

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – SEPT. 3 EDITION

Monitoring Hurricane Dorian - 9/2/19 Update

We continue to pray for our brothers and sisters in the Bahamas and those in the path of Hurricane Dorian along the east coast. Based on the most recent forecasts from the National Weather Service, it looks like our conference will be heavily impacted by Hurricane Dorian. Gov. Brian Kemp has ordered residents in six Georgia counties east of I-95 - Bryan, Camden, Chatham, Glynn, Liberty and McIntosh Counties - to evacuate beginning today at noon.

Bishop Bryan, Luis Morales (Conference Disaster Response Coordinator), Rev. David Thompson (Coastal DS) and Kelly Roberson (Communications Director) had a conference call this morning to talk about immediate plans now and protocols for when the storm hits. Here are some updates we can provide now:

- Rev. Thompson has been in communication with the pastors and churches in his district along the east coast.
- Epworth By The Sea, Magnolia Manor in Richmond Hill and the Methodist Children's Home in St. Marys are making their necessary preparations.
- We are beginning to hear of churches opening up as Good Samaritan Shelters. If your church is thinking about opening as a shelter for those displaced because of the storm, please be in touch with Luis Morales. We want to 1 - provide you with some helpful guidelines and 2 - compile a list. Contact Luis at morhill@gmail.com or 478-216-7729.
- Spanish speaking volunteers are needed once the storm passes through to help with the crisis-cleanup database calls. If you are able to volunteer, please contact Luis at morhill@gmail.com or 478-216-7729.
- UMCOR and the North Georgia Conference have been in constant communication with us and stand ready to help as soon as the storm passes through.
- Luis has been on GA VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Assisting in Disasters) calls each day so that we can be part of a coordinated response.
- Special offerings to help with storm recovery needs may be sent to the South Georgia Conference Storm Recovery efforts. [Click here for details.](#)
- We will be disseminating information as to if and when Early Response Teams are needed as soon as we can and when it safe to do so after the storm.

With still much unknown, the Conference Disaster Response Team continues to closely monitor the storm and will send additional updates as needed. The latest disaster response information will be posted at www.sgaumc.org/disasterresponse.

Again, we thank you for all you are doing to support our response efforts across South Georgia and extending throughout the connection.

A Note from Bishop Bryan

Even as we in South Georgia make preparations for Hurricane Dorian we are focusing our prayers right now on those in the Bahamas who are currently experiencing the devastating effects of the storm. We are thankful for the emergency personnel who are in place on those islands and who are risking their own lives for the safety of others. God bless those first responders as they do their work today and in the days ahead.

How grateful I am for the way South Georgia has responded to the storms of the past three years by increasing our capacity to provide early response teams. In addition, our neighboring conferences have contacted us to let us know of their readiness to respond once we define our needs and let them know where we need their help.

I thank God for the relationships made possible through the connectional system of The United Methodist Church!

Alive Together in Witness,

R. Lawson Bryan

Churches opening as shelters for evacuees

Hurricane Dorian already is having an impact on the South Georgia Conference because of the evacuation process in Florida and the east coast of Georgia. The conference is putting together a list of churches being used as Red Cross, Good Samaritan or overflow shelters. [Click here for list.](#)

If your church is thinking about opening as a Good Samaritan shelter for those displaced because of the storm, please be in touch with Luis Morales. We want to 1 - provide you with some helpful guidelines and 2 - add you to the list. Contact Luis at morhill@gmail.com or 478-216-7729.

2020 conference budget reduced, local churches continue to faithfully give

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

In a time when not much is certain, this is clear: the South Georgia Conference is connectional.

Despite uncertainty in The United Methodist Church and concerns for the denomination's future, South Georgia's apportionment giving remains steady. As of the end of July, the Conference is on pace to pay local and regional apportionments at the same rate as were paid in 2018.

The Conference also approved a 2020 budget of \$9,326,184, a more than 7 percent decrease from the 2019 budget. This follows a 6 percent decrease from the year before. Since 2010, the conference budget has been reduced by 25 percent.

Deliberate choices were made by the Conference's Council on Finance and Administration (CF&A) and the Annual Conference to prioritize local church budgets over the conference budget.

"We recognized that anytime we put money in the conference budget we have stopped the local church's ability to decide how to spend it and what ministries they want to support themselves," said Dr. Derek McAleer, Director of Administrative Services.

Keeping more money in local churches is a priority, said Dr. McAleer, and is why CF&A has worked hard to reduce the Conference budget \$3 million – from \$12.5 million to just under \$9.5 million – in the past 10 years.

"Every budget year we are looking more carefully at each item and asking if it is something so important to our overall ministry that we need to require our local churches to support it," he said. "That's difficult because we weren't supporting anything that was a waste. Everything in our budget was good; the question was how much do you substitute the conference's selection of good ministry for a local church's choice of what's good ministry?"

Much of the reason for the reduction in next year's budget is because the liabilities for the pre-1982 pensions and benefits have been paid.

The world has changed in the past 10 years, and the budget has reflected it. A shift to more digital communication and fewer printed and mailed items has saved \$100,000. CF&A has also urged meeting organizers to rethink travel and the ways in which they meet.

"We don't communicate the same way, we don't interact the same way," Dr. McAleer said "Things have changed; technology provides us with options we didn't have before."

Even after the 2019 General Conference session, where the passage of the Traditional Plan left the denomination deeply divided, giving to general church askings is down only 5.5 percent.

The continued paying of apportionments is encouraging, said Randy Griffin, CF&A chair and a member of Martha Bowman United Methodist Church in Macon.

"I think it exemplifies a continued spirit of unity and wanting to remain unified," he said. "We're really excited about seeing that level of support keeping up with where we were last year in spite of all the conversations going on."

[For every dollar given to the local church, 90 cents stays in the local church. Eight cents goes to Conference apportionments, 1.25 cents goes toward district apportionments, and less than 1 cent goes toward Advance Specials.](#)

“Getting the funds back in the local church allows us to reach out in many more directions than we would otherwise be able to,” Griffin said. “I am very thankful that the local churches are able to keep more of their receipts to do things within their church and their communities.”

CF&A, the Administrative Services Team, and the Communications Team have prepared several documents to help explain the budget. [Click here to access them.](#)

Series of shocking stunts helps youth group raise mission trip money

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Bake sales, pasta dinners, and cake walks are the bread and butter of church fundraisers, but one Brunswick church’s student ministry has taken food fundraising up a noxious notch or two.

Wanting to raise several thousand dollars for 14 students and four chaperones to go on a mission trip to Jamaica this December, youth directors from [The Chapel](#), a United Methodist congregation in Brunswick, this summer hatched a plan to raise \$5,000 by performing a series of shocking stunts.

In two months, they’ve raised nearly \$7,000 by eating bugs, worms, rotten eggs, experiencing simulated labor pain, having their nose hair waxed, and more.

“We thought it was a crazy, awesome idea,” said Drew Childers, The Chapel’s student ministry director who said he and former student director Adam Goff came up with the idea during an afternoon brainstorming session.

“But the reality of it didn’t sink in until people started sending in money,” Childers said. “I don’t think the idea really stuck with me until we ate the live worms, and then we realized what we had gotten ourselves into.”

The two broke their \$5,000 goal into bite-size pieces, and each mini monetary goal had a corresponding stunt. When they raised \$250, Childers and Goff ate pig’s feet. At \$500 they ate live worms. When \$1,000 had been given they were hooked to a labor pain simulator.

“Between eating live worms and the labor simulator, those are our two moments when reality really hit,” Childers said, who endured up to level 35 on the pain simulator. “My mother thoroughly enjoyed that.”

Social media, especially Facebook, was key. Once videos were posted to the [church’s youth Facebook page](#), they were liked and shared and word spread. Childers and Goff were even recognized around town for their crazy antics.

“Social media really drove this,” Childers said. “People started sharing it and calling us crazy and then were supporting our crazy.”

Jacob Bosarge, a 16-year-old junior at Brunswick's Glynn Academy High School, is going on the mission trip and joined Childers in one of the challenges.

The two, along with another Chapel youth, 16-year-old Kyler Roy, each ate a piece of "[The World's Hottest Chocolate Bar](#)." Containing chili extract rated at nine million Scoville Heat Units, eating the candy earned the youth group \$4,000.

"It's the equivalent of a sunburn on your tongue," Bosarge said [in a video](#) posted to Facebook, after eating a minuscule piece smaller than a thumbnail. The three had milk, mayonnaise, and peanut butter nearby to help dull the pain, and trashcans handy, just in case.

The chocolate bar tasted awful, Bosarge said, and not at all like chocolate, mostly like chili powder disguised as candy. But it was for a good cause, so he has no regrets.

"They didn't even try to make it taste good, but it was fun," he said. "I thought it was going to be one of the easier ones, but I was mistaken. I'll take hot over gross, though."

While in Jamaica, the team will partner with a local group and put on a Vacation Bible School for local children, build relationships, and help connect local students with the local church.

Bosarge is looking forward to this, his first international mission trip, and to serving with his friends.

"It feels really good to help other people, but it's also nice to do this with people I already know and trust and have relationships with to build those and make them stronger."

Childers is thankful for the church and community's support of the youth and their mission trip. He is a little concerned, however, that the bar has been set for future fundraisers.

"We had no idea where this would end up, but just to see the congregation rally behind the students has been super cool," he said. It's been phenomenal to have that support. We have a congregation and community and church who loves and values our students.

"The only downside is that they're going to expect this from me from now on! It's been fun, and sometimes you have to get wild and crazy."



Confidence, Communication, Curiosity

**FROM THE BISHOP
R. LAWSON BRYAN**

How are we in South Georgia going to keep track of all the hopeful conversations going on around the global United Methodist connection? The [Leadership Forum Task Force](#), that's how!

When I formed this group last year we named it the “Foundations for the Future of South Georgia Task Force.” The members of the group represent the boards and agencies of our conference that oversee property matters, money, pensions and benefits, laity, the Cabinet, the General Conference delegation ... lots of major entities. Being at the table together gave South Georgia a working group that did scenario planning around each of the plans that we knew would be voted on at General Conference 2019. This Task Force designed and led the annual conference information session that was held immediately after General Conference 2019. And then the Leadership Forum asked this Task Force to continue for a year to keep the Conference updated on developments related to [General Conference 2020](#), which will be held May 5-15 in Minneapolis.

Since those involved have agreed to continue serving, I can now refer to this as the [Leadership Forum Task Force](#). They will report to the Leadership Forum and to the annual conference from time to time. Here are some takeaways from our most recent Leadership Forum Task Force meeting (Aug. 22):

Question: A year from now, if the task force has done a fantastic job, what will it have done?

Answer: It will have inspired **CONFIDENCE** in South Georgia through **COMMUNICATION** and **CURIOSITY**.

Question: What do we mean by **confidence**?

Answer: 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.

Communication is an umbrella term for how we **talk about the future** of the South Georgia Conference and The UMC leading up to [General Conference 2020](#) and beyond; the goal is to promote **relationships of trust** within South Georgia by **providing clarity** and a **sense of connectedness**. To keep the conference up to date on conversations going on around The UMC, the Task Force will communicate via [the conference website](#), social media, video reports, specific outreach to laity and clergy, and by encouraging informed conversations within already established relational groups (such as cluster groups).

Curiosity is an umbrella term for **helping local churches ask key questions of** whatever comes out of GC2020; the goal is to **unite us in a process** designed for us to **discern a future** in which we can continue to be Alive Together in Christ in South Georgia.

Through scenario planning, the Task Force will identify key questions for local churches to use in reflecting on whatever comes from GC2020. This **“key questions process”** will be made available to all local churches so that all may be involved in discerning God’s future for us.

The Task Force's next meeting is Sept. 30 and will be devoted to developing key questions about [the Indianapolis Plan](#), [the UMCNext Plan](#), [the Jones/Bard Plan](#) and other plans that we expect will be filed by the Sept. 18 GC2020 submission deadline.

[Click here to see a list of Task Force members.](#)

Please let them know how grateful you are for their service. And please join them daily in praying the Task Force prayer:

O God, by whom we are guided in judgment, and who raises up for us light in the darkness: Grant us, in all our doubts and uncertainties, the grace to ask what you would have us to do; that your Spirit of wisdom may save us from all false choices, and in your straight path we may not stumble; through Jesus Christ. Amen

Stay Calm. Stay Connected. Stay the Course.

Alive Together in Witness,
R. Lawson Bryan

Register today 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.

Faithful During Grief

Fall Quarter: Responding to God's Grace

Sunday school lesson for the week of September 8, 2019

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Lesson Scripture: I Samuel 1:1-2:10

Key Verse: I Samuel 1:17

Eli answered, "Go in peace, and may the God of Israel grant you what you have asked of him."

Lesson Aim: to understand the experience of grief and the important role of prayer as a faithful response to it.

Geographical context

Israel has now settled in Canaan. The city of Shiloh is central in this narrative. It is the first capital of Israel. Shiloh is central to the location of the tribes in Canaan. The time period predates the building of the temple in Jerusalem. Shiloh was one of the main centers of Israelite worship during the pre-monarchic period, since the Tent, Shrine, and Ark of the Covenant were present there. The people made [pilgrimages](#) there for major feasts and sacrifices.

Background information regarding worship in Israel

The tabernacle had been built under [Moses'](#) direction from God ([Exodus 26](#)) to house the [Ark of the Covenant](#). The tabernacle remained at Shiloh for 369 years. It was at Shiloh that [Eli](#) and [Samuel](#) ministered ([1 Samuel 3:21](#)). According to [1 Samuel 1–3](#), the sanctuary at Shiloh was administered by the [Aaronite](#) high priest [Eli](#) and his two sons, [Hophni and Phinehas](#). According to this account, the young [Samuel](#) was dedicated by his mother [Hannah](#) there, to be raised at the shrine by the high priest, and his own prophetic ministry is presented as having begun there. Hophni and Phinehas are noted as malicious in their dealings with those who came to the shrine to offer [sacrifices](#) ([1 Samuel 2:12–17](#)). *Resource used*

Historical and theological reflection introducing the narrative

Sadly, women were most often treated as property in the O.T. era. To gain an understanding of how difficult it was for the wife to engage in the task of running the household, read Proverbs 31:10-31. The highest purpose given to women in the O.T. was that of childrearing, especially giving birth to a son. If she did not conceive and bear a son her life lost meaning in the community. The religious worldview of the Jewish people can be stated simply: if a person is healthy, prospers, and owns the niceties of life, they live in God's favor. God is rewarding them for a virtuous life. However, the inverse is also true. If a person is sick, poor, or lacking in some important area of life, God is punishing them. They must have done something to fall out of God's favor. Consequently, a woman was often given a bill of divorce and sent on her way if she could not bear a son.

Hannah has not given her husband a son. Thus, Hannah is in a state of devastation in the tabernacle. Most likely she participated in a ritualistic meal such as Passover. The narrative does not reveal the season or nature of the meal. Following the meal Hannah stood and began weeping deeply. She undoubtedly was so upset she could not eat. The text reads that she stood after

“they” had finished eating. Sobbing is probably the proper word to describe the depth of emotion she feels. She is crying and praying simultaneously. Her weeping would stand in sharp contrast to the joyous meal they were enjoying. Hannah has lost her appetite and the emotional wellspring from within reveals itself. It is difficult in our current culture to fully grasp how worthless Hannah felt. The community would label her a failure, and most likely she believed it. She would have believed she lived outside God’s favor and her barren womb was the penalty she paid.

Her husband Elkanah had another wife named Peninnah who had birthed children. Peninnah taunted Hannah mercilessly. Bullying remains a serious problem in today’s schools. It can also be a problem in the workplace. It is devastating to the victim and strips all self-esteem and self-worth away. Hannah is being bullied, and horrifically. Her prayer is a desperate prayer. The emotion the reader senses from the text is that Hannah has borne all the taunting, cultural shaming, and judgement a person can stand. Her emotions are unraveling and she stands before God with a broken heart, pleading for God to bless her with a son. Though Elkanah loved Hannah, he lived disconnected from her pain. In 1:8 we can hear this emotional disconnect. Elkanah asks, “Hannah, why are you weeping? Why don’t you eat? Why are you downhearted?” The last question he asks in his questioning of Hannah reveals just how severe the emotional distance is: “Don’t I mean more to you than ten sons?” Consequently, through this emotional chasm echoes another expression of grief: loneliness. Hannah must feel utterly alone. Where is God? Where is my husband emotionally?

What elements in life give you a true sense of purpose? Are their elements and dynamics within our culture that leave you feeling inadequate, less than, worthless? Can you recall an experience of devastating heartbreak in which you felt utterly alone?

Theological and experiential reflection upon I Samuel 9-20:

I Samuel 1:9

Elkanah has led his family to Shiloh for a religious feast. The narrative indicated he is a faithful man who participates in the worship experiences related to the tabernacle. The text reads that Hannah stood and began to pray and weep. Eli, the high priest, is sitting in his chair near the doorpost of the tabernacle. From this important position he offers counsel and help to those who come. He overhears Hannah. Hannah is not just in anguish, she is in deep anguish. Her weeping is not controlled, for she weeps bitterly. Experiences of grief and utter heartbreak numb us to cultural rules and expectations. Hannah isn’t embarrassed. She hurts too deeply to be embarrassed. Her pain is all she feels at the moment and she has no one with whom to share her pain. She chooses to turn to God. Perhaps she believes the sincerity of her prayer can lead to her regaining favor and God answering her prayer.

One night during my church’s family supper a woman entered, weeping. She wasn’t acquainted with anyone, only her grief. She came because we were a church and we were her last resort for

some measure of peace. As we might expect, many, in their humanity, were curious and simply stared. However, I made my way to her and learned of her loss of a child. She truly felt no one understood her pain and she entered the church because the lights were on.

Have we ever come to God as a last resort? Have we spoken in a manner we would never speak if not for our pain, or behaved in a way that normally would embarrass us?

I Samuel 1:10-11

In Hannah's prayer we can hear the deep plea of her soul. There are three words: look, remember, and not forget. She asks God to look upon her grief, remember, and not forget her. Among all the people of Israel she would feel forgotten, alone, unworthy of notice. But, she is desperate in her grief, asking God to please remember his servant. It is important to note that Hannah does not envision God serving her, but her serving God. The answer to her prayer would prove an act of grace, nothing more.

What is the nature of our prayers in sorrow? Have you ever felt you have to do or say something special to gain God's notice?

I Samuel 1:10-11

Hannah made a vow. One of the repetitive questions I've been asked when teaching Genesis is why Isaac could not take the birthright back from Jacob who stole it from his brother Esau. The answer is really not that difficult. In the world of the Jewish people, and much of the near eastern world, words were creative. Notice in the creation story in Gen. 1 and 2 God "speaks" the world into being. Once something was said, a course of action was already underway and could not be stopped. Isaac had pronounced the birthright and nothing Esau could do would help him regain it. Hannah makes a promise, offers a vow unto God that will be binding. Sadly, giving our word to someone has lost a sense of the sacred in public life. We have adopted the phrase "contracts are meant to be broken." However, it was not so in Israel. Hannah will vow to give her son to God and God's service the entirety of his life.

How sacred is giving our word, making a promise, or entering into a vow? Are we determined to ensure that promise is kept? How have you witnessed the creative power of words, both constructively and destructively?

I Samuel 1:11

The firstborn male is always dedicated to the Lord (Exodus 13:2; Lev. 27:26). Jesus himself was dedicated in such a manner. In the New Testament church we give our child to God through baptism. Baptism in our tradition involves two Cs: Conversion and Covenant. If a person is not a Christian as a young person or adult we baptize them into the membership of the church. When a child is baptized we enter into a sacred covenant with the child, parents, or guardians. We promise to do all in our power as the church family to help the couple rear their child in the faith. One day they will embrace their baptism as their own at Confirmation. Therefore, the dedicating

of our children to God as an act of thanksgiving, love, and covenant is an ancient practice that continues to be important today.

Hannah, however, was, in essence, bargaining with God. When someone feels unworthy or unnoticeable our fallen nature begins to bargain for God's attention. Hannah was basically praying, "If you bless me with a son I will give him back to you." Having ministered to those dying and to families in painful grief I am well accustomed to the temptation to bargain, to gain God's attention, that our prayer might be answered. However, God already knows the number of hairs upon our head, our great joys, and our deepest sorrows. Hannah's language implies that her son will live as a Nazirite. It is among the high callings to which Hannah could place upon a future son.

How seriously do we take our vow related to infant baptism? Specifically, what can we do to help that family rear the child in the faith and the church? Have you ever been tempted to bargain with God, or gain God's attention through a promise when suffering grief?

I Samuel 1:11-16

Hannah's grief is so painful she finds it difficult to use words. In Romans 8 Paul reminded the early Christian church there are moments when we do not know how to pray. The Holy Spirit thus intercedes with groaning and utterings too deep for words. This is exactly what is happening to Hannah. Eli the high priest overhears her mumbling and rushes to judgement. He accuses her of being intoxicated. One of the reasons Jesus was emphatic that we do not judge another is that we do not know their story. We do not always know what is happening in their life, or the pain they carry. The holy tabernacle was not a place for drunkenness, but neither was it the place for such judgement. Hannah was seeking comfort and guidance. Thankfully God uses Eli to bring hope to Hannah, in spite of his rush to judgement.

Is there an occasion in which we can recall rushing to judgement? How did we feel upon learning we were mistaken? Have there been moments in which we were wrongly judged? How did we feel after another made a misguided assumption about us?

I Sam. 1:17-20

Eli's prayer and benediction upon Hannah gave her comfort and hope. Upon returning home she became with child. Though this was a painful experience for Hannah, God used it to bless not only Hannah and Elkanah, but all of Israel. Her child Samuel would become one of Israel's major prophets/judges. Her grief was turned to joy. Samuel would be used of God in the future to help transform Israel's grief into joy and hope.

Lesson Summary

One of the beautiful rays of light in our faith is hope. Hope is knowing the reality that God is present in every moment of life, transforming and using that moment for God's high purposes. Thus, no moment in life is wasted, not even grief. While in the depths of grief it is difficult to see goodness or believe that our loss and sorrow can be transformed and used. However, the Bible

consistently reveals that God is present in our deepest sorrow. Many of the great redemptive moments in scripture arise from human pain and suffering. God hears our prayer. Even if our sorrow is so great we struggle to articulate what we feel, and even if it blinds us as to knowing what we need, God hears our prayer. God hears not only our words but the cry of the heart and soul. In John 11 Jesus so deeply felt the grief of Mary and Martha he wept. That moment of grief led to Lazarus being raised to new life. Jesus understands our grief, and will in time bring new life to each of us.

Prayer

Almighty God, though you are creator of all, you choose to know us. Though you order all things by your power, you care for us. We give you thanks that you are aware of our grief and sorrow. We trust you, even in the darkness. For we know that our weeping may only endure for a night, for joy will come in the morning. In Jesus name, Amen.

Dr. D. Craig Rikard is a South Georgia pastor. Email him at craigrikard169@yahoo.com.

Faithful During Uncertainty

Fall Quarter: Responding to God's Grace

Sunday school lesson for the week of September 15, 2019

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Lesson Scripture: Exodus 16

Key Verse: Exodus 16: 15

"When the Israelites saw it they said to each other, 'What is this?' For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, 'It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat.'"

Lesson Aim: This lesson helps us to remember the many experiences of God's redemptive love and care and to realize if we fail to recall and embrace these experiences we can easily become a people of complaining doubt.

Geographical context

After their escape from Egypt and their experience of lacking water, the oasis of Elim proved a welcomed sight. Consisting of 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees, it was an inviting place to rest. However, the life of faith is a journey and the Israelites are now leaving Elim and moving into the Desert of Sin.

Historical and theological reflection introducing the narrative

Israel lived in bondage for 400 years. One would think the Israelites too overjoyed and rich in faith after God led them through the Red Sea into freedom. However, their journey was quickly becoming as much a journey of doubt and mistrust as it was of believing and faith. In this

narrative, the Israelites are only removed from the Exodus about two and a half months. The escape through the sea should be fresh on their minds. However, they quickly became a nation of complainers. As the water supply dwindled and the water found at Marah proved undrinkable, they complained to Moses. God has proved faithful to the people of covenant, but they are proving themselves to be unfaithful. This story serves as a mirror into which we can see ourselves in our walk of faith with the Lord. God has expressed and revealed love and care for us all of our lives. There have been some occasions when the Lord's love was more easily recognized. On other occasions our eyes were opened to God's care later as we looked back in retrospect. Whether we immediately acknowledge the care and love of God or we recognize it later, we are tempted to quickly forget and complain. Keeping a personal journal of faith is a helpful tool in our spiritual formation. One of the benefits of a journal is that it consists of the many experiences of God's redemption. It is helpful to record what God has done that we might never forget that we are the benefactors of grace. To forget is to open the door to a grumbling, complaining spirit.

Theological and experiential reflection upon Exodus 16

Exodus 16:1-2

Only two and a half months have transpired since the most redemptive moment in Israelite history has occurred. The people should still be able to remember the sounds of pursuing chariots and the fearful cries of the Israelites. They should be able to remember Moses raising his rod as the waters were parted by God. They should be able to remember their first steps into freedom as the waters closed over the Egyptians. How can they so quickly forget? Yet, they grumbled at Marah concerning the lack of drinking water. Now the stage is set for them to trust God for their food, or once again neglect to remember the Exodus and complain. The whole company complains to and against Moses and Aaron. Perhaps they are afraid to complain to God since in their minds God might become angry at them. Therefore, as is often the case, they direct their anger towards God's servants. These are the same two servants who were remarkably instrumental in the Exodus. God has used them mightily. Now they are the lightning rod for the fear and anger of the Israelites.

In the first lesson of the fall, the story of Lot in Sodom, we realized that fear leads to irrational thinking. It also can lead to impulsive thinking and behavior. The Israelites are afraid of starving and their first inclination is not to remember God's past love and trust, but instead they immediately cast blame towards the most convenient and safest individuals. After all, what can Moses and Aaron do to them? They could say to the two, "You led us from Egypt out here! Therefore, it's your fault!" Yes, they were used by God to lead Israel out of 400 years of bondage into freedom. However, the people have quickly ignored this moving truth and scapegoated the two brothers. Notice, it isn't just one or two people complaining. The text clearly reveals it was the "whole company." This is a lack of faith on the part of the entire community.

How easily do we believe it is to forget the expressions of God's grace? What is the nature of those moments when such forgetting occurs? How can we avoid neglecting the loving acts of God? Why do we tend to blame those in leadership in times when our faith is tested? Why is blame one of our initial responses in facing frightening situations?

Exodus 16:3

In their fear, the Israelites begin to reframe their past. The bondage against which they cried to God now looks better. They choose to remember that they did have food, and now they conclude they will probably starve. They long for yesterday, a recreated, reimagined yesterday. One of the reasons we often long for the past is because we have already survived it. Everything looks better once we stand on the other side of the crisis. The Israelites lived and felt far differently in the years preceding the Exodus. In great distress they had called and cried to God for deliverance. Now they are a resentful people who believe yesterday was far better than their present and imagined future.

Have you heard others speak as though they long for yesterday? Have we longed for the past instead of facing the present? What are the consequences of attempting to live in the past instead of facing the uncertain future?

Exodus 16:4

God speaks a word of grace. The Lord will feed them with manna. Israel does not deserve or merit any favor from God. In spite of their mighty deliverance by the Lord's hand, for the second time, they have chosen to complain. Every redemptive act by God is an act of grace in scripture. If God reacted to their complaining and lack of faith they would suffer. However, the goodness and love of God supersedes Israel's doubt and grumbling. Note, God promises bread for one day at a time. Later in the story of Elijah we read of his flight and stay at the brook called Cherith. God fed Elijah in the midst of a long famine through ravens bringing him bread. However, they brought only enough for one day. Each day Elijah had to trust the ravens would come. Such trust would build character and faith in Elijah, later allowing him to promise a starving widow and her son that the barrel of meal would not empty. There are crises in life that require we trust God one moment at a time. If we gaze too far ahead we can experience fear that strength will not be there for us. We can also become blind to what God is doing in the present. Thirdly, we will miss an opportunity to grow in faith and character.

Do we understand God's presence and action in our life as a response to our goodness and piety, or as an act of loving grace? What are the consequences of believing our goodness leads to God's goodness? How easily do we look toward to the future in times of difficulty in contrast to seeking God in the moment? What consequences have we recognized in our failure to see God's grace at work in the "now?"

Exodus 16:5

Though the Mosaic Law has not yet been given, we read here of the already established Sabbath.

Genesis 1 records God created for six days and rested on the seventh, which was established as the Sabbath. The people are to gather a double portion of manna on the sixth day so they can rest and worship on the seventh. Many emphasize “not working” on the Sabbath. However, the emphasis is not just on not working; it is on not working in order to appreciate and be thankful. I visited the Wailing Wall in Israel an hour before the Sabbath began. It was a sacred moment as the sun was sinking low and the prayers at the wall were raised to God. A large crowd was waiting for the rabbinical students to emerge from a room near the wall dancing in joy. Sabbath is a joyful, thankful time. One is to reflect upon what God has done for his people and the world. God is worshiped as the Lord of all goodness and mercy. Thus, Israel is to collect manna for six days, but rest and be thankful on the seventh.

In what ways do the people of God observe the Sabbath? How do we personally observe this holy day? What is the emphasis on our keeping of the Sabbath?

Exodus 16:6-7

Moses proclaims to grumbling Israel that another of God’s redemptive acts is coming. The text does not inform us what will happen in the evening that will remind them it was the Lord who brought them out of Egypt. Perhaps the text is alluding to the quail that will come at twilight. We will simply accept the narrative as is and be mindful of the truth undergirding the passage: God answers the prayers of grumbling Israel and feeds them with bread from heaven! The glory of the Lord would be witnessed in the gift of the manna.

The word glory refers to the “character and nature of God.” God’s loving, merciful character would be witnessed in the bread that came each day. The next morning, they would not just see bread on the ground, they would spiritually see the glory of the Lord in their midst. The pure in heart, according to Jesus, could see God in their midst. Those who could see “beneath the manna,” who could recognize that though they are fed, “it is God who is doing the feeding,” are those who see the glory of God. God not only fed them through grace, he allowed a people who quickly overlooked the spiritual in life to see the divine glory. Again, the very fact that God would reveal to us the divine nature is a remarkable, awe-inspiring gift of grace. Moses offers a word of chastisement. Since God had heard their grumbling and responds with goodness, “Who are we that you should grumble against us?”

What is the nature of our perception on any given day? Do we see that which God has created without seeing the divine nature in and through that creation? Are we regularly overwhelmed in response to God’s revelation of the divine heart in Christ? What are the gifts in our life that can reveal God’s love and mercy? Do we see the divine nature regularly? If not, why not?

Exodus 16:8

The people had grumbled that they ate bread and meat in Egypt. Now God will answer their prayer fully and send them quail for meat. However, later in the narrative they will realize that

on occasion we do not consider the consequences related to what we ask. The bread came each day, but what would they do with the leftover quail?

Exodus 16:9-13

Aaron speaks to the people on behalf of Moses. The community is called together and reminded that God has indeed heard their grumbling. It is stunning truth that the creator of the cosmos hears the cries of the suffering. As the perfect revelation of God's nature, Jesus traveled to the tomb of his dear friend Lazarus and wept with Mary and Martha. The language of the narrative reveals that Jesus sobbed deeply. Even knowing Lazarus was to be resurrected, he felt the deep pain and sorrow of Mary and Martha. He was deeply touched. John's Gospel was written to share the gospel especially with the Greeks. However, on the surface he made a mistake in recording Jesus wept, for the Greeks believed gods would not feel the pain of the human. However, John is revealing a startling truth that needs to be heard and remembered: God is touched by our suffering! God understood the fear in the cries of Israel and responded with manna and quail. As Aaron spoke, the glory of the Lord appeared in a cloud. The fear of the Israelites and their corresponding grumbling revealed they had assumed God has abandoned them. However, once again God responds to their mistrust with a revelation of his merciful nature. This revelation will occur in the manna, now in a cloud, and later in the quail. That evening, following the appearance of the cloud, quail came and "covered the camp." In the morning a layer of "dew" surrounded the encampment. The dew would evaporate in the morning sun and white flakes would cover the ground. These flakes were the manna.

When we consider our relationship with the Lord, do we envision a distant God who is too busy to hear our prayers? Do we seriously believe God not only hears our prayers, but feels the fear and pain of our hearts? How has God revealed that our creator identifies with our circumstances and chooses to feel our pain?

Exodus 16:14-14

When the dew evaporated the people did not understand the remaining flakes as food. They had never witnessed such bread! God's care does not always initially appear in a manner recognizable to us. Sometimes we have to wait for the "evaporation" before we see God's new expression of love and mercy. It is not accidental that the resurrected Christ was unrecognizable. Had he appeared in the same manner as he lived prior to his death and resurrection we would have been tempted to say, "That is the way he always looks!" "He only comes to us this way!" Instead, the risen Lord appeared in a manner that reminds us God can come to us looking any way, in any manner, at any time, and anywhere.

My mother died at age 46. Her sudden death was painful. I longed for some expression that God was present with me, had not forgotten me in my grief. I did not see a vision, nor did the earth shake or sky open. I received so many cards and calls I struggled to remember everyone who responded. There was God! God had come in cards, letters, calls, hugs, faces, and numerous

words of comfort. We must give the dew time to evaporate, then we will see the beautiful expression of that “bread from heaven.”

In what new and unexpected ways has God’s love appeared to us? Are we tempted to narrowly define the manner in which God works? If so, what are those narrow ways?

Lesson Summary

In life we move through one crisis into another, experiencing beautiful, meaningful life in the journey. Crises always present us with a sense of uncertainty. We know what happened yesterday, and how we survived, but we are unsure of today or tomorrow. Thus, we live by faith. Our faith is in God, who is rich in mercy and responds to our human struggle with grace. As we move from crisis to crisis it is our prayer to become stronger in faith and character, to become more like Jesus. I love a statement I read years ago: I have seen my yesterdays, and therefore, I am not afraid of today and tomorrow, for the same God is present in all. To that I say Amen.

Prayer

Almighty God, remind us of your unchangeable loving nature. You are indeed the same yesterday, today, and forever. Teach us to look with our adversity and see your glory at work. Remind us we are never forsaken, and that our journey leads only upward and higher in the high calling of Christ. In Jesus name, Amen.

Dr. D. Craig Rikard is a South Georgia pastor. Email him at craigrikard169@yahoo.com.

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What John Wesley says about church growth

JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS

DAVE HANSON

At one point, John Wesley became concerned about Methodist Societies that failed to grow. One suggestion he made concerning this issue you might take to heart. He said the reason they have dropped off is because they have given up early morning worship services. He urges us to have worship every morning at 5 a.m. He said those societies which fail to worship at “first light” will certainly see no growth.

How many of us would take this advice to heart if we really believed our churches would grow if we worshipped every morning at 5 a.m.? Would you be willing to arise at that time to pray for revival?

This has been a John Wesley Moment.

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

Home is where the heart is

GROWING IN GRACE

BEN GOSDEN

A love letter to South Georgia Methodism

There hasn't been a moment in my life when I haven't been a South Georgia Methodist. It's true. For nearly 37 years, the compass of my faith in Jesus Christ has pointed to South Georgia as the home of my faith journey. Where do I begin to express my gratitude for this conference – this spiritual space marked with country churches, oak trees that hang just low enough in the summer, beautiful fields lined with peaches and pecans, college towns where young people hear a call to the ministry, sanctuaries where people come to worship on Sundays, and communities where they live to be the church every other day.

Sure, we have that imaginary equator known as the gnat line, but anyone from here knows that's okay because you're already fanning because of the summer heat. We don't always get it right and we can be a bit dysfunctional at times, but, at the end of the day, this is South Georgia, where we're alive together in Christ. And that aliveness has touched my life in a number of important ways.

The clergy who have had an influence on my journey, and who continue to mentor me as I grow as a leader, are too many to name:

Marcia Cochran was my pastor for 15 years, and I can remember a time when the sound of a man's voice in the pulpit was strange to hear. She inspired me to fight to continue to level the playing field so that others have this same experience.

Joe Roberson was my candidacy mentor and dear friend. We lost a giant in South Georgia the day Joe died. He taught me about urban ministry and about making room at the table for all people. He was a constant cheerleader in my life and he made me want to be a cheerleader for others.

Tommy Mason was my senior pastor for three years while I cut my teeth in ministry as an associate pastor. Tommy taught me how to be thoughtful and intentional in the decisions I make. At every turn, he reminded me that discipleship is the primary goal of how we lead people to grow. He taught me how to keep the main thing the main thing in ministry.

There are countless others who have served to encourage me, especially when I was down. They have pushed me to grow when I was being lazy. And they have helped me find the most authentic "me" to bring to my leadership in the church.

And there are countless laity who have taught, and continue to teach, what it means to give your life to Jesus in worship and service. We clergy live in such bubbles that it's easy to forget it's the laity of South Georgia who are the backbone of ministry.

I've learned important lessons in South Georgia. I've learned what it means to love and be loved. I've learned that salvation in Jesus' name is the most important gift I could ever receive – so important that I've made it my life's service as a debt of gratitude for such a gift. And I've learned from real people of faith the lesson John Wesley teaches that the Bible really does contain all is necessary to begin to comprehend the mystery of salvation. I've learned that the church is not fully itself if it's not reaching out, welcoming in, and providing space for all people who grow as disciples of Jesus Christ.

As we live into this current season of denominational conflict, it is these gifts (and so many more) that I cling to. How do we simultaneously live both in conflict and in service with one another I recently had a friend ask me that question because he knows that I hold a theological position about inclusion in the church that may not be held by the majority of Methodists in South Georgia. He asked me how I could serve in a conference where I stick out like a sore thumb. It's a fair question to ask.

I suppose I would begin to answer that question with two simple words: proximity matters. The shouting and fighting we see at General Conference happens because those people don't live together. They don't serve together. They don't enjoy fried chicken after district set-up meetings together. They don't pray for each other's kids when they face surgery. And they don't rearrange their schedules because a colleague has lost a parent, a spouse, or their own life and there's a funeral to attend.

I wish I knew what the future holds for Methodism. I hope it's a future filled with hope. Scratch that – I'm a South Georgia Methodist and I've been taught that we're a people of the Resurrection. Hope is the future God has for us all, by the power of Christ. Whatever that hopeful future is, and wherever I may land when the chips settle, there is one thing I know as sure as I know that macaroni and cheese is the perfect side to fried chicken: If home is where the heart is, then no matter where I end up, my heart will always be home among South Georgia Methodists.

The Rev. Ben Gosden is senior pastor at Trinity United Methodist Church in Savannah. He can be reached at ben@trinity1848.org.

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Retired Clergy Birthdays – September 2019

9/01 – David Boggs: 1557 George Williams Rd.; Louisville, GA 30434

9/03 – Fred Foster: 1964 Madison Hwy.; Quitman, GA 31643

- 9/03 – Guy Mathis, Jr.: 1108 Moore Dr.; Americus, GA 31709
- 9/04 – Earl James: 310 Avondale Circle; Warner Robins, GA 31088
- 9/05 – Mark Kase: 1100 Arthur J. Moore Dr., Unit 102; St Simons Island, GA 31522
- 9/05 – Gene Yelverton: 6345 Concord Church Rd.; Ellaville, GA 31806
- 9/06 – Cecil Hazen: John Wesley Villas, 5471 Thomaston Rd., Apt 419; Macon, GA 31220
- 9/09 – Richard Soper: 229 Victorian Lake Dr.; Brunswick, GA 31525
- 9/13 – Bernie Khaw: 150 Myrtle Ave., Apt. 2205; Brooklyn, NY 11201
- 9/14 – Tom Johnson, Sr.: PO Box 127; Oxford, GA 30054
- 9/15 – Ted Bass: 133 Brieghton Ct.; Macon, GA 31210
- 9/15 – Elick Bullington, Jr.: Lakeside Senior Care; 1025 N. Chester Ave.; Douglas, GA 31533
- 9/15 – Buddy Cooper: 7005 Deerwood Lane; Upatoi, GA 31829
- 9/16 – Henry Bass: 404 Clyde Ave.; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 9/16 – Bob Norwood: 946 Old Wadley Rd.; Swainsboro, GA 30401
- 9/16 – Ray Youngblood: 214 Lee St.; North Augusta, SC 29841
- 9/18 – Burns Willis: 1815 E. Washington St.; Thomasville, GA 31792
- 9/19 – Wayne Moseley: 29 William E. Moseley Rd.; Collins, GA 30421
- 9/19 – Dan Pegram: 112 Tahoe Dr.; Pooler, GA 31323
- 9/20 – James Trice, Jr.: 5300 Zebulon Rd.; Garden Home 31; Macon, GA 31210
- 9/21 – Robert Herrington, Sr.: 185 S. Sixth St.; Cochran, GA 31014
- 9/21 – Virgil Lee: 208 Yorkshire Crescent; Thomasville, GA 31792
- 9/22 – Edwin Chase: 70 Shipwatch Rd.; Savannah, GA 31410
- 9/23 – Steve Posey: 8337 S. 5th St.; Broken Arrow, OK 74011
- 9/26 – John Irwin: 109 Deer Run Dr.; Macon, GA 31220
- 9/26 – Larry Sauls: 1691 Church Loop Rd.; Rockledge, GA 30454
- 9/27 – James Boyd: 112 Asbury St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
- 9/27 – Andy Brownley: 34 South Broad St.; Alamo, GA 30411
- 9/28 – Donna Jordan: 404 Brentwood Dr.; Dublin, GA 31021
- 9/28 – William Ryan: 2138 Red Bank Circle; Sevierville, TN 37876
- 9/30 – Dennis Stalvey: PO Box 685; Americus, GA 31709

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OBITUARIES

Rev. Joe Leatherwood

Chaplain George “Joe” Joseph Leatherwood, Lieutenant Colonel (U.S. Army Retired) passed away Monday, August 12, 2019, at his home after a long battle with cancer. Joe was born August 2, 1948, in Columbus, Ohio to the late George E. and Faye Jones Leatherwood. He received his Bachelor in Theology from Ohio Christian University and received his Master of Divinity from Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City, MO. Joe was a retired Chaplain for the United States Army with over 22 years of service. During his service to his country, Joe was deployed to Iraq during Operation Enduring/Iraqi Freedom and had a positive impact on thousands of soldiers and their families. As a civilian, he pastored for 13 years at Hilliard Church of the Nazarene (MO), Daisy United Methodist Church (GA), and Ellabell United Methodist Church (GA). He coached baseball and basketball from the college level to his grandchildren’s little league teams. Joe enjoyed golfing with the senior men’s group at Black Creek Golf Club and

recently admitted, “I never was quite as good a golfer as I thought I was.” The family would like to thank Dr. George Negrea and Dr. Dana Kumjian and their staff for their care throughout the years.

Survivors include his wife of 45 years, Pamela Joan Cook Leatherwood of Black Creek; one son and daughter-in-law, Jeremy (Amy) Leatherwood; two daughters and sons-in-law, Tiffany (Andre’) Weathers of Statesboro and Danielle (Cleave Bivins) Miller, III; one brother and sister-in-law, Kelly and Kate Leatherwood of Washington Chapel, OH and nine beloved grandchildren, Jordan and Mia Jo Weathers, Gabrielle and Jacob Leatherwood, and Chloe, Molly, Lucy, Kallie and Kelsie Miller.

Services were held Friday, August 16, 2019, in the chapel of Flanders Morrison Funeral Home. Interment followed at Georgia Veteran’s Cemetery, Glennville, with full military honors. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to St. Jude’s Children’s Hospital or Ogeechee Area Hospice. To sign the online register, please visit www.flandersmorrisonfuneralhome.com. Flanders Morrison Funeral Home and Crematory is in charge of the arrangements.

Scripture Readings – Sept. 3

Sept. 8

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 18:1-11

Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18 (UMH 854)

Philemon 1:1-21

Luke 14:25-33

Sept. 15

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28

Psalms 14 (UMH 746)

1 Timothy 1:12-17

Luke 15:1-10

Sept. 22

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

Psalms 79:1-9, or Psalm 4 (UMH 741)

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 9/3/2019 edition

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](#)

ERT & Chainsaw Operator Safety Training, Midland – Sept. 28

An Early Response Team (ERT) and Chainsaw Operator Safety Training will be held Saturday, Sept. 28 at Pierce Chapel in Midland. [More information](#) | [Register](#)

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.

UMW Annual Meeting – Oct. 19

The 2019 South Georgia UMW Annual Meeting will be held Saturday, Oct. 19 in Columbus, Ga.

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.](#)