though one had happened if it did not? No one, neither the women nor the

disciples, was anticipating that Jesus would arise. Consequently, they were not spending the days following his death planning how they could perpetuate a hoax on the public.

Paul's declaration in 1 Corinthians 15:20 is the one that all followers of Jesus gladly embrace and proclaim: "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep."

"Fake news – no; actual news – absolutely! A joyful Easter to you and yours – Christ is alive!

Action Plan

1. How can we better prepare ourselves to offer evidence for the fact that Christ rose from the dead? Why is it important to do so?
2. Who among your acquaintances is ready to hear the message that Jesus is risen? What will cause them to be receptive?
3. In our recommended response to the Resurrection: Don't be afraid! Believe! Rejoice! Go and share! What does it actually mean to go and share?

Resources for this lesson:

"2018-2019 Standard Lesson NIV Commentary," Uniform Series "International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching," pages 290-296

"The NIV Application Commentary, Matthew" by Michael J. Wilkins, pages 932-946

"Adult Bible Studies, Spring 2019, Discipleship and Mission, Teacher, Uniform Series," Gary Thompson, pages 69-76

"The Book of Matthew, The Smart Guide to the Bible Series," by Dewey and Rebecca Bertolini, Larry Richards, pages 327-329

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).

Called to Make Disciples

Spring Quarter: Discipleship and Mission

Unit 2: Call to Ministry

Sunday school lesson for the week of April 28, 2019

By Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scripture: Mathew 28:16-20; Acts 1:6-8

Key Verse: Matthew 28:19-20

Lesson Aims

1. Give the content of Jesus' commissions.
2. To accept Jesus' call and commission to make disciples.

To be effective, churches need to know where they are going. They need to know what business they are in and why they exist. And they need to make and keep "the main thing the main thing." In other words, they need a road map to guide them. That road map is their mission statement.

Today's lessons present two accounts of Jesus' giving his disciples their road map (instructions) for continuing his ministry in his absence. The first account, from Matthew 28, comes immediately after the passage from last week's study. As you may recall, that passage recounted events surrounding the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection itself.

All that took place in and near Jerusalem. However, in the opening verse of today's Matthew text (28:16), we see that a new geographical location is mentioned (Galilee).

The second account comes from the book of Acts. This book is Luke's record of the history of the first-century church. An important part of what preceded the founding of the church (Acts 2) was a commission or charge given to the apostles before Jesus' ascension near Bethany (Luke 24:50, 51).

Though geographical contexts of our two lesson-segments are different, the time frame is the same. Both occur during the 40 days of Acts 1:3. This period begins at Jesus' resurrection and ends prior to Pentecost, when the church is brought into being.

Commission in Matthew Matthew 28:16-20

In obedience to the words of the angel and Jesus himself (Matthew 28:7,10), the disciples, now number eleven, journeyed north to Galilee. There they meet Jesus on an unnamed mountain.

It is reported that when the disciples saw Jesus, they worshiped him. Note that the disciples had never before worshiped Jesus. They had loved him, believed in him and followed him, but never before worshiped him. But things had changed. Before they had thought of him as a great man, a great teacher, and a great prophet. Now, they saw him as the King of kings and Lord of lords. So "when they saw him," Matthew says, "they worshiped him," just like the women had done earlier (Matthew 28:9).

Matthew also tells us that "some doubted." Doubt is not the opposite of faith; the opposite of faith is cynicism, apathy, and indifference. As commentator M. Eugene Boring notes, "Whatever the nature of the resurrection event, it did not generate perfect faith even in those who experienced it firsthand. It is not to angels or perfect believers, but to the worshiping/wavering community of disciples to whom the world mission is entrusted."

Hear me now! The very presence of Thomas in the list of the 12 apostles guarantees the intellectual integrity which Jesus expects of all who follow him. Jesus said that his kingdom was

not simply a kingdom of grace, but a kingdom of truth as well. Faith is not so much the absence of doubt as the mastery of doubt.

So our God permits us to doubt, to complain, to even shout at Him repeatedly the ultimate question, “why?” But ultimately, as Episcopal priest Fleming Rutledge suggests, the divine answer does not come in the form of a “why” but in the form of a “who?”

The late Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, noted Baptist minister, put it this way: “Doubt. Don’t ever be afraid to doubt. Doubt and doubt big. Just be sure you doubt long enough to doubt your doubts.”

At this point, Jesus proceeded to reassure his disciples and to challenge them.” I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). Such a sweeping statement reflects Jesus’ conquest of death (compare Revelation 1:18). The word in the original language behind the translation “authority” is translated “power” in other contexts (example, John 19:10,11). Therefore we can think of “power” as the ability to do something while “authority” is the right to do something. At any rate, the two ideas are closely related and Jesus has both in an absolute sense.

The word “all” is inclusive, and in case his disciples might wonder the extent of the reach of “all,” Jesus made it clear: “in heaven and on earth.” He, the crucified and resurrected one, now defines the extent of the kingdom he has proclaimed from the beginning. He assures his disciples that his authority extends over it all.

And the fact that this authority “has been given” to Jesus implies that the heavenly Father, having sent the Son (Galatians 4:4), is the one who has given the Son all power and authority. Whatever is implied here is unmistakable in Matthew 11:27; John 3:35; 13:3; 17:2; Ephesians 1:20; and Philippians 2:9-11.

Almost immediately, Jesus told his disciples what this meant to them. It was not something to sit back and enjoy, nor was it about finding a place at Jesus’ right or left hands.

“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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,” said Jesus.

To be sure, Jesus can do many things with the power and authority he has. And Jesus does indeed desire that “all nations” recognize and honor him. But the method here is not that of brute force. Instead, he desires it to happen by means of disciples making “disciples of those nations.” We should underline it. His disciples are to make other disciples in spreading the kingdom of God.

Note that this call to mission removes the earlier restrictions Jesus had put upon his disciples. When he sent them out earlier, he instructed them, “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel” Matthew 10:5,6). Now, however, the good news about Jesus is to be made known to everyone everywhere.

Matthew understands that God doesn't seek individual believers as much as believers who participate in a community of people who obediently follow Jesus. Up until this point in Matthew's account, baptism has been associated only with John the Baptist. But now, baptism... "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" becomes a sign of membership in the community of faith. So those who follow will receive baptism. For the first time, the Trinitarian formula—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is spelled out specifically and clearly.

Another important notation, we disciples of Jesus are not only to be evangelists to the nations, seeking their baptism, but we are to be teachers. If evangelism is to move converts to discipleship, their converts must be carefully instructed so that they will know what their Lord expects of them.

As his disciples, we can take great comfort in the fact that in these verses, Jesus not only claimed power and authority and issued his commission (known as the Great Commission), he also made an incredible promise of his abiding presence with us. Thus, the final saying of Jesus in this Gospel is what gives us the greatest assurances that we can carry out his purpose in our lives. Why? Because he promises unconditionally, "Surely I am with you always to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Commission in Acts

Acts 1:6-8

In the first recorded words of Jesus in the book of Acts, he tells his disciples not to leave Jerusalem until the promised baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5). Here's where our lesson begins. The 40-day period of Acts 1:3 is coming to an end.

So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you going to restore the kingdom to Israel now?" (v.6). They had certainly been convinced of God's power and rule as a result of everything that had happened with Jesus' death and resurrection. But Jesus had not yet "restored the kingdom to Israel." So was baptism with the Holy Spirit the event that would bring that about?

The very nature of the question reveals that the disciples just don't get it. Jesus has taught them repeatedly, through both parables and direct teaching, that his kingdom is spiritual in nature. But these followers are still thinking in terms of a political kingdom. They are anticipating a conqueror who will overthrow Roman rule. They are expecting that the "glory days" experienced under King David will be restored.

Now, those followers after the resurrection wanted a timetable as to when Jesus would do what they were so sure he would do—make Israel the top power in the world.

Jesus' answer, however, was blunt: It was really none of their business what God's secret plans were—there were certain matters that God marked "Personal." Right here, once and for all, Jesus suppressed the inclination to fix dates or to pry into God's business. Jesus made it clear that what these followers needed was not a timetable but power. They were to focus on the task ahead and the supernatural help he was sending. Their priority must be to receive the power of the Holy

Spirit (which happened on the day of Pentecost, Act 2). Thus, Jesus makes sure that the distraction question of verse 6 hasn't caused them to miss his statement of verse 5.

Verse 8 is known as the keynote of the Book of Acts. It is also the charter of the church. The Greek word for "power" is "dynamis;" the disciples are to be a "dynamic community energized not by human power but by the Holy Spirit.

When this handful of believers is empowered by God Himself, Jesus tells them that they will accomplish extraordinary things. They will be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and in the farthest corners of the world. Thus, the power of the Holy Spirit was going to make these disciples witnesses.

The late scholar, William Barclay, notes these characteristics of a Christian witness. First, a witness is a person who says I know this is true. Second, the real witness is not the witness of words but of deeds. And third, in Greek, the word for "witness" and the word for "martyr" is the same word. To be a witness means to be loyal no matter what the cost.

Summary

While the commission of Jesus in Matthew and Acts differ in certain details, they have one crucial item in common: Jesus wants his followers to take his message of salvation to the entire world. That is to be the number one priority for the eleven disciples as the Day of Pentecost approaches. And it must still be the church's number one priority today.

Church consultant Ken Callahan warned over a decade ago that "the day of the church culture is over. The day of the mission field has come." To recast Callahan's statement: "The day of the church "member" is over. The day of the "Disciple of Jesus Christ" has come.

As Christian disciples, we need to change our mindset from parishioners to participants, from consumers to contributors, and from church landmark to mission outpost. Come again, O Holy Spirit and empower your church! Amen!

Action Plan

4. What do you think it means to be a disciple of Jesus?
5. What's the best way to react the next time doubts interfere with your worship? Why?
6. Why do you think we in the church don't do a better job at making disciples?

Resources for this lesson:

"2018-2019 Standard Lesson NIV Commentary," Uniform Series "International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching," pages 297-304

"The NIV Application Commentary, Matthew" by Michael J. Wilkins, pages 946-955

"Adult Bible Studies, Spring 2019, Discipleship and Mission, Teacher, Uniform Series," Gary Thompson, pages 79-87

"Immersion Bible Studies Matthew," J. Ellsworth Kalas, pages 88-91

“They Stood Boldly,” William P. Barker, pages 17-19

“The Acts of the Apostles,” William Barclay, pages 3-5

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).

Called to Righteousness

Spring Quarter: Discipleship and Mission

Unit 3: Call to Life in Christ

Sunday school lesson for the week of May 5, 2019

By Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scripture: Romans 3:21-31

Key Verse: Romans 3:24, 25

Lesson Aims

3. Explain how God maintains his just nature while providing a way for sinful humans to be justified.
4. To acknowledge our sinful nature and accept God’s forgiving grace.

Since we are going to be dealing with the Book of Romans for the next four weeks, a word about it seems appropriate.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Rome in approximately AD 58, during his third missionary journey. His letter to the Roman Christians is somewhat different from his other epistles in that he had not planted the church at Rome and did not know the people there personally. However, he envisioned Rome to be a future stop on his way to Spain for missionary work (Romans 15:24, 28). Paul did indeed come to Rome a couple of years later, but not as part of a missionary trip. He arrived under Roman guard due to his appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:9-28:16).

The church in Rome had a mixed membership of Jews and Gentiles. We can only guess at the church’s size. Paul’s greeting in Romans 16 lists more than two dozen people by name, implying many more. It’s reasonable to think of that church of several hundred – still a tiny fraction of the city’s total population.

Paul wrote to prepare the church in Rome for his intended visit. He was aware of issues between the Jews and Gentiles in the church and had words for both groups. We are informed that in the process Paul gave a thorough presentation of the gospel that he had been preaching. It was a message that had already influenced the Roman church through people like Aquila and Priscilla (Romans 16:3; Acts 18:2).

A central doctrinal concern of Paul was to demonstrate the universal sinfulness of humanity and the incredible scope of God's plan for redemption of men and women from the consequences of sin. Paul based his conclusion on both the historical facts of Jesus' life and proper interpretation of Jewish Scriptures. The lesson today makes the assumption that the case for universal sinfulness has been made in Romans 1:18-3:20. With that foundation in place, the question that arises is how the sinless, holy God can rescue sinners from the wrath that divine justice requires. It is this weighty issue that is before us.

Just and Justifier Romans 3:21-26

Note that Paul begins today's text with the words, "But now." What did Paul mean by these words of transition? He had just pointed out that we are all guilty sinners who deserve only God's wrath. So what could Paul possibly say that will give us hope?

In reality, there is hope! Paul states the good news that while there is a righteousness we could never obtain through the law, there is righteousness has been made available by a different avenue. God's righteousness is now available to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Here, God does not lay down a new Law for us to keep. We are not invited to attain a right standing with Him through obedience to any religious code. Paul writes, "But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law." The gospel is non-legalistic. It is grace, God's unmerited favor to a sinful humanity.

Back to the heart of the passage! God's righteousness is now available to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ. Paul refers to a definite "righteousness" the process by which God acts to put people in a right relationship with himself. Since all have sinned, obviously the only hope for us is to have righteousness credited to our account by someone who has that righteousness. And, of course, that is Jesus Christ, and His righteousness is available to anyone who puts his or her trust not in oneself, not in the law, but in Him.

Before continuing on, let's take a look at the meaning of the word "trust." In the Greek world, the idea of trust was closely related to a sense of duty so that the word carried with it the idea of obedience. It was sometimes used in regard to contractual relationships and might be translated "faithful" or "trustworthy." It also was used to indicate "conviction." Within the concept of trust and trustworthiness, the word carried with it the idea of "to rely on."

We are told that in later Hellenistic times, the word took on the meaning "to believe," to believe in the gods. However, this belief still carried with it the sense of trust, faith, and reliance.

In Romans 1:2, Paul indicated that God had promised the gospel, beforehand through His prophets in the holy scriptures. At this point, in Romans 3:21, he expands the statement to include the law as well as the prophets. Through both, God has borne witness to his saving acts in Jesus Christ. Thus, Paul shares with other early Christians the conviction that the Old Testament points forward to the coming of Jesus Christ.

In verse 22b, 23, the fact that there is no “difference between Jews and Gentile” with regard to the problem of sin implies that there is also no difference with regard to the remedy. That remedy is Christ, just noted.

Next, in verses 24-26, we see that “all are justified freely by his grace.” Paul does not want his readers to forget the chasm of sin that is bridged by Christ. Consequently, in verse 24 and 25, Paul uses these weighty words to define our sin status and how it is overcome.

The first word is “justified,” a legal term of Paul’s day. Although we are indeed guilty sinners, to be “justified freely by his grace” means to hear the great judge promise “guilty but no penalty.” We will not suffer the eternal consequence of our sin.

Forgiveness says, “I’m going to let this slide this time.” On the other hand, justification says, “I’m going to remove the offense from all memory, as if it never occurred.

The reason why this happens comes next, “through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” Paul’s second weighty word is “redemption.” This introduces the basis of the “no penalty” part of the great judge’s pronouncement before.

Through the centuries, the meaning of the word redemption comes to include the idea of paying a ransom to release the one who is in bondage (compare Mark 10:45; 1 Timothy 2:6; Contrast Psalm 49: 7-9). All this is building up to Paul’s conclusion regarding how exactly this redemption came by Christ Jesus.

Our salvation is possible because of “a sacrifice of atonement,” Paul’s third of three weighty words. This word is drawn from the system of sacrificing animals to atone for sins (example, Numbers 29:11). Such atonement was for the purpose of turning aside God’s wrath. But that system was only temporary.

If God’s holy wrath comes down on us because of our sin, then we will pay the price of eternal separation from God. But there is an alternative, Jesus Christ. He serves as the final and perfect atoning sacrifice for sins, his death satisfies any penalty our sins require (1 John 2:2; 4:10; Hebrews 9:11-10:18). But it’s not automatic; rather it becomes effective “through the shedding of his blood.”

While Paul never fully explains how Jesus’ sacrifices on the cross of Calvary actually atones for our sin, this idea is at the very heart of his theology.

Dr. Robert E. Lee, the noted minister, tells of an unforgettable experience he had the first time he visited Calvary on a tour of Israel. He was so excited that he outdistanced his guide in climbing the hill. As he reached the summit and stood there at the very place where his Lord poured out his blood, the great preacher’s emotions were so stirred that his body began to tremble. When at last the breathless guide caught up with him, he asked, “Sir, have you been here before?”

For a moment, there was silence. Then Dr. Lee whispered, “Yes, I was here nearly 2,000 years ago.” So were we all!

Part of God's consistent love for humankind is God's merciful forbearance, a word related to "patience" (Romans 2:4). With rare exceptions (Acts 12:23), God does not punish sin immediately. His delay allows us a chance to repent (2 Peter 3:9, 15). But God does not postpone punishment indefinitely either.

When Paul says, "because of His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed" (Romans 3:25), he is pointing out that up to the death of Christ, God had let the sins of humankind go unpunished, which would have been contrary to his nature if he had not eventually presented the sacrifice of Christ. God punished everybody's sins on the crucifixion cross.

Through Jesus' death, God demonstrated at least two truths: (1) that He is a God of justice and (2) that He justifies – or makes right with Himself – those who have faith in Jesus.

Important! For God to be just means that the penalty for sin must be paid. For sin to go unpunished would mean that God is unjust. And indeed, sin's penalty has been paid – by Christ on the cross. Through the work of Christ, God retains his perfectly just nature while being the one who justifies sinners."

We sing in mighty choruses, "What can wash my sins away?" We answer in positive affirmation – "nothing by the blood Jesus; what can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Faith and Law **Romans 3:27-31**

The question is asked, "What implication does justification by faith have for us at the point of our basic attitude toward God and ourselves?" Without question, it should make a difference in our lives. Those who think they have attained a right standing with God by keeping the Law tend to be prideful. But when God's gaze is rightly understood pride melts away. Paul states, "It is excluded." Addressing the Corinthians, Paul says "The one who brags should brag in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31 CEB).

As far as the Law is concerned, Paul does not believe the Jewish law has no value. Its great value is defining sin (Romans 7:7). Even so, lasting justification must come from some other quarter and Paul has shown this to be faith in the person and atoning work of Jesus Christ. Therefore Paul's inescapable conclusion is that justification and salvation are possible without reference to "works of the law." And this must be true whether the word "law" refers to the Law of Moses or any other religious or secular system based on law-keeping.

In verses 29 and 30, Paul makes clear another concern that is extremely important to him. He wants his readers to know that God shows no partiality between Jews and Gentiles. The one, supreme God, revealed in Jewish Scripture, is the only God. He is the Lord of both Jew and Gentile, for there is no alternative.

For Paul, in this context, verse 30 is not really about circumcision, but about justification – being counted as righteous in the eyes of God. God's plan is for both groups: faith (compare Romans 4:11, 12; Galatians 3:8).

Finally, Paul is not trashing the Jewish law so that it can be abandoned by the church. His intention has never been to sever the church from its foundation in Jewish Scripture. If Paul were alive today, he would insist that the Old Testament has an indispensable place in the church. As we are informed, without it, the concepts of sin, sacrifice, atonement, righteousness, and divine justice would have no anchor point. The doctrinal truth of Christianity would drift into chaos.

Therefore, Paul reminds his readers that his arguments do not “nullify the law.” Indeed, Paul believes he has pointed out the true purpose of the law: to define sin and the necessity for a remedy for human sinfulness.

And Paul’s claim is right in line with Jesus’ claim that he came not to do away with the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). However, Paul still insists that faith in Jesus Christ is the way to justification, not the keeping of the commands of the law.

Action Plan

7. Why did the Jews think that keeping the Law gave them a right standing before God? What was Paul’s response to this belief?
8. How might your perception of others change were you to remind yourself daily that God justifies in the same way all who are willing?
9. What did Paul mean when he talked about the Law? Why is the Law important today?

Resources for this lesson:

“2018-2019 Standard Lesson NIV Commentary,” Uniform Series “International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching,” pages 305-312

“The NIV Application Commentary, Romans” by Douglas J. Moo, pages 125-142

“Adult Bible Studies, Spring 2019, Discipleship and Mission, Teacher, Uniform Series,” Gary Thompson, pages 90-97

“The Book of Romans, The Smart Guide to the Bible Series,” Gib Martin and Larry Richards, pages 46-49

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Almost Saved

PATHWAY TO HIS PRESENCE

BJ FUNK

John Wesley wrote a brilliant sermon, preached in England at Oxford, on July 25, 1741. He named it *The Almost Christian*. Its relevance stretches through the years to 2019, and it is just as

meaningful today as it was 278 years ago. Wesley's challenge is to question those who are not being Christian through and through. Are there those who are coming to church each Sunday to just "show up," without any real heart change taking place? He describes the Almost Christian as a man or woman who looks like a Christian, talks and walks like a Christian, but whose actions don't always show he is a Christian.

Christianity must impact every area of our lives. Instead of being an Almost Christian, we are to strive to be a *sold-out* Christian, allowing Jesus to make a noticeable difference in the way we act, think, and talk. The Almost Christian prays, reads the Bible, studies Scripture, and regularly attends worship. He visits the sick, does good works, and visits those in prison. So, what's missing?

John Wesley shows his vulnerability when he says in this sermon that he used to be an Almost Christian. He was doing all the right things, the things that looked like Christianity, but his own heart had not felt the touch of the Master. That came as he began to understand a phrase that we sometimes sing: *They will know we are Christians by our love.*

The love of God became personal for him, melting away his devotion to legalism and bringing Wesley into a new peace. From that came the love of neighbor. John Wesley believed that the two go hand and hand.

Wesley had a head knowledge before he had a heart knowledge. When the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ moved from Wesley's head to his heart, the word *Almost* was removed, and he realized he had now moved fully into a relationship with a personal Savior who died for him.

The scripture for Wesley's sermon comes from Acts 26:28. Paul is in chains, and he stands before King Agrippa, king of Judea, telling the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. He also tells of his conversion on the road to Damascus. Agrippa responds by saying, "Paul you make me almost want to be a Christian." Hence, the sermon about being almost a Christian.

While searching for a bulletin cover for my sermon on *The Almost Christian*, our Administrative Assistant found a quote that stood out. It's not from John Wesley, but it sounds like something he would say:

He who is almost persuaded is almost saved, but to be almost saved is to be entirely lost.

This has now become one of my most favorite quotes.

When I was a little girl, my sister and I often played in the sprinkler on hot days. Nothing made me happier than a summer afternoon with the sprinkler. But I had a fear of jumping over the middle part, that part that turned 'round and 'round. I ran to the edge of the sprinkler, squealed with delight, and ran back out. I did that over and over.

If someone had asked if I were a sprinkler jumper, I would have said, “Oh, yes.” And, I would have thought I was. But, I only went to the outskirts of the sprinkler. I only put my toes in the spray of water and then ran back out. On the outskirts of the sprinkler, I was safe. On the outskirts, I didn’t have any commitment. On the edge of the sprinkler I could jump in and out quickly and not stay long enough to get soaked by what the sprinkler had to offer. I just put my toes in and called that “jumping in.”

We want to ask ourselves if we have put our toes in the edge of Christianity and called that being a Christian.

There is for each of us a vibrant, life-changing transformation to be found in being saved. That’s when we move from being an Almost Christian to an Authentic Christian.

Are you almost saved?

The Rev. B.J. Funk is associate pastor of Central UMC in Fitzgerald. Email Rev. Funk at bjfunk@bellsouth.net.

Retired Clergy Birthdays – April

- 4/01 – Edgar Chance: PO Box 524; Wrens, GA 30833
- 4/01 – Danny Treadway: 1417 Peabody Dr.; Maryville, TN 37803
- 4/03 – Jennifer Sherling: 2447 Tuxedo Place; Albany, GA 31707
- 4/05 – O.C. Dean, Jr.: 265 Three Oaks Dr.; Athens, GA 30607
- 4/05 – Kay Stanaland: PO Box 905; Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
- 4/07 – Jim Hamlin: 322 S. Houston Springs Blvd.; Perry, GA 31069
- 4/08 – Terry DeLoach: 209 Dixie St.; Brooklet, GA 30415
- 4/09 – Sandra Henry: 111 Laurel Overlook; Canton, GA 30114
- 4/09 – Glenn McCranie: PO Box 493; Grandy, NC 27939
- 4/12 – Tim Bagwell: 192 Barrington Hall Dr.; Macon, GA 31220
- 4/12 – Gerald Goodman: 260 Bel Air Rd.; Tallahassee, FL 32305
- 4/15 – Leigh Ann Raynor: 212 Torrington Blvd.; Thomasville, GA 31757
- 4/16 – Nick Hazelton: 517 Ferncliff Terrace; Macon, GA 31204
- 4/16 – Wesley Kaylor: 855 Chokey Rd.; DeSoto, GA 31743
- 4/16 – Barbara Nelson: 1106 Merrill Dr.; Dublin, GA 31021
- 4/16 – Tom Nichols: 414 Cardinal St.; Pooler, GA 31322
- 4/16 – Jimmy Sharp: 2225 Teate Rd.; Vienna, GA 31092
- 4/18 – Frances Howell: PO Box 658; Midway, GA 31320
- 4/19 – Betty Sue Brantley: 210 Moseley St.; Vidalia, GA 30474
- 4/22 – Fred Maddox: 200 Highland Rd.; Statesboro, GA 30458
- 4/24 – Willie Lucas: 607 Holloway Ave.; Albany, GA 31701
- 4/25 – James McLendon: 151 Sullivan Dr.; Homer, GA 30547
- 4/27 – B.J. Funk: PO Box 187; Chula, GA 31733
- 4/28 – Bert Alexander: PO Box 964; Pine Mountain, GA 31822

4/28 – Mike McAfee: 3 Porchester Ct.; Columbus, GA 31907

4/29 – Sam Watkins: 1937 E. DeRenne Ave., Savannah, GA 31406

4/30 – Don Kea: 5300 Zebulon Rd., Garden Home 20; Macon, GA 31210

OBITUARIES

Thomas Daniel Sattler

Thomas “Tom” Daniel Sattler died at his home at 2:22 p.m. at Spring Hill Country Club in Tifton, Georgia, on April 6, 2019, under the care of Hospice of Tiftarea. Thomas Daniel Sattler was born September 22, 1954, in Washington, D.C. to Frank Charles Sattler and Mary Louise Noto Sattler of Italian descent from Scranton, Pennsylvania. He grew up attending the Roman Catholic Church and Christian School at Our Lady of Good Counsel in Vienna, Virginia. In his spare time, Tom loved playing ball on his father’s little league baseball team, the Falls Church Federals. This instilled a love and passion for sports in him that followed him throughout his life. He worked his entire life beginning at age eleven, riding his bike to deliver the paper. Tom graduated from George C. Marshall High School in Falls Church, Virginia. He later attended Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, GA and ultimately obtained his Bachelor’s degree in Theological Studies from Andersonville Seminary in Camilla, Georgia.

Best known for his sense of humor, his love for others, his faith, and his strong work ethic, Tom was deeply cherished by all who knew him. He always found something to laugh about, whether it be lovingly calling the kids “his little monkeys,” or other jokes from the pulpit. Tom had a few pet names including being called T.D. and Sasquatch due to his towering figure.

In his professional life and career, Tom worked his way up through the computer industry from the original IBM mainframes as a computer operator until his retirement as a Senior Project Manager several years ago from eLeadCRM in Valdosta, GA. He was employed by a number of computer companies including PRC in Falls Church, Virginia; NRC Comten/AT&T Longlines in Cincinnati, Ohio; Toronto, Canada, and Boston, Massachusetts; Tandem/Hewlett-Packard Computers, Attachmate Corp., and Platinum Corp. in Atlanta, GA. In 2003, Tom relocated to Tifton with his wife, Leshia W. Sattler, who is native to the area.

For more than 10 years Tom served in the ministry as a United Methodist Pastor in the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church at Clements Chapel, Sycamore UMC, Arabi UMC, Rebecca UMC, and Enigma UMC. Upon his retirement his wife Leshia W. Sattler followed in his footsteps in the UMC ministry. They retired from the UMC ministry in 2017 from Leila UMC.

Tom is survived by his wife, Leshia W. Sattler. He is survived by six daughters and their families: Danielle Ashley Kirchoffer of Aviano, Italy; Jessica Renee Sattler Tourney of Los Angeles, California; Melissa Italia Shemwell of Atlanta; Audriana Lauren Sattler of Sandy Springs; Heather Anne Sattler of Valdosta; and Rachel Louise Sattler of Lakeland, Florida. He was preceded in death by his mother and father, and his only son, Adam Thomas Sattler, a

Georgia Tech astrophysics student, on November 20, 2016. He has one surviving brother, Terry Daniel Sattler and his family, of Sevierville, Tennessee.

Arrangements are being handled by Reflections of Tifton. Services were held Saturday, April 13 at Enigma UMC in Enigma, GA. Tifton FUMC Associate Pastor Robbie Paulk has ministered to the family and brought the message. There will be no formal visitation or graveside services scheduled at this time in respect to Mr. Sattler's wishes.

Scripture Readings – April 16

April 16

Tuesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 49:1-7

Psalm 71:1-14 (UMH 794)

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

John 12:20-36

April 17

Wednesday of Holy Week

Isaiah 50:4-9a

Psalm 70 (UMH 793)

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 13:12-32

April 18

Holy Thursday

Exodus 12:1-4 (5-10) 11-14

Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 (UMH 837)

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-17, 31b-35

April 19

Good Friday

Isaiah 52:13-53-12

Psalm 22 (UMH 752)

Hebrews 10:16-25

John 18:1-19:42

April 20

Holy Saturday

Job 14:1-14

Psalm 31:1-4, 15-16 (UMH 764)

1 Peter 4:1-8
Matthew 27:57-66 or John 19:38-42

April 21

Easter Sunday

Acts 10:34-43
Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 (UMH 839)
1 Corinthians 15:19-26
John 20:1-18 or Luke 24:1-12

April 28

Second Sunday in Easter

Acts 5:27-32
Psalm 150 (UMH 862)
Revelation 1:4-8
John 20:19-31

May 5

Third Sunday in Easter

Acts 9:1-6 (7-20)
Psalm 30 (UMH 762)
Revelation 5:11-14
John 21:1-9

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 4/16/2019 edition

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 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.

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 morhill@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.

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.

Camp Connect: High School Camp – June 10-14

Students entering grades 9-12 as well as graduating seniors are eligible for High School Camp. Tailored toward the unique time in a high school student's life, this week of camp is filled with fun activities and opportunities to grow closer to Christ through daily worship, Bible study, and fellowship. Campers will enjoy the beach, pool, art, hilarious morning shows, and evenings of camp-wide games and worship. Stay tuned as more activities are in the works! High School Camp is held at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island and will begin at 3 p.m. on Monday and conclude at 11 a.m. on Friday (no lunch will be provided on Friday). Campers will stay in a cabin for the week. Counselors are provided. Visit www.campconnectumc.org for all the details and [to register](#). Contact the Office of Connectional Ministries at (912) 638-8626 with any questions.

Wesley Glen Day – June 16

Celebrate Wesley Glen Day by wearing your new t-shirt to church on Father's Day. Share photos of you and your church friends to let everyone know that you support the United Methodist ministry for adults with developmental disabilities in the South Georgia Conference. www.wesleyglenministries.com.

Peace with Justice Sunday – June 16

Peace with Justice Sunday enables The United Methodist Church to have a voice in advocating for peace and justice through a broad spectrum of global programs. [Click here for resources to help promote this special Sunday](#).

Camp Connect: Middle School Camp 1 – June 17-21

Middle School Camps, intended for rising 6th-8th grade students, are filled with a week's worth of fun activities and opportunities to grow closer to Christ through daily worship, Bible study, and fellowship. Campers will enjoy the beach, pool, crafts, games galore, hilarious morning shows, and evenings of camp-wide games and worship. Both Middle School Camps are held at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island and will begin at 3 p.m. on Monday and conclude at 11 a.m. on Friday (no lunch will be provided on Friday). Campers will stay in a cabin for the week.

Counselors are provided. Visit www.campconnectumc.org for all the details and [to register](#). Contact the Office of Connectional Ministries at (912) 638-8626 with any questions.

Camp Connect: Middle School Camp 2 – June 24-28

Middle School Camps, intended for rising 6th-8th grade students, are filled with a week's worth of fun activities and opportunities to grow closer to Christ through daily worship, Bible study, and fellowship. Campers will enjoy the beach, pool, crafts, games galore, hilarious morning shows, and evenings of camp-wide games and worship. Both Middle School Camps are held at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island and will begin at 3 p.m. on Monday and conclude at 11 a.m. on Friday (no lunch will be provided on Friday). Campers will stay in a cabin for the week.

Counselors are provided. Visit www.campconnectumc.org for all the details and [to register](#). Contact the Office of Connectional Ministries at (912) 638-8626 with any questions.

Camp Connect: Elementary Camp 1 – July 8-12

Elementary Camps, intended for rising 4th-5th grade students, are filled with a week's worth of fun activities and opportunities to grow closer to Christ through daily worship, Bible study, and fellowship. Campers will enjoy the beach, pool, art, games galore, hilarious morning shows, and evenings of camp-wide games and worship. All camps are held at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island and will begin at 3 p.m. on Monday and conclude at 11 a.m. on Friday (no lunch will be provided on Friday). Campers will stay in a cabin for the week. Counselors are provided.

Visit www.campconnectumc.org for all the details and to [register](#). Contact the Office of Connectional Ministries at (912) 638-8626 with any questions.

YOUTH2019 – July 10-14

Every four years, youth from throughout The United Methodist Church gather for four days of discipleship, fun, and fellowship at the YOUTH event. The event is filled with interactive learning, worship, Bible study, service opportunities, and fellowship time. Expect inspiration, support, and challenges to authentically experience what it means to be United Methodist. The South Georgia Conference will be taking students from our conference to the event via charter bus. For more information, contact Group Leader Rev. Melissa Traver at melissa.s.traver@icloud.com. [More information](#)

Mission u – July 11-14

Mission u, the mission education event of the South Georgia Conference, will be held July 11 through July 14, 2019, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. The annual event is co-sponsored by the conference United Methodist Women and the conference Outreach team. This year's theme is Radical Discipleship: Then & Now. [Click here to download the brochure.](#)

Camp Connect: Elementary Camp 2 – July 15-18

Elementary Camps, intended for rising 4th-5th grade students, are filled with a week's worth of fun activities and opportunities to grow closer to Christ through daily worship, Bible study, and fellowship. Campers will enjoy the beach, pool, art, games galore, hilarious morning shows, and

evenings of camp-wide games and worship. All camps are held at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island and will begin at 3 p.m. on Monday and conclude at 11 a.m. on Friday (no lunch will be provided on Friday). Campers will stay in a cabin for the week. Counselors are provided. Visit www.campconnectumc.org for all the details and to [register](#). Contact the Office of Connectional Ministries at (912) 638-8626 with any questions.

Georgia United Methodist Pastors' School – July 15-18

The 2019 Georgia Pastors' School is set for July 15-18 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Georgia Pastors' School provides inspiration, education, fellowship, fun, and relaxation for North and South Georgia clergy and their families. The school is supported by the tuition of attendees, an endowment established by the board of managers, an annual gift from the North Georgia Conference, and the generous contributions of our sponsors who provide refreshments during breaks and fellowship times. The school is managed by pastors for pastors from both the North and South Georgia Conferences. Active and retired United Methodist clergy and their families are cordially invited to experience this combination of continuing education and personal renewal. More details can be found at www.georgiapastorsschool.org.