

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – JUNE 25 EDITION

Delegation endorses Rev. Beckum as episcopal nominee

The South Georgia Conference [delegation to the 2020 General and Jurisdictional Conferences](#) has endorsed the Reverend Robert Beckum as its episcopal nominee (nominee to be elected as a bishop in The United Methodist Church).

Rev. Beckum will join nominees from other conferences under consideration for the episcopacy at next summer's Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference at Lake Junaluska, NC.

Rev. Beckum is the senior pastor of St. Luke United Methodist Church in Columbus, appointed there in June 2011. He has been a delegate to four General Conferences and was elected as a delegate again this year.

“I’m excited that the South Georgia delegation unanimously and enthusiastically chose Robert to be our candidate for election as bishop in 2020,” said Rev. Jim Cowart, head of South Georgia’s delegation and lead pastor of Harvest Church in Byron. “I think Robert is the right person at the right time for this position. The entire delegation and I fully endorse him and offer our prayerful support.”

Prior to being appointed to St. Luke UMC, Rev. Beckum was the vice president of Church Relations and Development for Magnolia Manor in Americus, Ga. for seven years. Magnolia Manor is the South Georgia Conference’s ministry to older adults, providing a loving Christian environment and ensuring the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of residents and their families.

Rev. Beckum has also served the following congregations: Albany First United Methodist Church; Trinity United Methodist Church in Warner Robins; Douglas First United Methodist Church; Mt. Olivet and Midway United Methodist Churches, both near Savannah; and as associate at Grace United Methodist Church in Savannah.

In addition to pastoral responsibilities, Rev. Beckum has served as the Chair of the Conference Council on Finance and Administration’s budget subcommittee, Chair of the South Georgia Annual Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, the Conference Council on Ministries, the Conference Leadership Forum, and the Conference Personnel Committee. He has also served on the Southeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Episcopacy.

“I am humbled by the trust of the South Georgia delegation to endorse me as a nominee for the episcopacy in 2020,” Rev. Beckum said. “It is indeed an honor to be serving with the exceptional members of our delegation, all of whom realize the challenging times before our denomination, and all of whom are serving with a ‘for such a time as this’ mindset. We seek your prayers as we begin the work of faithfully representing the clergy and laity of South Georgia in the legislative

work of General Conference in May and in the important work of electing bishops at Jurisdictional Conference in July.”

Rev. Beckum received a bachelor’s degree in history and political science from Georgia Southern University and a Masters of Divinity from Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Rev. Beckum was ordained an elder in 1978.

Rev. Beckum is originally from Louisville, Ga. and is married to Mary Pat (Jones) Beckum. They have been married 41 years. Mary Pat is an elementary school educator. They have one son, Jonathan, who was recently commissioned as a provisional elder at the 2019 Annual Conference Session. Jonathan and his wife, LeeAnn, live in Montezuma, Ga. where Jonathan serves as the pastor of Montezuma UMC.

With a decisive, consistent character, Rev. Beckum has the temperament needed to be an effective episcopal leader, Rev. Cowart said.

“He has the ability to work with all kinds of people. He’s fair with people that disagree with him and his position, he knows how to stand strong for his convictions without being abrasive, and he can be strong and kind at the same time.

“I suppose the best endorsement I can give is that I’d like to have him as my bishop,” Rev. Cowart said.

Bishops will be elected next July when the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) will hold its quadrennial gathering July 15-18 at Lake Junaluska, NC for the primary purpose of selecting bishops to serve conferences in the SEJ.

In addition to endorsing an episcopal nominee, the [delegation](#) also chose legislative committees on which to serve. The 2020 General Conference, which will take place May 5-15, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minn., [will have 14 legislative committees](#). The bulk of General Conference happens in these legislative committees, which receive petitions and proposals, debate them, and determine whether to approve, amend, combine or disapprove them for recommendation to the full body of General Conference. The eight General Conference delegates will have a vote in their committee, and the alternates will be able to observe in their committee.

Serving on behalf of South Georgia in legislative committees will be:

- Church & Society 1: Scott Hagan
- Church & Society 2: Jennifer Cowart
- Church & Society 3: Robert Greene
- Conferences: Jay Hanson

- Faith and Order: Allison Lindsey
- Financial Administration: Bill Hatcher
- General Administration: Larry Price
- Global Ministries: Brenda Adams
- Higher Education/Superintendency: Robert Beckum
- Judicial Administration: Richard Shinhoster
- Local Church: Doreen Smalls
- Ordained Ministry: Jim Cowart

The delegation will meet again in the fall.

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Q & A with Rev. Paula Lewis, South Central District Superintendent

This is the first in a two-part series that will introduce the new District Superintendents

ADVOCATE: Tell us a little about yourself. Where did you grow up? Have you always lived in South Georgia?

REV. LEWIS: My family moved back here from Mississippi when I was in fourth grade. I lived in the Thomasville area from then until I took my first appointment. When we first moved to Thomasville, we lived in a split-house apartment with my grandfather. I spent a lot of time with him, whether it was cleaning his house, cooking for him, or going to the senior center with him. We moved out of the city and into the county after he died, and shortly after that my grandmother came to live with us. So, most of my life experience has taught me about serving and taking care of people. I developed a love for knowing people's stories because of my grandparents. They were from a time when the whole extended family ate together every Sunday at dinner. When dinner was over you either sat around the table or on the porch talking about life, family, and the good ole days when they were growing up. Lots of lessons were learned around the table.

ADVOCATE: What's your faith journey?

REV. LEWIS: I honestly cannot remember a time when God and church were not part of my life. Many of my earliest memories are of church. When we moved to Georgia, we lived three

houses down from a pastor. Though it was not his church we attended, the pastor and his wife would give me *Highlights* and other children's devotional books and I would quickly complete them and ask for more. I accepted Christ at a summer camp when I was 13. I don't remember what the message was about that night, but I remember feeling a flood of love and acceptance that I had never experienced before. My childhood was not easy, and like most people, I have taken my fair share of wrong turns, but God has always been my Rock.

I have not always been a United Methodist. We attended a Southern Baptist church before moving to Georgia. Then my family attended an Independent Baptist church. After Scott and I were married, we visited a United Methodist church because a friend invited us, and it felt like home.

I remember the day I felt God calling me into something more. At the time I really did not know what that was. As the pastor spoke of giving your life over to God more fully, my heart began beating so hard that as we stood for the last song I thought the person beside me could hear it over the singing. I finally let go of the pew and went to speak to the pastor about giving my life over to God more fully and what that might mean. My life has never been the same.

ADVOCATE: Tell us about your ministry philosophy and guiding principles.

REV. LEWIS: My fondest memories of my faith family are from when we lived in Mississippi. My dad was an alcoholic. The church we attended there was a huge part of him staying dry and supporting our family when he didn't. When we moved to South Georgia, we did not find the same support system within or without the church. Life became very chaotic and unpredictable as my dad slid more and more into the darkness of his addiction. He still attended church as long as he had not been on a bender that weekend, and he also made me attend every Sunday whether he did or not. Still, the time after we moved to Georgia were some of the darkest days of my life.

I longed for someone to tell us it was going to be okay or at least to know that we were not alone. But the church that became our home did not know how to do that. When he was dry, they were engaging, but when he was not, they disengaged. I don't think it was from a place of judgement, though it felt like it then. Rather, it was from a place of not knowing what to do or how to handle someone else's mess as well as not understanding how, once you have acknowledged it, to continue to incorporate them, along with their messiness, into the life of the church.

What I would tell them now – and what I would tell any church – is that most of the time people just need you to sit through the mess in their life with them. They don't need you to fix them or solve their problems. You can't. Only God can do that. All too often we try to take on God's job and, if we can't fix people, we just leave them alone or tell them they are wrong because we don't know what else to do.

No one could help my dad when he did not want help, but when people sat with us and loved us through what we were going through, we had hope. Because that is what our church in Mississippi did for the first 10 years of my life, I had hope that God was with us for the rest of my life despite what the circumstances looked like, and that is why I am in ministry now.

ADVOCATE: What are your visions, goals, and hopes for the district?

REV. LEWIS: Wow, what a wide-open question! I shared with my pastors at the set-up meeting that the evening Bishop Bryan called me about this appointment I was teaching the first lesson in our Lenten study on Simon Peter's call. Jesus came to the shore where Simon was working, got in his boat, and asked him to push out to shallow water. After teaching, he asked him push out to deep water. Reluctantly, Simon did, and that is where the miracle occurred.

Thriving in the deep water, where God does His greatest work through us, is really more about what God does than about what we do. My goal for now is to listen to God, to Bishop Bryan and the cabinet, to my pastors (who are one of the most important parts of my team) and to the churches, to get to know them, and to hear their stories. Then to let God speak to me through them about what our district needs and how we can join with the whole Annual Conference in living out and sharing the Good News that Jesus offers love and hope to all.

As I listened to Bishop Looney at Annual Conference remind us that more than half our church do not see a profession of faith in a conference year, my greatest hope is that, with God's help, we can change that in the South Central District and begin to see our nets break.

ADVOCATE: What are the things that most excite you about the district and/or the South Georgia Conference?

REV. LEWIS: I love serving; I always have. Moreover, one of my greatest joys in ministry is when I can help people live into their callings more fully. What an honor it is to get to do just that as a District Superintendent!

ADVOCATE: What are some of the biggest challenges you see facing the Conference or district?

REV. LEWIS: One of the biggest challenges I believe we face is remembering what is important. Bishop Looney's attention to the fact that more than half of our churches are not bringing people to Christ each year should be disturbing to us. We have to learn how to be a beacon of hope for the hurting and lost in this world who are longing for someone to say, "It is going to be okay; you are not alone. I will sit with you." If we can do that, then Christ's light will shine through us and those same people will ask, "What does God mean to you? Tell me about how God has changed you and how God can change me."

ADVOCATE: What do you like best about serving in the South Georgia Conference?

REV. LEWIS: I love the people, both the clergy and laity. I think we have some of the most loving and kind people when we take the time to really get to know each other.

ADVOCATE: Tell us about your family.

REV. LEWIS: Scott and I have been married for almost 22 years. He did not marry a preacher. He married a school teacher, but I could not ask for a more supportive husband. We have four beautiful children that keep us busy: Riley and Mason are 15-year-old twins, Aiden is 18, and Mondo is 22. Mondo has been attending Reinhardt University and Aiden will be leaving for Young Harris in August. It is hard to believe that in three years we will be empty nesters! My children have always joined me in ministry whenever it is appropriate. It is one way we balance

the demands of ministry with staying connected as a family. For example, Mason and Riley went with me to welcome pastors who were moving in our district.

ADVOCATE: What do you like to do in your free time? What are your hobbies and interests?

REV. LEWIS: In my free time, I like to go to the beach or the mountains. Both are equally refreshing. For renewal of my soul, I enjoy going to Green Bough House of Prayer. There, secluded, with no phones (cell service is more than sketchy), TVs, or other electronic devices, I find the time to relax and remember that I like to read, do puzzles, draw, or just drink in God's beauty outside.

ADVOCATE: What's one fact about you that most people don't know?

REV. LEWIS: I am artistic, and that most often takes shape in the form of 3D cakes. I have made anything from R2D2 to a Georgia Bulldog cake. It takes a lot of time, which is why I don't get to do it very often anymore.

Columbus churches partner to feed homeless

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Every Tuesday night, folks in Columbus' Rose Hill neighborhood gather downstairs in the former Rose Hill United Methodist Church for a little bit of food and a whole lot of Jesus.

For nearly a decade, volunteers from throughout the community have come together to help feed the city's homeless. Begun by a former Rose Hill UMC pastor, the ministry is now run by Linda Laye, chaplain of the Fellowship at Rose Hill.

Several Columbus-area United Methodist churches are part of the weekly meal rotation, providing a hot, ready-to-eat meal for 80 to 100 people each Tuesday evening: M.L. Harris UMC, Epworth UMC, St. Peter UMC, The Ridge, St. Mark UMC, and Pierce Chapel UMC. St. Paul UMC prepares a special Christmas dinner.

Peaches and her husband, Neal, a retired Army veteran, are Tuesday night regulars. They like coming around not just for the food, she said, but because they feel loved and valued.

"They don't judge you. Ms. Linda doesn't judge you, she makes you want to do better and the people up here are the same way," said Peaches, who said that she and her husband are homeless, live in a tent, and constantly worry that others will steal their few possessions. "No one up here judges you."

While some of the Fellowship at Rose Hill's regular guests have homes, they enjoy the free meal to give their budget a break and to enjoy fellowship, says volunteer Steve Hall, a member of The Ridge. He estimates that about 80 percent live within walking distance of the ministry.

Hall, who's been serving with the ministry since 2013, says the people keep him coming back each week. He mingles and chats with guests and does whatever's needed, from refilling tea to setting up chairs to taking out the trash.

"I think we need to see there's another walk of life," he said. "They're good people."

Before eating, the church that prepared the meal shares a brief devotional and prayer.

The words shared inspire her and give her hope, Peaches said.

"They always give you a wonderful word of encouragement to go along with your day, and a lot of the words of encouragement ... have gotten me and my husband through a lot of stuff," she said.

The ministry – perhaps the only one in Columbus where one can get a meal with no questions asked or papers to sign – is important to the people it serves because it helps them know they are cared about and not forgotten, Laye said.

"Here, on Tuesday nights, they know they can talk and experience an hour and a half of love," she said. "It's important for them to know that they have not been forgotten by the community and that The United Methodist Church loves them and wants to provide a moment of comfort and love for them. They might not get that anywhere else. There are some who really do depend on this ministry, and this might be the only church they ever see. This might be the only Jesus they see all week."

S3 applications due soon

Applications are now available for clergy wanting to participate in an S3 group. S3 is a collaborative, small group, action-learning experience for clergy that helps sustain and promote excellence in ordained ministry. Participants develop and implement a two year small group learning experience focused on three areas: Sabbath, Study, and Service. S3 groups are self-selected and self-directed: participants choose the members of their group and develop their group's S3 learning project (with direction from the S3 project committee). Detailed information and an application can be found [here](#). Contact Dr. Jimmy Asbell, S3 director, at jasbell@vinevillemethodist.org or [478-745-3331](tel:478-745-3331).

[CLICK HERE FOR AN APPLICATION](#) (Due July 1, 2019)

[CLICK HERE TO WATCH A VIDEO EXPLAINING S3](#)

See how they love one another!

OUR CONNECTION MATTERS

NITA CRUMP

18-20 Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: “God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I’ll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20, The Message)

The annual gathering of United Methodists across South Georgia is over. The people in Columbus were excellent hosts, working for more than a year to prepare for our arrival and show us in countless ways what Columbus-flavored southern hospitality looks like. So many people worked to plan, organize, and coordinate the many, many moving parts that have to come together to have a meeting of that size flow smoothly and accomplish anything. We were able to worship, fellowship, learn and grow, do business, and leave Columbus feeling that we had accomplished much while we were there.

As we move into the new appointment year, I want to encourage everyone to continue to live into the conversational covenant that we have used for the past several months. The terms of the covenant were displayed as the backdrop of the stage. The HEART principles and John Wesley’s Three Rules were there for all to see as we worked through our business. These are not meant to be our covenant for large gatherings only. These should continue to be our covenant throughout the year as we gather for worship, fellowship, and doing the business of our local churches and districts.

The words in Matthew 28 call us to: “Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life ...” The very best way we can train anyone is by setting a good example for all to see. People were attracted to the early church because of the way early Christians loved and cared for each other. Tertullian, an early Christian author, is credited with reporting that the Romans would exclaim, “See how they love one another!”

The year ahead will be stressful as we move toward General Conference 2020, our own annual conference, and Jurisdictional Conference. There is so much uncertainty. The future at times seems so clear and then at other times seems as clear as mud.

I encourage everyone to remember that, while the future may not be clear to us, it is clear to God. If we live in the way Christ has called us to live, demonstrating to each other and to the world that we can love in the way Christ loves, the future will be less of a worry and today will be well-lived.

Please remember to abide by Wesley’s three rules and use the HEART principles as guidelines for every conversation. Include these in your meetings at your church. Post them on the bulletin boards. Include them in your bulletins and newsletters. Let these guidelines become the covenant

that everyone uses in all areas of our church. Perhaps, if we do so, we'll find that people outside the church are able to say, "See how they love one another!" about us.

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

Multiculturalism and Undocumented Neighbors Task Forces provide resources

At the 2017 Annual Conference session, the South Georgia Conference approved two resolutions, statements that represent the position of the conference on a subject. The first, a "[Resolution in support of a Coordinated Action on Behalf of Undocumented Neighbors](#)," called on the presiding bishop to form a task force to develop a strategy to educate clergy and laity about the history of immigration and human and civil rights concerning undocumented members of society and to encourage South Georgia United Methodists to engage in works of piety and mercy towards their undocumented neighbors. The second approved resolution, the "[Multiculturalism Taskforce Resolution](#)," asked that the bishop appoint a diverse task force to consider the implications of multiculturalism education.

Over the past year and a half, these two Task Forces have worked to help churches address the issues of diversity and immigration with the church and with society.

At the 2019 Annual Conference Session, they presented to the Annual Conference with a [resource guide on Multiculturalism](#) and a [resource guide on Undocumented Neighbors](#) as well as videos to accompany each. ([View presentation from Annual Conference](#))

"These resource guides and videos are powerful tools for us individually and collectively," said Rev. Earnestine Campbell, Associate Director of Connectional Ministries. "They are tools for us to learn, grow and be equipped in applying Christianly principles in our everyday lives in encountering those that look different than 'us' and for those who are considered 'strangers' but are really our 'neighbors.' It is a striking awareness of who we are as God's hand and feet to humanity and the world."

The resource guides offer printed materials, links to websites, suggestions to start conversations around the issues of our Undocumented Neighbors and Multiculturalism, and education around the history of immigration and human and civil rights. The guides are intended to help move people to a deeper understanding of these issues and identify resources within The United Methodist Church that a local church can use. An extensive bibliography is included that can help churches in developing training for small or large groups.

The Task Force has also made available videos focused on having authentic conversations around Undocumented Neighbors and Multiculturalism. The goal is to help people engage in courageous conversations about these issues in our Conference and communities within and outside of The United Methodist Church.

"The Multiculturalism and Undocumented Task Forces have been unfailing in their dedication to excellent work in fulfilling the charge of the resolutions," said Rev. Campbell. "There is more work to accomplish, and they will continue in their dedication to bring awareness, understanding, and education around these issues in the Annual Conference."

Members of the [Multiculturalism Task Force](#) include: Ariana Berksteiner, Columbus Burns, Patricia Burns (chair), David Diaz, Jamie Gallaga, Beverly Madron, Gloria Morgan, Jin-Won Park, Ashley Randall, Denise Rooks, Yolanda Sewell, Antonio Sutton, Patsy Thomas, Melissa Traver, Buddy Whatley, Earnestine Campbell (Staff/Liaison).

Members of the [Undocumented Neighbors Task Force](#) include: Elaine Chavez, David Diaz, Brett Maddocks (chair), Daniel Medina, Ivelisse Quinones, Isaac Salgado, Angelyn Tripp, Moises Velez, Earnestine Campbell (Staff/Liaison).

You can download and access the Resource Guides and videos at www.sgaumc.org/advocacy.

Annual Conference Program Committee seeks feedback

The Annual Conference Program Committee is asking for feedback from those who attended the 2019 Annual Conference Session. Your input helps plan for future conferences.

[Click here to share feedback on the 2019 Annual Conference Session.](#)

Just a few spots left! Register for Camp Connect today!

There are just a few spots left for Elementary Camp 1!! [Register 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 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).

Jesus Teaches about Right Attitudes

Summer Quarter: Living in Covenant

Unit 2: A Heartfelt Covenant

Sunday school lesson for the week of June 30, 2019

By Rev. Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

Key Verse: Matthew 5:12

Purpose: To embrace Jesus’ teachings amidst today’s struggles and difficulties.

Mountains to Climb

There is something about mountains. While some people may prefer a visit to the beach, most people will tell you the mountains stir their soul. They give you a humbling perspective on your place in the world. The view from an overlook into the world below reminds you how small you are and how great and wonderful the world is. I look forward to every opportunity I have to visit the mountains of North Carolina. Even a short drive along the Blue Ridge Parkway seems to refresh my spirit. The chance to hike a section of the Appalachian Trail is a rare and cherished treat.

There is a part of me that understands why people would put “summitting Everest” on their bucket list. Located in the Himalayas, Mount Everest is Earth’s highest mountain. While the first recorded efforts to reach the summit were made early in the twentieth century, Tenzing Norgay and Edmund Hillary made the first official ascent of Everest in 1953. Over the next 30 years, no more than a dozen or so highly experienced mountaineers reached the summit in any one year.

In 1985 the situation began to change. Previously, climbing Mount Everest was the culmination of years of dreaming and training. That year, [Richard Bass](#), a wealthy 55-year-old businessman and amateur mountain climber with only four years of climbing experience, was part of a guided expedition led by [David Breashears](#). It was the beginning of what some have called “the era of [commercialisation](#) of Everest.”

Within a few years several companies were offering guided tours to the mountain. People were paying up to \$130,000 to climb Everest with personal photographers and private bars at base camp. Jamling Tenzing Norgay, the son of Tenzing Norgay, said in a 2003 interview that his late father would have been shocked to discover that rich thrill-seekers with no climbing experience were now routinely reaching the summit, “You still have to climb this mountain yourself with your feet. But the spirit of adventure is not there anymore. It is lost. There are people going up there who have no idea how to put on crampons. They are climbing because they have paid someone \$65,000. It is very selfish. It endangers the lives of others.”

Reinhold Messner – Italian mountaineer, adventurer, explorer, and author – concurred in 2004, “You could die in each climb and that meant you were responsible for yourself. We were real mountaineers: careful, aware and even afraid. By climbing mountains, we were not learning how big we were. We were finding out how breakable, how weak and how full of fear we are. You can only get this if you expose yourself to high danger. I have always said that a mountain without danger is not a mountain ... High altitude alpinism has become tourism and show. These commercial trips to Everest, they are still dangerous. But the guides and organisers tell clients, ‘Don't worry, it’s all organised.’ The route is prepared by hundreds of Sherpas. Extra oxygen is available in all camps, right up to the summit. People will cook for you and lay out your beds. Clients feel safe and don’t care about the risks.”

Despite the assurances, the risks of climbing Everest remain. As a result, while a record 891 climbers summited in the spring 2019 climbing season, there were at least 12 climbers who died. One guide identified a major factor contributing to this deadly season – about half of climbers embarking on the journey are inexperienced, “They don't train very hard. They underestimate Everest,” said Jangbu Sherpa, who has been working on Everest since 2006. “There are lots of climbers who just want to check the box so that they can say they’ve been to the top of the world.” Some operators also fail to confirm the experience level of climbers and simply accept anyone who can afford the cost of the journey and ascent, he added. (NBC News, May 30, 2019)

How would you characterize the difference between the attitude of the early mountaineers who climbed Everest and the tourists who “just want to check the box so that they can say they’ve been to the top of the world”?

A Different Kind of Climb

Those who tour the Holy Land these days will most certainly spend at least a couple of hours visiting the Mount of the Beatitudes. A group of Italian Franciscan nuns helped finance the construction of an eight-sided chapel, designed by Antonio Barluzzi there around 1938. Most scholars agree that the Sermon on the Mount is a collection of Jesus’ teaching that Matthew brought together as a concise way to present Jesus’ message. Whether or not Matthew 5-7 was a single message that Jesus delivered on one day, pilgrims have been coming to this “mount” for more than 1,600 years to remember Jesus and the principles and values he proclaimed.

This mount is quite different from Everest. On the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, between Capernaum and Gennesaret, its highest point is 190 feet **below** sea level. It’s no Mount Hermon. Still a little more than 500 feet above the surface of the lake, it is easy to imagine Jesus speaking to a large crowd assembled on the gently sloping hill.

While climbing this hill may have not been much of a challenge, those who heard Jesus’ words “were amazed at his teaching” (Matthew 7:28). This was radically different from anything they had heard from the traditional teachers of their day. Jesus was turning their expectations upside down. In many ways the rest of Matthew’s gospel presents the unfolding of the ramifications and repercussions of this body of teaching.

Many objected to the things Jesus said. Some claimed he was mistaken. Others questioned his right to speak on God’s behalf. Some applauded his words, but warned that he shouldn’t be taken literally. Many dismissed completely what he had to say.

What is your initial reaction to the teaching Jesus proclaims in the Sermon on the Mount?

The Royal Way

John Wesley was convinced the Sermon on the Mount was not meant to be read and dismissed, but that it contained teaching that was “indispensably necessary to eternal salvation.” Particularly in the Beatitudes, Jesus was not just listing groups of people who were particularly favored by God; rather Jesus was inviting people to a way of life – a perspective on life – that would lead them to true joy and gladness. In a way, Jesus was inviting to them ascend to a new summit – one that few, if any, had ever attempted.

When it comes to character, Jesus invites those who will consider what it takes to climb to new heights. The first four beatitudes address attitudes with which those who are moving toward the kingdom view the world.

Self-confidence has long been celebrated as a key to success. “Never let them see you sweat!” Someone may have told you “Fake it ‘til you make it,” suggesting that by imitating confidence, competence, and an optimistic mindset, you can accomplish great things.

Jesus says, “Happy are people who are hopeless, because the kingdom of heaven is theirs” (Matthew 5:3). To begin to move toward the kingdom – to make the only ascent which has any eternal significance – Jesus seems to be saying that it is more important for you to admit how helpless, needy, spiritually impoverished, and dependent on God you are.

How many times has someone told you to cheer up? Nobody wants to be known as the person who sucks all of the energy out of the room. “Smile and the world smiles with you, cry and you cry alone.”

Jesus says, “Happy are people who grieve, because they will be made glad” (Matthew 5:4). Recognizing our own hopelessness and spiritual poverty may be reason enough to move those who seek God’s presence to despair; but when you consider the public ministry of Jesus, it becomes apparent that Jesus was moved by the disease, injustice, oppression, and indifference to suffering that he encountered as he moved from village to village. In the face of a fallen creation, there is much to lament.

“If you don’t believe in yourself, no one else will.” We are obsessed with self-esteem. Unfortunately, we often think that proving our self-worth means both trumpeting our own abilities and disparaging the contributions of others. We can’t win unless someone else loses. If we don’t put ourselves first, no one else will.

Jesus says, “Happy are people who are humble, because they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). It is difficult to discern when positive self-regard becomes pride, but Jesus is clear that those who are fit for the kingdom understand there is a God, and it’s not them. Paul gives good advice here: “Because of the grace that God gave me, I can say to each one of you: don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Instead, be reasonable since God has measured out a portion of faith to each one of you” (Romans 12:3).

Some people always seem to be looking for an angle. The question is not whether something is right or wrong, helpful or harmful, inspiring or degenerate, but whether it is profitable.

Jesus says, “Happy are people who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, because they will be fed until they are full” (Matthew 5:6). People who begin by recognizing the brokenness of this world develop an appetite for God’s order of creation to be restored. They are eager to see the hungry fed, the naked clothed, the sick healed. They celebrate the release of every slave, the righting of every wrong, the restoration of peace in families, nations, and the world.

The remaining Beatitudes move from being descriptive of right attitudes to addressing practical matters of living. Jesus speaks of those who show mercy, demonstrate pure motives, work to establish peace, and persevere in the face of opposition.

This is a very different list from the one most religious people might expect. Many of the religious leaders in Jesus' day repeatedly ask him to rule on interpretations of the law. They seemed obsessed with determining who was guilty.

Near the end of Matthew's gospel, Jesus warns the people, "The legal experts and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat. Therefore, you must take care to do everything they say. But don't do what they do. For they tie together heavy packs that are impossible to carry. They put them on the shoulders of others, but are unwilling to lift a finger to move them" (Matthew 23:2-4). The rest of the chapter returns repeatedly to the refrain: "How terrible it will be for you, legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites!"

Controversy, antagonism, and provocation seem to be much more evident among the religious leaders. There are few examples of people coming to Jesus with a question that seemed like an authentic attempt to understand what Jesus was saying.

There may be no better example of the religious leaders' willingness to sell out than when Caiaphas uses this argument to convince the council to eliminate Jesus: "You don't see that it is better for you that one man die for the people rather than the whole nation be destroyed" (John 11:50). Their worry about the own self-preservation, their roles in the temple cult, and their place of privilege in the culture was more important to them than being aligned with the will of God.

Jesus calls us to embark on a difficult climb. These heights will challenge even the most resolute. Nevertheless, the view at the top is more than worth the struggle. Jesus says, "Be full of joy and be glad, because you have a great reward in heaven" (Matthew 5:12a).

Which Beatitude is most challenging to you? Who could you ask to give you support and to hold you accountable as you seek to develop in this area of your faith?

Ashley Randall is the pastor of Garden City United Methodist Church. He has hiked the Appalachian Trail from Springer Mountain to Wesser, but spends more of his time running around historic Savannah these days.

Jesus Teaches about Fulfilling the Law

Summer Quarter: Living in Covenant

Unit 2: A Heartfelt Covenant

Sunday school lesson for the week of July 7, 2019

By Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 5:13-20

Key Verse: Matthew 5:16

Purpose: To heed Jesus' call to be a model of faith to those around us.

Let Your Light Shine

I worked at a summer camp in North Carolina while I was in college. It was a residential camp for children ages six to 16. The camp had capacity for about 200 campers and most campers stayed for one of the two four-week sessions, although quite a few of the campers stayed the whole summer. High school juniors and seniors could register as “counselors-in-training” (CITs).

The camp offered lots of activities: archery, arts and crafts, swimming, canoeing, water skiing, golf, horseback riding, camp craft, and riflery. We served three meals a day, family-style, on china, in the dining hall. We had a library and someone who could help kids so they didn't fall further behind over the summer break. In addition to being a cabin counselor, I also taught swimming, waterskiing, and canoeing. The summer after I graduated from college, I was the CIT Director.

There was some kind of special program after dinner every night. Sometimes it would be a local musician or storyteller. We had talent shows featuring the campers and counselors. We would show movies. We had a caller come in and teach the kids how to square dance.

After the evening program it was time for the campers to go to bed. The cabins were pretty rustic – a wood-frame building with a front porch, a shed roof, screen windows on both sides. The kids slept on metal bunk beds and kept all their clothes and gear in the trunks they brought with them to camp. There was no plumbing in the cabins. The boy's bathhouse was at one end of the cabin area and the girl's bathhouse was on the other end.

Taps was played around 9:30 p.m. and the kids were all expected to be in their beds with the lights out then. The cabin counselors had the responsibility of making sure that the kids in their cabin had bathed, brushed their teeth, and were otherwise ready to call it a day. Once their kids were settled down, the counselors had permission to take some time for themselves. Once a week or so, I made a trip to the laundromat to wash my clothes. Other nights I would go back to the gym and shoot hoops or hang out in the counselor's lounge and play backgammon or Crazy 8s. All the counselors had to be back in their cabins by midnight.

About once a week I had “night duty.” Three or four counselors would be assigned to stay on the hill overlooking cabin row and keep an eye on the area while the other counselors were

decompressing from the day. It was their job to make sure the kids were safe and that they stayed in their cabins until their counselor returned at midnight.

Since it was an assigned responsibility, you were expected to complain about having “night duty.” The truth is, it was usually great. On a moonless night you could see the Milky Way. You got to sit out under the stars with a couple of friends and swap stories, plan your next day off, or discuss your plans for the next year or two. Of course, you also had to keep an eye on the cabins.

The essential tool for this job was a heavy-duty, hand-held lantern. EVEREADY® still sells a variation of this item almost 40 years later. It works like a hand-held spotlight, throwing a beam 30 or 40 yards that is bright enough to illuminate a person’s face and body. If you aim it at a person’s feet, it will light their path; but if you shine it in their eyes, it will stop them in their tracks. Depending on who was holding it and what their intentions were, it was either an instrument of intimidation or encouragement.

What other items do you think could be used either as an instrument of intimidation or encouragement?

Salting, Shining, and Standing Out

Matthew 5:13-20

“You are the salt of the earth.”

“You are the light of the world.”

The first thing we should be clear about is who is “YOU.” It would be a mistake to think that Jesus has shifted his focus from those whom he has been describing in the opening of his message. “YOU” are the ones who are favored by God – the “blessed” – the “happy.” Those who are hopeless, humble, hungry. Those who grieve, show mercy, make peace. Those who have pure hearts and suffer harassment because of their commitment to follow God’s design for relationships. This is the community that Jesus is establishing through the new covenant.

This covenant community is encouraged to embrace their distinctiveness in the world. They are salt and light. As covenant people, their relationships with the world will be transforming – as long as they are informed by God’s principles.

In his sermon, “Upon Our Lord's Sermon On The Mount: Discourse Four (Sermon 24),” John Wesley describes the influence of the faith community’s “saltiness” this way:

It is your very nature to season whatever is round about you. It is the nature of the divine savior, which is in you, to spread to whatsoever you touch; to diffuse itself, on every side, to all those among whom you are. This is the great reason why the providence of God has so mingled you together with other men, that whatever grace you have received of God may through you be

communicated to others; that every holy temper, and word, and work of yours, may have an influence on them also.

And what is the light we bring? According to Wesley:

Your lowliness of heart; your gentleness and meekness of wisdom; your serious, weighty concern for the things of eternity and sorrow for the sins and miseries of men; your earnest desire of universal holiness and full happiness in God; your tender good-will to all mankind; and fervent love to your supreme Benefactor.

As Wesley says, when you live like this, “Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun in the midst of heaven.” That’s what leads Wesley to assert:

“... that a secret, unobserved religion, cannot be the religion of Jesus Christ. Whatever religion can be concealed, is not Christianity. If a Christian could be hid, he could not be compared to a city set upon an hill; to the light of the world, the sun shining from heaven, and seen by all the world below.”

Wesley is most interested in making the case “that Christianity is essentially a social religion, and that to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it.” For Wesley, this is just another way of saying, “there is no holiness apart from social holiness.”

Be this your one ultimate end in all things. With this view, be plain, open, undisguised. Let your love be without dissimulation. Why should you hide fair, disinterested love? Let there be no guile found in your mouth. Let your words be the genuine picture of your heart. Let there be no darkness or reservedness in your conversation, no disguise in your behaviour. Leave this to those who have other designs in view; designs which will not bear the light. Be ye artless and simple to all mankind; that all may see the grace of God which is in you. And although some will harden their hearts, yet others will take knowledge that ye have been with Jesus, and, by returning themselves to the great Bishop of their souls, “glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

What are some ways that God’s people are impacting the world with whatever grace they have received from God? How does your light help people see the truth about ourselves and our need for God?

To Abolish or Fulfill

Mathew 5:17-20

It is still early in his message, but Jesus seems to recognize some anxiety developing in his audience. “What is this new thing...this new covenant...this new community?”

It was a complaint Jesus encountered with some regularity. Sometimes people challenged his authority. Sometimes they questioned his teaching. Sometimes they didn’t like who and how and when he helped. As Wesley describes their “reproach,” they claimed Jesus “was a teacher of

novelties, an introducer of a new religion.” It was always an anxious response to Jesus’ challenge to the status quo.

“Don’t even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets. I haven’t come to do away with them but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17).

So is Jesus saying that all of the laws and ordinances contained in the Law and the Prophets are still in force? On the face of it that is what Jesus seems to be saying. In fact, Jesus goes on to be even more explicit: “neither the smallest letter nor even the smallest stroke of a pen” can be ignored or dismissed.

In his sermon on this passage, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon On The Mount: Discourse Five (Sermon 25),” Wesley makes the distinction between the “ritual or ceremonial law” and the “moral law.” In regards to the “ritual or ceremonial law delivered by Moses to the children of Israel, containing all the injunctions and ordinances which related to the old sacrifices and service of the temple, our Lord indeed did come to destroy, to dissolve, and utterly abolish.” Wesley then makes quick reference to the decision of Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and the rest of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem: “The Holy Spirit has led us to the decision that no burden should be placed on you other than these essentials: refuse food offered to idols, blood, the meat from strangled animals, and sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid such things. Farewell” (Acts 15:28-29).

That leaves the “moral law.” This is what Wesley says about it:

“But the moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments, and enforced by the prophets, He did not take away. It was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken, which stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven.”

Every part of this law must remain in force, upon all mankind, and in all ages, as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.

Even though this distinction might remove many of the 613 commandments contained in the Hebrew Scriptures, that still leaves a lot of commands (unless you think the four prohibitions of the Jerusalem Council is the complete list). And it still leaves the question about what Jesus has done to establish the new covenant. What about Paul’s proclamation of the Gospel?

Christ is our peace. He made both Jews and Gentiles into one group. With his body, he broke down the barrier of hatred that divided us. He canceled the detailed rules of the Law so that he could create one new person out of the two groups, making peace. He reconciled them both as one body to God by the cross, which ended the hostility to God. (Ephesians 2:14-16)

Wesley claims that our distinction between the Law and the Gospel is a false dichotomy:

“There is no contrariety at all between the law and the gospel; that there is no need for the law to pass away, in order to the establishing of the gospel. Indeed neither of them supersedes the other, but they agree perfectly well together. Yea, the very same words, considered in different respects, are parts both of the law and of the gospel. If they are considered as commandments, they are parts of the law: if as promises, of the gospel. Thus, ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,’ when considered as a commandment, is a branch of the law; when regarded as a promise, is an essential part of the gospel; - the gospel being no other than the commands of the law proposed by way of promises. Accordingly, poverty of spirit, purity of heart, and whatever else is enjoined in the holy law of God, are no other, when viewed in a gospel light, than so many great and precious promises.

“There is, therefore, the closest connection that can be conceived between the law and the gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to the gospel; on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbor, to be meek, humble, or holy. We feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, that ‘with man this is impossible.’ But we see a promise of God, to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek, and holy: We lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith; and ‘the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us,’ through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Notice that Wesley returns to the bedrock claim that “God’s righteousness comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who have faith in him” (Romans 3:22). But then Wesley goes on to remind us that Jesus calls us to a righteousness that is “greater than the righteousness of the legal experts and the Pharisees.”

We might be tempted to disparage their righteousness. Wesley does not. He admits that some of them may have been hypocrites. Some of them may have even been openly opposed to God’s plan and purposes. Nevertheless, “It may be, indeed, that some of the scribes and Pharisees endeavored to keep all the commandments, and consequently were, as touching the righteousness of the law, that is, according to the letter of it, blameless.”

So what does it mean to fulfill the Law? Wesley describes it this way:

Thus, to do no harm, to do good, to attend the ordinances of God (the righteousness of a Pharisee,) are all external; whereas, on the contrary, poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, hunger and thirst after righteousness, the love of our neighbour, and purity of heart, (the righteousness of a Christian,) are all internal. And even peace-making (or doing good,) and suffering for righteousness’ sake, stand entitled to the blessings annexed to them, only as they imply these inward dispositions, as they spring from, exercise, and confirm them. So that whereas the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was external only, it may be said in some sense that the righteousness of a Christian is internal only: All his actions and sufferings being

as nothing in themselves, being estimated before God only by the tempers from which they spring.

Notice how Wesley goes back to the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount to describe this righteousness. “YOU” are those who are “blessed,” “happy,” “favored by God.”

Perhaps Paul puts it more succinctly when he says, “All the Law has been fulfilled in a single statement: Love your neighbor as yourself” (Galatians 5:14).

If “love is what fulfills the Law” (Romans 13:10b), what would the people in your circle of influence learn about God from what you say and do?

Rev. Ashley Randall is pastor of Garden City United Methodist Church. He is working with a group of religious leaders across Chatham County to establish a congregation-based justice ministry.

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But Grace said

PATHWAY TO HIS PRESENCE

B.J. FUNK

Before leaving for a lengthy trip I went to a crowded gas station. All pumps were filled, so I pulled my car to be second in line. Our two cars were facing head to head because my fuel tank was on the opposite side from hers. No problem. I’ll just wait a bit.

A bit turned into several minutes, and I watched as the young woman continued looking down at her lap. She never looked up.

“She’s probably waiting for the one in her passenger seat to return from paying.”

“Or maybe she’s counting her change and will get out and pay soon.”

Neither. She continued looking down, and now I had waited a good five minutes. I decided to get out and go knock on her window.

“Hi. I’m wondering if you are finished getting gas and if you could pull out so I could pull in.” A smile adorned my face.

She looked up, mirroring my smiling face with her unhappy face. Uh oh.

“I will move as soon as I finish texting,” she said flippantly. “Besides, there are plenty of other gas pumps. Go to one of those.”

I believe she inherited her disgusted look from Adam when he looked at Eve and said, “See what you’ve done! See the price we now have to pay because you took that one piece of fruit?”

The fact that I needed gas seemed somehow my fault!

The other pumps were still full. I walked back to my car, and I have to be honest. I was not thinking sweet cookies, yummy ice cream, and peppermint candy thoughts about her. I was thinking frogs, snakes, alligators, bears, lions, and wolf thoughts. And, it would have been just fine with me if any of those animals had shown up just then. In her car.

Questions popped in my mind. Should I ask the store clerk to tell her to move? Should I start honking my horn? Should I...

At that time, Grace began to stir inside. *Oh no! I really wanted to handle this one without Grace. Can't I? I don't feel like Grace right now.*

But Grace said, “Pray for her. Think of what she may be going through personally. Understand that her life might be difficult, and maybe she is barely holding on to the little confidence she has left. Perhaps she just had a fight with her husband. Maybe finances are low. Bottom line ... she is too overwhelmed with life right now to be nice. Too burdened to be thoughtful.”

I wanted to disagree. “I’ve had a few hurtful things happen myself, Grace. You never saw me acting like that, have you?”

“As a matter of fact, I have.”

I never realized Humble Pie had such a salty taste.

Grace said, “I’ve seen you be pretty selfish, B.J., especially when things didn’t turn out like you wanted. I’ve seen your ego swell when what I wanted to swell was *Me* in your life. I’ve actually heard your heart thinking thoughts similar to what this young woman is thinking.”

Once again, Grace won. I started praying for my twin in the car ahead of me.

Grace, grace, marvelous grace. Thank you for once again coming through to teach me a lesson.

Eventually, she pulled out, never acknowledging me. But, if Grace is right ... and she always is ... she had too much on her heart to be nice.

I should know. Twins usually think just alike.

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



Retired Clergy Birthdays – June 2019

6/02 – Jan Durham: 103 Willeford Dr.; Savannah, GA 31411
6/03 – Joyce Payne: 423 Nandina Ct.; Warner Robins, GA 31088
6/04 – Frank Parr: 24 Wylly Ave.; Savannah, GA 31406
6/06 – W. Raymond Wilder, Jr.: 2001 South Lee St.; Americus, GA 31709
6/06 – Sandra Wilson: 4657 Twin Oak Dr.; Macon, GA 31210
6/07 – Bob Williams: PO Box 665; Dublin, GA 31040
6/08 – Marcia Cochran: 344 Stone Mill Dr.; Brunswick, GA 31520
6/09 – John Clements: 468 Edwards Creek Rd.; Alamo, GA 30411
6/09 – Whit Kirkland: 551 Kirkland Dr.; Byron, GA 31008
6/09 – Sylvia Ross: 2000 Cambridge Ave. #331; Wyomissing, PA 19610
6/10 – John Horton: 295 Lakeridge Ct.; Macon, GA 31211
6/10 – Bill Huddle: 5310 Winding Lakes Dr.; Cumming, GA 30028
6/10 – Charles Smith, Jr.: 4102 Serendipity Ct.; Martinez, GA 30907
6/14 – Eul Kim: 4320 Jackson St.; Riverside, CA 92503
6/15 – Mira Barrett: 433 Paul St.; Portal, GA 30450
6/15 – Paul Dupree: 2050 W. Broad Ave., #5; Albany, GA 31707
6/15 – Stephen Webb: 260 Riverchase Dr.; Bainbridge, GA 39819
6/17 – Charles Cravey: 6500 Clito Rd.; Statesboro, GA 30461
6/17 – William Harris: 111 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
6/17 – Heyward Hiers: PO Box 187; Berlin, GA 31722
6/18 – Leland Collins: 130 Surrey Place; Perry, GA 31069
6/19 – R. Randall Ray: 139 Cedar Ridge Rd.; Americus, GA 31709
6/20 – Glen Hancock: PO Box 356; Helena, GA 31037
6/20 – Saunders Pinckard: PO Box 6555; Americus, GA 31709
6/20 – Jim Rush: 160 University Park Dr.; Homewood, AL 35209
6/21 – Nancy Lee Cater: PO Box 8547; Warner Robins, GA 31095
6/21 – Lonzie Wester: 2616 Winchester Rd.; Waycross, GA 31501
6/23 – Sue Diebolt: 2006 Waverly Ct.; Lancaster, SC 29720
6/23 – Don King: 140 Long Pines Circle; East Dublin, GA 31027
6/24 – Doug Harvey: 5109 River Rd.; Jakin, GA 39861
6/24 – Jack Knight: 255 Cross Country Chase; Stokesdale, NC 27357
6/24 – Benjy Varnell: 100 Militia Hill Way; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
6/25 – Russ Elkins: 104 Oak Dr.; Adel, GA 31620
6/25 – Jim Emery: 3855 Dennis Creek Rd.; Talbotton, GA 31827
6/25 – Grable Page, Jr.: 2823 W. Royal Oaks Dr.; Beaufort, SC 29902
6/26 – C. Graton Helms: PO Box 4476; Eastman, GA 31023
6/27 – Bill Strickland: PO Box 355; Portal, GA 30450
6/28 – Ethan Strom: 384 Midnight Cypress Dr.; Winter Haven, FL 33881
6/29 – Nancy Scarbrough: 1345 Hardeman Ave. #239; Macon, GA 31201
6/30 – Roy Dial, III: 3015 Chadbourne Trail; Alpharetta, GA 30004

Scripture Readings – June 25

June 30

Third Sunday after Pentecost

2 Kings 2:1-2, 6-14

Psalm 77:1-2, 11-20 (UMH 798)

Galatians 5:1, 13-25

Luke 9:51-62

July 7

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

2 Kings 5:1-14

Psalm 30 (UMH 762)

Galatians 6:(1-6) 7-16

Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

July 14

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Amos 7:7-17

Psalm 82 (UMH 804)

Colossians 1:1-14

Luke 10:25-37

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Events in the South Georgia Conference – 6/25/2019 edition

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.

Southwest District United Methodist Men Rally – Aug. 17

Save the date – Saturday, Aug. 17, 2019 – for the Southwest District United Methodist Men's Rally, to be held at Cairo First UMC from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Lunch will be provided. The cost \$10 each. More information regarding speakers and reservations will be provided.

Golden Cross Sunday – Aug. 18

Golden Cross began in 1908 with the commitment of Methodists in Dallas, Texas to provide the first health care to persons who could not afford it. They began to receive offerings for the expenses of the poor patients at Methodist Hospital in that city. By 1930, the concept was officially adopted throughout the predecessor denominations of The United Methodist Church. Today Golden Cross is a ministry that reaches out in love to the laity in our Annual Conference who are experiencing financial difficulty due to excessive medical expenses. Through Golden

Cross, United Methodists care for members of our local churches in time of emotional stress and financial need. The South Georgia Conference has designated the first Sunday of July to be the Sunday to receive a special offering for Golden Cross. Each church is asked to observe Golden Cross Sunday to receive an offering and send it to the conference treasurer. [Click here for information about Golden Cross Sunday.](#)

Pathways – Aug. 24

Equip yourself for effective ministry at Pathways! Churches looking for new ideas, networking opportunities and practical, quality training for their pastors, parishioners, staff and leaders need look no further than this year's Pathways leadership training event. Scheduled for Saturday, August 24, 2019, at Trinity United Methodist Church in Warner Robins, the training event will offer participants more than 30 workshops to choose from, each designed to help congregations become healthier and to fulfill the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ. The event will begin with a time of worship and gathering time around creativity in ministry. The training, which starts at 9:30 a.m. and lasts until 3:30 p.m., features workshops on a variety of subjects, from children and youth-focused workshops to spiritual discipline workshops to those focused on missions and outreach. The design team urges local church leaders to carpool to the event to minimize travel costs and to maximize the benefits of the day by continuing the learning conversation during the return trip. The conference costs \$25 per person. A boxed lunch from Chick-fil-A is included in the registration fee. Safe Sanctuaries compliant childcare is available for newborn to fifth-grade children at a cost of \$10 per child which covers the cost of their lunch. Pre-registration is required for childcare. .5 CEU credits are available for this event. For questions, contact Allison Lindsey at allison@sgaumc.com. Registration and more information will be available soon. Stay tuned!

Methodist Children's Home Work Day Offering – Sept. 15

Every local church in South Georgia is encouraged to receive a special Work Day Offering to support the ministry of The Methodist Home for Children and Youth. The Work Day Offering for the Methodist Home is a tradition from the 1900s, a time when people, mostly farmers, donated the equivalent of one day's wages to the Methodist Home. Sometimes they would load a freight car with cotton or peanuts and send it to Macon. Today folks just use a calculator. The amount of the work day offering can be calculated quite simply: Divide your annual income by 365 (farmers didn't take vacation days.) For example, if a person made \$60,000 a year, it would be \$60,000 divided by 365 = \$164. Whether you give cotton or a check, be assured that your gift will bring hope and a new lease on life to the more than 400 children and families they serve every day. To learn more about this incredible ministry of our conference visit www.themethodisthome.org.

Sexual Ethics Workshop – Sept. 26

A Sexual Ethics Workshop will be held Thursday, September 26 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Tifton First UMC. [Register here](#)