

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – AUG. 6 EDITION

Bishop Bryan: Listen, Pray, Speak the Gospel Truth about Violence

The mass shootings this past week in El Paso, Texas, Dayton, Ohio and Gilroy, California have once again brought us face to face with the horrible violence of which human beings are capable. We are plunged into shock and collective grief.

And we wonder. Who did this? What were the motives? Why these places in these particular cities? What about the mental health of the shooters? These and a host of other questions can only be answered after thorough investigations have occurred.

In the meantime, we listen. We listen to the law enforcement reports, to the hospital updates, and to those who were around when the shootings occurred. This listening leads us to pray without ceasing for those we are seeing and hearing.

And when we wonder what to say, I call us also to speak up using the important words found in our “Social Principles,” paragraph 162 in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*:

We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, age, gender, disability, status, economic condition, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious affiliation.

The New Testament lesson for Sunday, August 4, also gives us the direction we need in order to be living witnesses for Christ in a culture that glorifies violence and denigrates the sanctity of human life. Listen to the words of the Apostle Paul from Colossians 3:

“So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above... for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: ... evil desire.... 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. 7 These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. 8 But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth.”

Let us listen. Let us pray. But, brothers and sisters, let us be certain to speak the Gospel truth about violence in our world, in others, and in our own lives.

Let us be Alive Together in Witness.

R. Lawson Bryan

Wesley Foundations, campus ministries offer community, connection

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Transformational. Inclusive. Loving. A home-away-from home.

In a word, life changing.

As a sophomore in college, away from home for the first time, Savannah Buice was looking for a community of believers. Invited to a worship service at Valdosta State University's Wesley Foundation, she went and immediately felt welcomed and at home.

"I feel like when you go to college you're out on your own for the first time, and, for a lot of people, they look to join the first thing that gives them community," said Buice, who graduated from VSU in May. "For me, Wesley was a place where I felt like somebody was always in my corner, where somebody was always praying for me and encouraging me. I knew that I always had people who cared for me for the right reasons and encouraged me to do good things."

VSU's Wesley Foundation is one of [16 Wesley Foundations and 9 UM-related campuses in Georgia](#). Campus ministries serve as the bridge between church and college, offering God's grace and love in a new and often foreign world.

The missional presence of The United Methodist Church on college and university campuses around the world, Wesley Foundations seek to give college students the space to discover, develop, and deepen their walks with the Lord.

"Wesley Foundations are uniquely positioned to reach out to college students and offer Christian community," said Rev. C.J. Harp, director of VSU's Wesley Foundation. "Our tagline (at VSU Wesley) is that transformation best happens in the context of community. The communities that college students place themselves in will greatly shape the trajectory of their lives."

It's critical that students connect to a community of faith before they arrive on campus, or as soon after arriving as possible, says Rev. Lynn Meadows-White, Minister of Discipleship at Pierce Chapel UMC in Midland and the parent of a 24-year-old graduate of Berry College and an 18-year-old rising freshman at Georgia Tech.

"I think it's really important that we try to prepare our high school graduates to get connected to campus ministry when they reach their destination in the fall," Rev. Meadows-White said. "To have a group that you connect with, where you can make friends and feel safe, and to have a place where you can struggle with questions and doubts and issues and fears is crucial to the faith development of any person of any age, but particularly for college students when their environment is so new and often so challenging in so many ways."

Rev. Meadows-White has encouraged each of Pierce Chapel UMC's 17 high school graduates to find and connect with a ministry on their future college campus. For those attending college where there is a Wesley Foundation, she sent their names and contact information to the [UMCommission](#) and asked that the campus minister contact the student in advance of their arrival on campus.

It's an easy but important step pastors or church staff can take to help ensure recent graduates feel loved and cared for.

"There are so many options when the students go to orientation and get to the schools, and the first few days and weeks are overwhelming," she said. "I know from my own experience and from watching other students that very often what they commit to the first month is what has their heart, if not for their whole experience, then for a long time."

Studies show that more than half of the students who participate in youth ministry will leave the faith or become nominal Christians after high school. It's imperative, say campus ministers, that pastors and congregations help connect and introduce students to Wesley Foundations and campus ministries.

"Anything we can do to help students continue their walk with Christ after high school can make a major impact on their faith in the future, the very least of which is to introduce them to campus ministries or their local campus minister," said Dr. Jonathan Smith, director of Georgia Southern University's Wesley Foundation. "If our churches truly care about the continued faith development of their youth after graduation and believe that their youth can make a difference in our mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, then it is essential that we give them the opportunity to continue their walk with Jesus Christ in college by connecting them with a Wesley Foundation or campus ministry."

Because Rev. Meadows-White had shared the names of Pierce Chapel UMC's graduates with the [UMCommission](#) and asked that they be contacted, folks from Georgia Tech's Wesley Foundation contacted her son and they arranged to meet while he was in town for orientation. She hopes all the church's graduates were reached out to in this way.

"I think that if we, as pastors, are not willing to go the extra mile for the sake of our students then we are missing part of our pastoral duty and responsibility," she said. "The faith of this generation is fragile, and I think that we need to do all we can to help connect them to the body of Christ in meaningful ways wherever the body of Christ is. We have a ready-made opportunity in our campus ministries, and we need to take the time to connect them. I want to encourage every pastor to at least make the effort to connect our students to a college campus ministry."

The [UMCommission](#) makes it easy. All a student, parent, or pastor needs to do is visit the website (umcommission.org) or fill out the simple [contact form](#).

College campuses are the most critical places for the future of the denomination and the faith, said Dr. Smith, and should not be neglected.

“Wesley Foundations and campus ministries produce the present and future lay and clergy leaders of our church,” he said. “They meet students with the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that transforms, not only their college experience, but the rest of the lives.”

While not all church members have a student in college, all can help support college students and campus ministries in three ways:

Pray

Pray for college students, that they might have wisdom and guidance from the Lord as they discern who they are and who they are becoming. Pray for God to move on college campuses and to bring an awakening among young adults. Pray for campus ministers and campus ministries to be attentive to the spiritual, physical, and psychological needs of their students so that they might be formed into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ.

Partner

Now more than ever, campus ministries need support from individuals and local churches to carry out their mission and ministry. Partnering with your local Wesley Foundation can be as easy as providing a meal or snacks during midterms or exam week or adding your local Wesley Foundation into your church's discipleship or missions budget. These may seem like small things, but they help campus ministers keep their focus on being a part of God's transformative work on campus rather than fundraising for the ministry.

Follow

Every United Methodist campus ministry in the state of Georgia has a website and a presence on social media. Take time to follow their ministries on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) to see the transformative work they are doing on their campuses and in their communities, and follow @umcommission to see what's happening at Wesley Foundations across the state. Then share those stories with your local church! Talk about how students are actively growing in their faith and transforming their campus by sharing the Gospel.

Prepare now, respond when storms hit

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Last fall, Hurricane Michael slammed into Southwest Georgia as a Category 3 hurricane after making landfall in the Florida Panhandle as a Category 5.

Michael brought 115 mph winds and downed trees and power lines throughout the region. Homes, churches, and businesses were damaged and destroyed. Cotton, peanut, and pecan crops, which were not yet fully harvested, were decimated.

The damage - widespread and far-reaching - is still being felt.

The 2019 Atlantic hurricane season – which runs June 1 through November 30 – is forecast to be “near normal” in regard to the number of named storms and major hurricanes (category 3, 4 or 5; with winds of 111 mph or higher) according to the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Churches and individuals in the South Georgia Conference are prone to being impacted by hurricanes, and as folks in Donalsonville, Colquitt, Bainbridge, and surrounding areas can attest, it’s not just those in the coastal communities who need to be prepared. Those in the southern counties of the conference also need to be aware of the potential for storms to form in the Gulf of Mexico and make their way inland.

Being prepared for storms – whether they’re hurricanes, tornadoes, or wind and rain events – helps protect people and properties when disasters do strike. But how do individuals and congregations best prepare?

Prepare now

Don’t wait. The time to prepare is now, when there isn’t a looming disaster or crisis. Individuals, families, businesses, and churches should all have up-to-date emergency plans and communicate it to key players within the organization(s).

“Everyone needs to be prepared,” said Luis Morales, the South Georgia Conference’s Disaster Coordinator. “Since 2016 when Hurricane Matthew first affected our coast, South Georgia has been hit by one storm or another every year.”

Worship centers and families need to be prepared for all types of emergencies, he said.

“Families need to have a plan for if they are together when a storm happens and also, now that schools are beginning soon, for when they’re apart. The plan needs to include how to communicate and where to meet when it’s safe to do so.”

Churches also need to have plans in place before a disaster strikes.

“Congregations need to know their safe areas within their church campus if a storm hits while they are there,” Morales said.

A few ways churches can be prepared include mounting floor plans, depicting in-place sheltering locations, in visible areas and keeping basic first aid kits and an AED (automated external defibrillator) on hand.

“Our conference can present [Connecting Neighbors](#) training which addresses how individuals and churches can better prepare themselves prior to a disaster.”

Here are a few basic preparedness tips from www.ready.gov, the official website of the Department of Homeland Security:

- Have an evacuation plan in place and know where to go if you need to evacuate
- Have a disaster supply kit ready, including flashlights, batteries, cash, first-aid supplies, and copies of important documents
- Plan for adequate supplies if you do not evacuate
- Have an emergency communication plan in place
- Sign up for your county’s emergency alert notification system, if applicable

“Preparedness is key,” Morales said. “Your best is to stay in a safe place, even if the power is out. Driving in bad weather is more dangerous than not having electricity.”

His number one tip for storms and disasters is to never drive in standing water.

“You cannot see if the road has been washed away. Turn around so you don’t drown.”

Be the Church

When disasters do hit, how can Christians best represent Christ, show love, and provide relief?

Simply being present is often the best way to show the love of Christ, said Rev. Aimee Baxter, the South Georgia Conference’s disaster case manager for Chatham County.

“Oftentimes the best way for us to show the love of Christ is by simply being there,” she said.

“There is power in listening to someone’s story and walking with them through the process of recovery. Many people feel so alone after a storm, which makes our presence the best gift. Once we have listened and learned, then we can roll up our sleeves and help them do the physical work or connect them to the right resources to cover needs beyond our skills and capacity.”

Education is key

Through the United Methodist Committee on Relief’s (UMCOR) Connecting Neighbors Leadership Training Program, churches and individuals are trained in a two-day, local church-readiness, train-the-trainer program designed to give volunteer trainers the tools and information they need to guide the development of local church disaster-response ministries.

A three-part training, [Connecting Neighbors](#) aims to prepare congregants and churches for disasters so they can be prepared to best respond when they do occur.

“The South Georgia Conference has built a tremendous amount of capacity over the past few years as we have experienced consecutive catastrophic events,” said Allison Lindsey, associate director of Connectional Ministries. “Being proactive, by being prepared and having a vision and plan for the outreach each local church can have in their community, is the key to our Christian response around disaster response, both in relief and recovery.”

If you are interested in bringing this training to your area or for more information about UMCOR’s Connecting Neighbors Training Program, contact Luis Morales at morhill@gmail.com.

New Conference Center receives \$100,000 gift

The campaign to build a new Conference Center for the South Georgia Conference just received a massive boost with the generous gift of \$100,000. The donor hopes that the gift will inspire others to step up their giving and finish the campaign toward providing the South Georgia Conference a much-needed home.

As you know, the new Conference Center is to be built on the beautiful campus of Wesleyan College and will bring the Episcopal Office and the Administrative Services Offices of the Conference together in one place. This will allow for better collaboration, a savings on current rented space, more secure facilities, and increased parking.

The partnership between the South Georgia Conference and Wesleyan College is unique, and the Conference Center on the campus of Wesleyan will enhance the ministries of both partners. That partnership could include the following and so much more: training for local church business administrators, interaction with college students in building positive relationships with The United Methodist Church, developing opportunities for college students interning in local churches, participating in campus worship in Pierce Chapel, and supporting the significant role of Wesleyan College in the middle Georgia area.

Mark Richt, former head football coach at the University of Georgia, had a team slogan: “Finish the Drill.” Coach Richt meant for the team to double up their efforts and play strong to the end of the game.

With this recent gift of \$100,000, the campaign goal is in sight. If we actively work together in upping our determination and giving we can raise the remaining \$200,000 and the new Conference Center will be a reality.

As Coach Richt would put it, “Let’s finish the drill!”

Students Changing Lives

By Mallery L. Hale, *Epworth By The Sea*

Students from churches and schools all over the southeastern United States are improving our community through Epworth By The Sea’s “Mission Volunteer” program, serving others and making an impact in Glynn County.

Epworth By The Sea partnered with 17 local organizations to deploy more than 950 students and 31 church/school groups during 2019. Projects included building wheelchair ramps, yard and park clean-ups, visiting nursing homes, feeding meals to the homeless, stocking pantry shelves for a food bank, packing medical supplies to send all over the world, mentoring and hanging out with students, environmental projects, and so many more.

Steve Brooks, youth minister from Hillside UMC in Woodstock, GA, brought his youth group for the Mission Volunteer program. He stated, “We had a VERY God-orchestrated week in your Mission Volunteers program. Our group did incredibly meaningful work with the elderly at Magnolia Manor as well as for Ms. Gail in the City of Brunswick. Our students were encouraged by the opportunity to help those in need in the name of Jesus Christ. They actually felt as though they received more than they gave! Our group also truly bonded together in greater fellowship and desire to continue serving our Lord back home! The accommodations, scenery, food and staff at Epworth were amazing! Thank you all for serving our Lord by providing wonderful ministry opportunities for so many different people.”

Elisa Reece, Student Ministries Director for Christ UMC-Warner Robins, shared with us, “Knowing we are all ‘Children of God,’ our purpose was to show love by making someone smile and expressing true joy through interaction as well as bringing hope to those that may have lost it. 1 Peter 4:10 says, ‘Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.’”

It seems the students gain a new respect for the less fortunate when they recognize their actions should correspond with their inward faith. We are called to be the “hands and feet of Jesus” and that is exactly what these 950 plus students have done this year! We pray that they will take what they’ve learned and apply it in their communities back home.

The Mission Volunteer Program began in 2010 by Epworth’s Program Director, Donna Chisholm. Since its inception, Epworth has hosted more than 300 groups and more than 7,600 students and adult leaders. If you are interested in Epworth’s Mission Volunteer Program, please contact Epworth’s Mission Coordinator, Mallery Hale, at mhale@epworthbythesea.org. More information is available online at www.epworthbythesea.org/mission-volunteers/.

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A summer of hopeful conversations

**FROM THE BISHOP
R. LAWSON BRYAN**

In addition to the high heat, summer is also a time for a break from school, sports of all kinds, and travel to the beach or other favorite vacation spots. This year we United Methodists can add “conversation” to our list of summer activities.

Recent conversations among United Methodists stem from the special General Conference held last February. That conference passed the Traditional Plan, which retains current language in *The Book of Discipline* concerning ordination and marriage of self-avowed practicing homosexuals. This summer’s conversations are happening all across The United Methodist Church among those who favored the Traditional Plan and those who favored other plans. These conversations are aimed at finding a way for United Methodists of differing opinions to have enough separation that they can practice ministry as they feel called to do so while at the same time allowing for as much collaboration as possible (in matters such as disaster response, missionary support, and higher education/ministry).

Equally important, all United Methodists have the opportunity to be part of the larger conversation by [submitting a petition to General Conference 2020](#), set for May 5-15 in Minneapolis (see below for details).

As we said during our 2019 annual conference session, our Leadership Forum Task Force will be monitoring these conversations and petitions in order to provide updates to the South Georgia Conference.

In the meantime, I want to offer an outline of the broader conversations of which I am aware, though I know there are many more conversations happening across the denomination.

- [The Jones/Bard Proposal](#): This is a conversation between one who aligns best with the Traditional Plan (Bishop Scott Jones) and one who aligns best with the One Church Plan (Bishop David Bard). [Click here to read the Jones/Bard Proposal](#).
- [Kansas City Meeting](#): This was a conversation among centrists and progressives from around The UMC. I have heard there may be a follow-up meeting in September.
- [Chicago Meeting](#): Two African bishops and one European bishop convened this meeting to have conversation between five traditionalists, five centrists, and five progressives. They are working together in the hope of providing a helpful plan by the filing deadline of September 18.
- Nairobi meeting: I have heard that the General Conference delegates in Africa are planning to meet in August for conversation about their role in the future of The United Methodist Church.
- Atlanta meeting: Rev. Jim Cowart, clergy leader of our South Georgia delegation, invited delegation heads from the annual conferences in the Southeastern Jurisdiction to meet for conversations about our future.
- Individual United Methodists are also offering thoughtful input for our collective discernment. These, of course, are their opinions but I want you to see a sampling of conversations going on. Here is [a link to a blog post by our own Rev. Ben Gosden](#), pastor

of Trinity UMC in Savannah, in which he offers seven suggestions for thinking about our future. Here is [a link to a blog by Rev. Chris Ritter](#), a pastor in the Illinois Great Rivers Conference and a delegate to the 2019 special General Conference, that provides information on what's going on in areas across the denomination.

I view these conversations as a hopeful sign that many dedicated United Methodists are willing to work together toward a General Conference that enables cooperation without compromise. I particularly appreciate the grassroots approach, for I believe it holds the best promise for a useful outcome. You will be hearing more about these and other conversations once they begin to produce specific proposals.

Here's a statement I hope that, together, we will embrace in the coming year:

In the South Georgia Conference, we live in the CONFIDENCE, based on our experience since 1736, that God's purpose is going to be fulfilled and is even now unfolding among us SO THAT we commit ourselves to remain connected to each other to give space for God to move in us and through us.

I encourage you to click on the links above and read about some of the conversations being had across the denomination. We are also thankful for the conversations being had in our congregations and across our conference. Dialogue is healthy, and the more we listen and talk, the more we will understand and value one another.

In addition, I have appreciated the feedback I received from clergy and laity over the past year when I have asked for your input. This feedback is helpful to me, and I use it to help guide future conversations. I want to do the same thing as we approach the 2020 General Conference. [Here is a link to communicate with me any thoughts you have at this point](#). Also, the Leadership Forum Task Force, the group I have tasked with discerning ways the conference might respond to decisions made at General Conference, will meet in August and will be sharing additional ways we will continue to come together to talk about the future.

Let's keep the conversation going!

Alive Together in Witness,
R. Lawson Bryan

Petitions to General Conference 2020

Petitions for consideration by the 2020 General Conference may be submitted to the Petitions Secretary now through September 18, 2019.

According to church law, "Any organization, clergy member, or lay member of The United Methodist Church may petition the General Conference...".

Detailed instructions for submitting a petition are available on the General Conference website at umc.org/gcpetition. Petitions must be typed and may be submitted through the General Conference website, by postal mail or fax, or via email to petitionsecretary@umcgc.org.

Don't miss Pathways – register today!

Mark your calendars now for the 2019 Pathways event, August 24. Pathways is geared to equip, inspire and encourage pastors and laity in faith and in ministry! We have more than 30 workshops to choose from, ranging from leadership development, new ministry ideas, social justice, spiritual growth, and more. There's something for everyone!

Visit sgaumc.org/pathways for more information, a downloadable brochure with workshop descriptions, a registration link, and a bulletin insert to share in your local church!

- [CLICK HERE TO DOWNLOAD BROCHURE](#) (includes list of workshops)
- [REGISTER HERE](#)
- [DOWNLOAD BULLETIN INSERT](#)

Join us for KidzQuest!

[KidzQuest](#), the annual children's retreat sponsored by Connectional Ministries, is for students in 3rd-6th grades. This event typically sells out before the deadline and brings so much energy (and noise!) to Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. 500 children and adult leaders come together with dozens of other church groups, learning how to worship, study God's Word, and understand what a relationship with Jesus really means. Amid beautiful coastal scenery, amazing adult leaders, and time away from home, these children are given an opportunity to experience Christ in brand new ways!

[Register today](#) for KidzQuest 2019 - September 20-22, 2019! **Registration is OPEN.** [Click here for the group form.](#)

Stay tuned to www.sgaumc.org/kidzquest for more information.

A Mother-Daughter Covenant

Summer Quarter: Living in Covenant

Unit 3: Covenant: A Personal Perspective

Sunday school lesson for the week of August 11, 2019

By Rev. Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 1:6-11, 14-18

Key Verse: Ruth 1:16

Purpose: To reflect on how vows inspire us to love and commit to others

“My ancestor was a wandering Aramean”

Of all the people featured in scripture, there are very few who live their lives without finding themselves displaced at some point. Consider the first couple, Adam and Eve. God provides them the perfect place to reside, but they break the one rule the landlord gives them and they are banished from the garden. Please note that God does provide clothes for them before he sends them out into the world.

Their kids don't do much better. In a fit of jealousy, Cain murders his brother. As punishment, God makes him a wanderer on the earth. Once again, before sending him away, God puts a mark of protection on Cain so that anyone who recognizes him as a criminal would not will kill him.

Noah and his family are displaced by extreme weather. Once their boat comes to rest, God renews the covenant with Noah, his sons and their wives, and all living creatures. God commands them to multiply and fill the earth. And so “from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth” (Genesis 9:19b).

More scattering with the debacle of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9), before we are introduced to Abram. Abram's life starts with a move initiated by his father from Ur to Haran – even though Terah, Abram's father, had intended to move the family to Canaan. In Haran, Abram hears the call from God, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you” (Genesis 12:1). God shows him Canaan. “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘I give this land to your descendants’” (Genesis 12:7a).

Abram doesn't stay long, though. “Now there was a famine in the land. So Abram went down to Egypt to reside there as an alien, for the famine was severe in the land” (Genesis 12:10). Indeed, even after God makes a covenant with him and changes his name, the rest of Abraham's story is filled with one instance of being displaced after another – sometimes because of conflicts with his own family, sometimes because of war in the region, sometimes just because. When Abraham's wife dies, he insists on purchasing a burial place for her because “I am a stranger and an alien residing among you” (Genesis 23:4a).

Abraham's sons, Ishmael and Isaac, each continue the story of moving from place to place. The rivalry between Isaac's twin sons, Esau and Jacob, leads each of them on far-ranging journeys. The family rivalry persists. Jacob's son, Joseph is sold into slavery – a victim of human

trafficking – by his own brothers. Eventually Jacob moves his family to Egypt to escape famine and to reunite with Joseph.

Jacob's family thrives in Egypt. When a new ruler ascends to the throne – one who does not recall the contribution Joseph had made to the preservation of the nation, he stirs up fear among his subjects and initiates a program of oppression against “these foreigners.” Moses emerges in the midst of this situation, first in a position of unexpected privilege, then as a fugitive, next as an advocate for the oppressed, then as the leader of a wandering company of people, and finally as the one responsible for instructing the covenant people of God on how they should live in the land God was about to give them. Repeatedly Moses told the people, “You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt” (Exodus 22:21; see also Exodus 23:9; Leviticus 19:34; Deuteronomy 10:19; 16:12; 24:18). And this command is particularly relevant as we consider the story of Ruth: “When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore, I am commanding you to do this” (Deuteronomy 24:21-22).

The story of uprooted people continues as the Hebrews claim the Promised Land, establish a nation, and are eventually sent into exile and later return. This pattern can be followed in Kings, Chronicles, Esther, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Amos.

Almost everyone was on the move, and most went into exile at some point. This includes the privileged, the prophets, the priests, and the people.

Rev. Joan M. Maruskin, National Administrator of the Church World Service Religious Services Program, summarizes the biblical witness like this:

“We are all part of God's great plan of migration. The great majority of people have either lived out the migration story or can trace their roots back to ancestors traveling from one land to another. In fact, if we embrace Adam and Eve as our original ancestors, we are all migrants in a strange land and very far from home.”

Take a moment to consider your personal migration. Do you currently live in the city, state, or nation where you were born? Have you moved, and, if so, for what reasons?

Everything That Can Go Wrong

Ruth 1:1-5

The story of Ruth begins with the family of Elimelech. They live in Bethlehem in Judah. He is married and has two sons. There is a famine in the land, and he decides to immigrate to Moab. Just to be clear, he leaves his home in “the house of bread” in the “Promised Land” to go and live among the Moabites.

The relationship between Moabites and Israelites is marked by animosity and antagonism. Genesis provides an origin story for the Moabites, which casts them unfavorably from the beginning. When Lot fled from Sodom before its destruction, he was able to escape with his two daughters (remember Lot's wife "looked back" and was turned into a pillar of salt). His daughters were concerned that they might not have children. They devised a plan that involved an excess of wine. Moab was the son (and grandson) of Lot (*see* Genesis 19:30-38).

Much later, as Moses was leading the people of Israel from Egypt toward the Promised Land, the King of Moab, Balak hires Balaam to curse the Israelites. The Lord prevents Balaam from cursing the Israelites—and in fact, blesses them four different times; much to Balak's frustration (*see* Numbers 22-24).

What Balak couldn't purchase, the women of Moab are able to secure. The Israelite men "made themselves impure by having illicit sex with Moabite women. The Moabite women invited the people to the sacrifices for their god. So the people ate a meal, and they worshipped their god. Israel became attached to the Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry at the Israelites" (Numbers 25:1b-3). The trespass is revealed quickly, God pronounces judgment, and Moses authorizes punitive action; nevertheless, 24,000 Israelites died from the resulting plague.

Conflicts and skirmishes between the Israelites and Moabites continue throughout the story of the conquest of the Promised Land and into the time of the Judges. Moab is not a place Israelites go on vacation.

"In the days when the judges ruled," Moab is where Elimelech takes his family, and then, he dies, leaving his wife with their two sons. Now, as if to add insult to injury, their sons marry Moabite women. They continue to live in Moab for 10 more years before both of the sons die, leaving Naomi without her two sons or her husband – without resources, prospects, or protection.

There is no way to know the circumstances of the deaths of Elimelech and his sons. They may have died from some illness or injury. It may have killed them quickly or they may have lingered for weeks, months, or years. If they had had access to proper care or the support of family and friends, they may have recovered and survived.

It is possible that they were the victims of violence. They may have been targeted because they were foreigners. They may have been unjustly accused of some transgression of local customs or traditions. They may have offended some local authority who let his lieutenants know that he would be glad to be rid of them.

Whatever the circumstances of their deaths, it had to be traumatic for Naomi. With each death her existence becomes more tenuous, her options more limited, her hope more desperate.

When have you made changes to your situation in life (e.g., new house, new job, new town, new relationship) hoping it would be a solution to your problems, only to discover the change created a whole new set of problems? How did you feel?

A Glimmer of Hope

Ruth 1:6-7

When it appears the situation has become most desperate, Naomi hears news from home that the famine has come to an end. There is nothing to keep her in Moab. She packs her household and prepares to return to Bethlehem. Her son's wives have been a part of that household for at least 10 years. They are her daughters-in-law. They are her family, despite their cultural differences. They prepare to make the journey with her.

How specific does the promise of a better life have to be to motivate you to change your situation?

Second Thoughts

Ruth 1:8-11

It is impossible to know all that was going through Naomi's mind as she "went along the road to return to the land of Judah." When she had left – other than being short on food – her life had been pretty good. She had been married with two sons. Her situation had certainly become desperate. How would she explain to her friends and family all that had happened to her? How would she express her regret without dishonoring the memory of her husband and sons? Perhaps it was then that she began to wonder what people might say about the two Moabite women who were returning with her.

It may be just as likely that while she was trying to figure out where they were going to live and what they were going to eat that she realized she had little to nothing to offer her daughters-in-law; particularly, no husbands to replace the ones they had lost. Their prospects would be much more secure if they returned to their own mothers' homes. If they continued on with her, they were going to be strangers in a strange land.

Ten years of life together had created tight bonds between these women. Even the suggestion that the daughters-in-law should return to their own homes starts the tears flowing. Neither of the young women is willing to turn back but are determined to return with Naomi to her people. Naomi is insistent.

What do you imagine Naomi was thinking when she decided to send her daughters-in-law back to their mothers' homes?

A Relationship Redefined by Covenant

Ruth 1:14-18

One of the daughters-in-law, Orpah, relents. After more tears, weeping, and wailing, Orpah accepts Naomi's argument and returns "to her people and to her gods." Now Naomi tries to use Orpah's decision to persuade Ruth to turn back, too. Perhaps it is the way Naomi characterizes Orpah's decision that finally elicits the expression of Ruth's deep commitment to Naomi, and not only to Naomi personally, but also to her God.

But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to abandon you, to turn back from following after you. Wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. Wherever you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord do this to me and more so if even death separates me from you." (Ruth 1:16-17)

Naomi's faith and witness have converted her Moabite daughter-in-law. Ruth sees herself as a member of the same covenant people as Naomi – a covenant people in a relationship with a covenant God. Perhaps in the moments before Ruth declared her resolve, Naomi still thought of her daughter-in-law as a foreigner – someone outside God's covenant. That would explain the reason she told them to return to their own people. At some level, Naomi still saw them as different, alien, other.

Ruth's testimony is the basis for a new covenant between these two women who appear to have little to bind them together. Ruth has declared her commitment to stay with Naomi, and not only to share an address, but also to identify with her people – a covenant people – and with her God – a covenant God. Bound by this new covenant, they resume the journey together.

In The United Methodist liturgy of the Baptismal Covenant, the congregation affirms:

Through baptism you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit

into God's new creation

and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood.

We are all one in Christ Jesus.

With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you

as members of the family of Christ.

How does this commitment inform our relationships with "people of all ages, nations, and races"?

Rev. Ashley Randall is the pastor of Garden City United Methodist Church. He is currently working with an interracial, interfaith group of faith leaders to establish a congregation-based justice ministry in the Savannah area.



A Covenant to Marry

Summer Quarter: Living in Covenant

Unit 3: Covenant: A Personal Perspective

Sunday school lesson for the week of August 18, 2019

By Rev. Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: Ruth 3:1-6, 8-12, 16-18

Key Verse: Ruth 3:10

Purpose: To recognize the risk and the reward that comes with covenantal love

A Chance to Build a Decent Life

Following the Second World War, millions of Europeans had fled or lost their homes. Some of them had immigrated from their home country. Others lived in the same area, but their homes and villages were in ruins. World leaders felt a responsibility not only to restore the political, economic, and industrial systems that had been disrupted by the years of conflict, but also to address the social and psychological needs of people who had been displaced.

The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was created in 1950. UNHCR was originally charged with helping millions of uprooted people seek permanent solutions for a return to normal life. The guidelines for their work were spelled out in the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. The bulk of the Convention was devoted to setting out the access to rights and standards governing the treatment of those recognized as refugees, so that they could resume normal lives. “The agency was given three years to accomplish this task. But as new refugee crises proliferated across the globe, the mandate was repeatedly renewed until, in 2003, the UN General Assembly made the High Commissioner’s mandate permanent.”

Prior to 1950 there was no generally accepted legal definition for a refugee. That is one of the first things the Convention addressed. “It defines a refugee as a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him – or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution.”

Allow me to quote extensively from UNHCR’s brochure, [The 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol](#):

“The 1951 Convention contains a number of rights and also highlights the obligations of refugees towards their host country. The cornerstone of the 1951 Convention is the principle of *non-refoulement* contained in Article 33. According to this principle, a refugee should not be

returned to a country where he or she faces serious threats to his or her life or freedom. This protection may not be claimed by refugees who are reasonably regarded as a danger to the security of the country, or having been convicted of a particularly serious crime, are considered a danger to the community.”

Other rights contained in the 1951 Convention include:

- The right not to be expelled, except under certain, strictly defined conditions (Article 32);
- The right not to be punished for illegal entry into the territory of a contracting State (Article 31);
- The right to work (Articles 17 to 19);
- The right to housing (Article 21);
- The right to education (Article 22);
- The right to public relief and assistance (Article 23);
- The right to freedom of religion (Article 4);
- The right to access the courts (Article 16);
- The right to freedom of movement within the territory (Article 26); and
- The right to be issued identity and travel documents (Articles 27 and 28).

Some basic rights, including the right to be protected from *refoulement*, apply to all refugees. A refugee becomes entitled to other rights the longer they remain in the host country, which is based on the recognition that the longer they remain as refugees, the more rights they need.

The 1951 Convention also recognizes that refugees have obligations. “Refugees are required to abide by the laws and regulations of their country of asylum and respect measures taken for the maintenance of public order.”

“Initially, the 1951 Convention was more or less limited to protecting European refugees in the aftermath of World War II, but the 1967 Protocol expanded its scope as the problem of displacement spread around the world.”

Today, UNHCR is still hard at work, protecting and assisting refugees around the world. According to the estimates, “an unprecedented 70.8 million people around the world have been forced from home. Among them are nearly 25.9 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18.... There are also millions of stateless people who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement.”

Filippo Grandi, the current United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, issued the following statement in May of 2016:

“It is in the interests of those very governments to make protecting refugees a priority, along with resolving the conflicts that made them flee. Peace, stability and the welfare of the displaced are in the economic, social and security interests of all nations.”

Study after study – from the IMF, the OECD, the World Bank and others – have shown the economic boost refugees can bring with them if they are allowed the chance to improve their circumstances and build a decent life. Refugees can be vulnerable, but also tough, resilient and industrious. When they have the chance to participate in the local economy, both they and their host communities benefit.

Ignoring a crisis and then demonizing its victims when they are forced to move is not a proper approach. It is no easy task to deal with the millions of human beings who are forced to seek help and protection, but it is better to face that task head on, with compassion and with practical solutions. Burying one’s head in the sand won’t solve anything. Allowing people to achieve their potential will.

According to UNHCR, “We are now witnessing the highest levels of displacement on record.” In a world where nearly 1 person is forcibly displaced every two seconds as a result of conflict or persecution, what is the role of people of faith in responding to this crisis?

A Plan for a Secure Situation

Ruth 3:1-6

When we left the story of Ruth and Naomi in chapter one, they were on the road returning from Moab to Bethlehem. Naomi, who had been the foreigner, was returning to her home. Now Ruth is the immigrant living among those who are very much aware that she is not one of them.

Naomi is recognized and welcomed back. Her family and friends listen to her story of hardship and distress. They make room for her and this young Moabite woman who accompanies her.

Naomi has returned because she heard that the famine in the country was over. In fact, the barley harvest is just beginning as they get back into town.

The practice of gleaning is established in the Levitical code:

When you harvest your land’s produce, you must not harvest all the way to the edge of your field; and don’t gather every remaining bit of your harvest. Leave these items for the poor and the immigrant; I am the Lord your God. (Leviticus 23:22)

Naomi is poor and Ruth is an immigrant. Boaz is a wealthy, respected land-owner, and a relative of Elimelech (Naomi’s deceased husband), who is also an observant Jew. Naomi sends Ruth to glean in the fields so that they will have something to eat. Boaz notices this immigrant woman

and asks his workers about her. “To whom does this young woman belong?” (Ruth 2:5b) If she is a Moabite woman living in Judah, Boaz assumes she must be a slave. When he is told that she is the young woman who returned with Naomi, Boaz engages her in conversation. He gives her permission to return to his fields and to drink from the water jugs provided for his workers.

Ruth is amazed. “How is it that I’ve found favor in your eyes, that you notice me? I’m an immigrant” (Ruth 2:10b).

Boaz responded to her, “Everything that you did for your mother-in-law after your husband’s death has been reported fully to me: how you left behind your father, your mother, and the land of your birth, and came to a people you hadn’t known beforehand. May the Lord reward you for your deed. May you receive a rich reward from the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you’ve come to seek refuge.” (Ruth 2:11-12)

Ruth works in the field until the end of the day and then tells Naomi about all that has happened, especially about her conversation with Boaz. Naomi is delighted to hear such good news and tells Ruth to continue to return to the fields of Boaz for the remainder of the harvest. “Thus she stayed with Boaz’s young women, gleaning until the completion of the barley and wheat harvests. And she lived with her mother-in-law” (Ruth 2:23).

When the harvest is complete, there is nothing left to glean. Naomi is aware that this is going to become a problem very quickly. At the beginning of chapter three, Naomi shares her concern with Ruth. They are in a vulnerable position, but Naomi has a plan. It is a desperate plan. In some ways it is a scandalous plan. It has the potential to be a dangerous plan for Ruth – physically, emotionally, and socially.

Naomi’s plan is for Ruth to make herself attractive to Boaz – to bathe, put on perfume, and dress in nice clothes – and then to lie down beside him after he has finished eating and drinking, “and he will tell you what to do” (Ruth 3:4c).

Ruth had promised Naomi that “wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you stay, I will stay” (Ruth 1:16b). Her loyalty to Naomi seems absolute. “Ruth replied to her, ‘I’ll do everything you are telling me’” (Ruth 3:5).

It is also worth remembering the conversation Ruth and Boaz had in the field a few days earlier. Perhaps she is hoping that he will accept responsibility for making his wish for her come true.

When have you been in such a desperate situation that you would take great risks in order to improve the circumstances for yourself or your family?

A Compassionate Response

Ruth 3:8-12

Let’s go back for a moment to Numbers 25:

When the Israelites lived at Shittim, the people made themselves impure by having illicit sex with Moabite women. The Moabite women invited the people to the sacrifices for their god. So the people ate a meal, and they worshipped their god. (25:1-2)

Moabite women have a reputation among the Israelites. In some ways, Naomi had told Ruth to lean into the stereotype: “bathe, put on some perfume, wear nice clothes.”

When Boaz realizes he is not alone on the threshing floor and that it is Ruth who is there and that this Moabite woman is submitting herself to be his servant, rather than take advantage of her vulnerability he recognizes the depth of her faithfulness and pledges to do all that he can to provide for her future. He acknowledges that she – a Moabite immigrant – is a woman of great worth, and he will be her advocate in the public square (or in this case, at the city gates).

When we see people in desperate situations, what would help us move past our prejudice to see them with compassion – and recognize their worth?

From Covenant to Covenant
Ruth 3:16-18

Boaz sends Ruth back to her mother-in-law with a generous gift and the promise to bring her case before the council of elders. Naomi is confident that Boaz “won’t rest until he resolves the matter today” (Ruth 3:18b).

Naomi is right. Boaz presents himself as the “redeemer” for this family who has experienced so much distress. Boaz takes responsibility for redeeming the heritage of his kinsmen, Elimelech. Boaz takes Ruth as his wife, she conceives, and gives birth to a son. “They called his name Obed. He became Jesse’s father and David’s grandfather” (Ruth 4:17b).

“Refugees can be vulnerable, but also tough, resilient and industrious.” Where have you seen the contribution of immigrants in your community?

Rev. Ashley Randall is the pastor of Garden City United Methodist Church. For more information on the work of UNHCR, visit unhcr.org. [Click here](#) to read an introductory booklet on their work.

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Try on a new identity!

LEADERSHIP REALLY MATTERS
ANNE BOSARGE
REV. JAY HANSON

I love watching preschool graduations. Precious chubby-faced kids with caps and gowns typically take turns declaring to beaming parents and grandparents what they want to be when they grow up. “A fireman.” “A ballerina.” “A baseball player and an astronaut.” “A mommy.” “A zookeeper and a policeman.” Nothing is impossible or unattainable. Everything has potential. If you asked the same kids in a year, you’d often find they’re now considering completely different careers. Kids have the amazing ability to put on and change identities as often as they change their socks and underwear!

When do we outgrow the willingness to try on new identities? Exactly when did that become “immature” and “foolish?” As adults, we often buy into the mindset of “that’s just who I am,” as if our identity is set and cannot be changed. While there are parts of our identities that should not be changed, like being children of God, there are many more parts of our identities that should change as we become more like Jesus for the sake of others. The part of us that rejoices when our enemies suffer, the secret joy we feel at the expense of others when we get our own way, and the annoyance we express when someone travels too slow in the fast lane are all parts of our identity that God wants to cleanse and refine. They hold us back from being the people He has created us to be.

Who do you want to be when you grow up? Who did God create you to be? Do you want to be a leader who is creative? Innovative? Hope-filled? Strategic? Is God calling you to be patient? Loving? Forgiving? Do you desire to be deeply rooted in your faith? Actively engaged in the community? A person of bold prayer? Try on that new identity! Act in a way that creates and confirms those attributes within you.

When faced with a decision, ask yourself, “What would a _____ person do?” If you want to be a creative person, ask yourself, “What would a creative person do?” If you want to be actively engaged in the community, ask yourself, “What would a community activist do?” If you desire to be more loving, ask yourself, “What would a loving person do?” As you try on new attributes God desires for you and act in a way that is in accordance with this identity, you begin to shape your life into the person God is calling you to be.

You might think it can’t be just as easy as asking a question. But it often is. Here’s why: most of us know far more than we put into practice. We get into habits of operating and thinking based on an identity of who we are now and what we have done in the past. We find comfort in these old ways of operating and find it challenging to think from a new point of view. But Jesus didn’t come to make us comfortable, He came to set us free. He came so that we could be free to shed our old identities and try on a new one that looks like and leads like Him.

Do you want to be the leader you were made to be? Try on a new identity and become more like Christ for the sake of others!

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

John Wesley and the Mystics

JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS

DAVE HANSON

During John Wesley's early years, and especially his time in Georgia, he read and studied many of the mystical writings of his day and of ancient Christian mystics.

He was very interested in what they had to say about self-denial, solitude, works of charity, and the interior life.

William Law was very influential in Wesley's life at Oxford. Wesley later wrote Law a scorching letter criticizing him for leading him astray by not talking more about Jesus Christ and Christian assurance. There is some question about whether John mailed this letter or not.

After his Aldersgate experience, John felt that assurance was a gift of God and not the result of spiritual exercises (as the mystics taught). He came to believe that meditation and time spent in prayer was the result of faith in Christ, not the cause of such faith.

He became especially disturbed by the mystic's idea of the "dark night of the soul," which they saw as God testing you to see if you would come through that feeling of God's withdrawal. He rather saw that feeling of desertion by God as a result of our sin.

The Rev. Dave Hanson is a retired pastor and John Wesley scholar.

Retired Clergy Birthdays – August 2019

8/02 – Roger Mays: 1418 Eason Stalvey Rd.; Hahira, GA 31632

8/05 – Gordon Dukes: 126 Nelson Ave.; Garden City, GA 31408

8/05 – Joe Romigh: 2507 Marixa Dr.; Statham, GA 30666

8/06 – Rick Holt: PO Box 153; Dixie, GA 31629

8/07 – B.G. Roberts, Sr.: PO Box 3207; Brunswick, GA 31521

8/08 – Don Adams: 1104 Wingate Street; Dublin, GA 31021

8/08 – Jim Nelson: 3584 Hidden Acres Dr.; Atlanta, GA 30340

8/09 – Creede Hinshaw: 2924 Hillandale Circle S; Macon, GA 31204

8/09 – Byron Scott: 740 Bethel Rd.; Surrency, GA 31563

8/10 – Allison Rhodes: 18 Lenox Pointe NE, Suite B; Atlanta, GA 30324

8/13 – Mike Huling: 514 Earl Ave.; Claxton, GA 30417
8/15 – Nathan Godley: 322 E. Oglethorpe Ave.; Savannah, GA 31401
8/15 – Charles Houston, Jr.: 505 Fort King George Dr.; Darien, GA 31305
8/16 – Dick Reese: 6593 Patriot Dr.; Columbus, GA 31909
8/17 – D. Eugene Pollett: 30 Branson Mill Dr. NW; Cartersville, GA 30120
8/19 – Jim Giddens: 4 Cottenham Circle; Savannah, GA 31411
8/19 – Jeffery Seeley: 2045 Vineville Ave.; Macon, GA 31204
8/19 – John H. Stephens: 881 Nesbitt Rd.; Pavo, GA 31778
8/20 – Cleo Gilchrist: 108 Easy St.; Dublin, GA 31021
8/20 – Dave Hanson: 106 George T. Morris Cir.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
8/20 – Bev King: 307 Hartford Rd. East; Fort Gaines, GA 39851
8/21 – John Eckert: 237 Bartholomew Blvd.; Jeffersonville, IN 47130
8/22 – Tom Edwards: 315 Phillips Ave.; Port Wentworth, GA 31407
8/22 – Jesse France: 514 I.G. Lanier Rd.; Pembroke, GA 31321
8/22 – John Powell: 2728 Moore’s Station Rd. #17; Dublin, GA 31021
8/23 – Joe Johnston: 24977 Tanglewood Dr.; Custer, SD 57730
8/24 – Jim Burgess, III: 661 East Plum St.; Jesup, GA 31546
8/24 – Sam Lamback, Jr.: 821 Wesleyan Dr.; Macon, GA 31210
8/25 – Charles Puryear: 106 Sandra St.; Thomasville, GA 31792
8/25 – Elliott Sams: 6400 Poplar Ave.; Memphis, TN 38197
8/28 – David Carter: 102 Rivoli Oaks Circle; Macon, GA 31210
8/28 – Robert Clark: 2022 E Pinetree Blvd.; Thomasville, GA 31792
8/30 – Jenny Jackson-Adams: 17 Lands End Dr.; Greensboro, NC 27408
8/31 – Lynn Hurley: PO Box 26; Attapulcus, GA 39815
8/31 – Willie Beasley: 4451 Mahan Dr.; Valdosta, GA 31632

OBITUARIES

Mrs. Inez Cadle

Inez Cadle, 98, passed away July 31, 2019 at her residence after a long illness.

The Toccoa, Ga. native was a member of Garden City United Methodist Church. She was instrumental in the ministry of her husband, Rev. Edward Cadle. She was an x-ray and lab technician during World War II.

She was preceded in death by her parents, Arthur & Mamie Davis; sisters, Rosie (Harris) McKenzie and Ann (Jack) Irvin; brother, J.A. Davis; and grandchildren, Nicholas Cadle, Misty Bridgeforth, and Shane Cadle.

The two things Mrs. Inez loved most in life were Jesus and her husband.

She is survived by her husband of 74 years, Rev. Edward Cadle; sons and daughters-in-law, Edward “Eddie” & Joann Cadle, Danny & Lynette Cadle, and Pat & Julie Cadle; daughters and

sons-in-law, Diane & David Wegmann and Mary & Matt Petrivitch; 19 grandchildren; and 24 great-grandchildren.

Services were held Saturday, August 3, 2019, at Springfield United Methodist Church. Interment followed in Springfield Cemetery Annex.

Remembrances: Mission on the Move, PO Box 206, Springfield, GA 31329 or Garden City United Methodist Church Building Fund, 62 Varnadoe Ave., Garden City, GA 30418.

Scripture Readings – Aug. 6

Aug. 11

Ninth Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

Psalms 50:1-8, 22-23 (UMH 783)

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8-16

Luke 12:32-40

Aug. 18

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Isaiah 5:1-7

Psalms 80:1-2, 8-19 (UMH 801)

Hebrews 11:29-12:2

Luke 12:49-56

Aug. 25

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalms 71:1-6 (UMH 794)

Hebrews 12:18-29

Luke 13:10-17

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 8/6/2019 edition

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 is \$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

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, Aug. 24 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 10 a.m. (registration begins at 9:30 a.m.) and lasts until 3:45 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. For more information, a list of workshops and registration, visit www.sgaumc.org/pathways.

The Art of Marriage Live at Epworth By The Sea – Sept. 13-15

Fall in love all over again. Marriage, the way God intended, is a true art form. In The Art of Marriage Live, our FamilyLife guest hosts weave together expert teaching, real-life stories, humorous vignettes and more to portray both the challenges and the beauty of God's design. They'll show us how to apply what the Bible teaches about marriage in a powerful way. It's practical, funny, and straight to the heart. Guest speakers: Jose and Michelle Alvarez. [Alvarez biography](#) | [Flyer](#) | [Schedule](#) | [Online registration](#)

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.

KidzQuest Children's Retreat – Sept. 20-22

KidzQuest, the annual children's fall retreat sponsored by South Georgia's Connectional Ministries is for students in 3rd-6th grades. This event typically sells out before the deadline and brings so much energy (and noise!) to the grounds of Epworth By The Sea retreat center on St. Simons Island, GA. 500 children and adult leaders come together with dozens of other church groups, learning how to worship, study God's Word, and understand what a relationship with Jesus really means. Amidst beautiful coastal scenery, amazing adult leaders (that's you!) and time away from home - these children are given an opportunity to experience Christ in brand new ways! [Click here for details](#).

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](#)

Annual SBC21 Leadership & Development Conference – Oct. 5

The 2019 SBC21 Annual Celebration of Leadership and Development Conference will be held Saturday, Oct. 5. Questions? Contact Rev. Earnestine Campbell, associate director of Connectional Ministries, at earnestine@sgaumc.com.

World Communion Sunday – Oct. 6

World Communion Sunday is one of the six churchwide Special Sundays of The United Methodist Church. Our church is at its best when we reach out to sisters and brothers in need. World Communion Sunday calls the church to reach out to all people and model diversity among God's children. United Methodists relate to [World Communion Sunday](#) by celebrating communion with other Christians around the world on this special Sunday. Churches are also encouraged to receive an offering to support scholarships for ethnic undergraduate and graduate students. Our gifts often enable first-generation students to attend college.

Eagles' Fall Retreat – Oct. 21-23

You are invited to join the Eagles, the retired clergy of the South Georgia Conference, for three wonderful days at beautiful Epworth By The Sea as they meet to sing together, enjoy great programs, host an auction of members' creations, share meals in the dining hall, and close on Wednesday with a service for those whom we have lost the previous year. The names of those

who have passed away will be read under the Live Oak trees with the ringing of the bell for each name. It is a most holy and moving moment for all Eagles. This year's keynote speaker is Rev. Dr. Don Adams. The dates will be October 21-23. The retreat begins on Monday afternoon with registration beginning at 3 pm. There is a special rate at Epworth for all Eagles.

UMW Sunday in Purple – Oct. 27

Sunday in Purple, sponsored by South Georgia's United Methodist Women, is a day to focus on increasing awareness of domestic violence in the United States and to be in solidarity with our sisters in South America where domestic violence often involves horrific murders. October is domestic violence awareness month in the U.S., and purple is its color. You are encouraged to wear something purple on Sunday, Oct. 27 (a ribbon or other item), take a photo, and send it to cybanks1946@gmail.com, or text it to 229-868-0381. Get your congregation to participate! Ask your pastor to include a special prayer for domestic violence victims and those trying to combat it. [Download a bulletin insert.](#)