South Georgia United Methodists have presence at protests

By Kara Witherow, Editor

Several South Georgia United Methodists are living out their faith by taking to the streets, protesting for justice and change.

Each weekend beginning June 7, Derian Wilson, a 20-year-old member of Martha Bowman United Methodist Church in Macon, has organized peaceful rallies at the roundabout outside Macon’s Tattnall Square Park.

Wilson says he planned the rallies to protest racism and injustice.

“I’m biracial, so I became aware of racism at a very early age,” he said. “I don’t understand hating people for the color of their skin. I don’t understand it, but I know that it needs to change and I know that my generation can be that change.”

In addition to the protests, Wilson has frequently held signs near busy streets to bring awareness to George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and other victims.

Hoping to see less injustice for future generations, he also seeks justice for those who have been victimized. His faith inspires and challenges him to speak out.

“The greatest commandment is to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind, and the second is similar: to love your neighbors as yourself. Your neighbor isn’t just the person who lives next to you or the person who looks like you or goes to school with you,” he said. “Your neighbors are the people you share your life with, the people we share this planet with.”

Standing up for what she believes in is an extension of Evan Lovvorn’s faith.

In Thomasville Sunday, June 7, she marched with more than 100 others in a rally against social injustice. The cause of racial equality and justice is important to her, she said.

“It makes me sick to my stomach that there are people who are judged by the color of their skin, because everyone is equal,” said the 17-year-old daughter of Rev. Shane Lovvorn, pastor of Dawson Street United Methodist Church. “The Bible tells us to love our brothers, and our brothers are our brothers in Jesus, in Christ. God tells us to love every single person around us.”

Asbury United Methodist Church member Wendy L. Stepherson, several of her friends, and hundreds of others gathered Sunday, May 31 in front of Savannah City Hall to peacefully protest the killing of George Floyd.

Being part of the crowd and seeing protesters hold signs demanding justice was powerful and touching, she said. So was seeing the diversity in the crowd.
“What I took away from (the protest) was that it is not just not a black race issue. The issue is that black lives matter, but there were different races who participated in the protest. That was encouraging to see,” Stepherson said. “You realize that we are all just one human race.”

But it’s not enough just to rally and protest, she said.

“A change needs to come, and if we don’t change, we are doomed.”

In the midst of the chaos and pain, Rev. Abra Lattany-Reed is hopeful.

“I believe that God is allowing us to reposition ourselves for the finish line, for the fullness of the Kingdom of God,” said Rev. Lattany-Reed, who serves as pastor of Harper’s Chapel United Methodist Church in Baxley.

A Brunswick native, she has been present and vocal at that city’s rallies and demonstrations in the wake of Ahmaud Arbery’s killing. She was invited to speak about what God says about the issues of the day and the need for the community to have emotional healing.

With a message from John 14, she invited the community to see and experience the peace that Christ has given everyone.

“I had an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ and encourage the community to not be afraid,” she said. “Even though this was a dark day, the sun would shine and point them to Christ.”

Rev. Lattany-Reed is one of more than two dozen local faith leaders who has committed to pray for peace before each of the case’s court dates. The next is scheduled for June 26.

This is an opportunity for Christians to let God shine through them, she said.

“Our witness is not just on Sunday mornings,” she said. “Our witness is in the marketplace. This is an opportunity for the church to see itself in a different way. I think people want an opportunity to live out their faith. Unfortunately, it’s often crisis and trials and tragedies that call upon the greater part of us – which is God in us – to stand up and let our light shine and let our witness speak.”

For racial justice resources, visit www.sgaumc.org/racial-justice-resources.

No joyful noise: Many South Georgia congregations will return to in-person worship without singing

By Kara Witherow, Editor

When Thomasville First United Methodist Church returns to in-person worship this Sunday morning, things will look – and sound – a lot different than they did when the congregation last met in person March 15.
Instead of a full choir of hymn-singing choristers belting out well-known songs like “I’ll Fly Away,” “Amazing Grace,” or “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” soloists or duets will likely sing more obscure, lesser-known hymns.

It’s one way to help prevent congregational singing, deemed unsafe by experts from the National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS), the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA), Chorus America, the Barbershop Harmony Society, and the Performing Arts Medical Association (PAMA).

“We are going to continue to have instrumental music and we’re going to continue to have music that’s sung by one or two people, but we’re not going to be playing the hits,” said Tim Peck, Thomasville First United Methodist Church’s Director of Worship Arts. “That wouldn’t work out too well.”

As South Georgia United Methodist churches prepare to restart in-person worship services, church leaders have to grapple with many big questions, one of which is whether or not to sing, or how to sing safely.

According to a Centers for Disease Control report, in early March a choir practice led to a large outbreak in Washington state. Dozens of choir members who met for practice at a church were diagnosed with COVID-19, and at least two died. South Georgia UM churches are being vigilant, observing guidelines and following recommendations to help prevent the same happening here.

The suspension of congregational singing and church choirs is sad and disappointing, but music directors and worship leaders say they have a responsibility for the safety of the entire congregation.

“I feel like it’s part of my job, not just to direct a choir, but to look after my people and keep them safe,” said Ellen Hanson, who serves as director of music for traditional worship at Martha Bowman United Methodist Church in Macon. “We’re all very sad that we won’t be able to sing together, but I hope that we can provide a rich worship experience.”

When Martha Bowman UMC does resume in-person worship services this Sunday, they will observe social distancing and the congregation will not participate in singing, Hanson said. Soloists, duets, trios, and the church’s handbell choir will offer new, lovely, and interesting sounds, she said.

“We’re doing our best to be creative about offering musical experiences without having choral singing or hymn singing,” Hanson said.

She’s also thought through liturgy like the Gloria Patri, the doxology, and congregational readings that may spread droplets or aerosols that can carry the virus.
“I’ve learned the Gloria Patri in sign language, and I’ll encourage people to join me in that.”

Music is vital to worship, says Kenji Bolden, and planning for worship services without singing has been a challenge.

“Music is the heartbeat of worship. It’s everywhere inside the book of Psalms. Music is at its core.” said Bolden, director of music ministries at Valdosta First United Methodist Church.

Valdosta First UMC also plans to re-start their in-person worship services this Sunday, without congregational singing. Bolden will also use solos, duets, and small ensembles. His musicians will be in the choir loft, distant from one another and the congregation.

Throughout the pandemic, he and other church leaders have stayed connected to the congregation via online worship and social media. Each staff member posts about their respective ministry area one day each week; Bolden posts a music-oriented topic every Friday.

“I think it’s very important for music leaders to find ways to engage their congregations, whether it’s in the sanctuary or outside the sanctuary, in music so they can lift their voices in some way, shape, or form, so they aren’t silenced by this,” he said. “It’s very important that we emerge from this time better for it.”

Through all of this, Peck hopes people see a more complete picture of worship.

“My job is to communicate that worship is a way of being, a way of demonstrating obedience and appreciation to God, and that doesn’t just involve the music on Sunday mornings,” he said. “My hope is that we are able to see that it’s about relationships. The bottom line is that we’re ministering to people.”

For resources on restarting in-person worship and singing, visit www.sgaumc.org/coronavirus.

Columbus woman welcomed into UMC as a deaconess

Micah 6:8 resonates deeply with Linda Laye.

“It’s a fitting verse for Laye, who was welcomed as a deaconess into The United Methodist Church in a virtual ceremony Monday, May 11.

“When you are consecrated as a deaconess you commit to a lifetime of service,” said Laye, who serves as chaplain of the Fellowship at Rose Hill in Columbus.

Laye was to have been consecrated as a deaconess during the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis, Minn., but the ceremony was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. On May 11 Laye and 31 other deaconesses and home missioners were welcomed into the order during a
A retired teacher, Laye has long had a passion for serving others. Growing up near Dothan, Ala., during high school she served on the Alabama-West Florida Conference’s council on youth ministry and as a youth delegate to Annual Conference. She also served one summer at Blue Lake Camp in Andalusia, Ala. and another as a camp counselor at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island.

“My father instilled in me love and service, and that’s important to me; I want to do what I can,” said Laye, a lifelong United Methodist. “John Wesley has said do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, and that’s what I want to do. And I want to do it for God’s glory, not for my glory. I want to be humble and I want to show other people that God loves them and that they matter.”

Rev. Lynn Meadows-White has known Laye for three decades and wasn’t surprised when she began the deaconess process.

“Ever since I’ve known her, she’s had a passion for serving, particularly for serving the marginalized in the community,” said Rev. Meadows-White, who serves as associate pastor of Pierce Chapel UMC in Midland. “She has a remarkable way of relating to people, of helping people feel noticed and cared for and loved.”

It was her passion for service, her heart for justice, and her deep love for and desire to be officially connected with The United Methodist Church that led Laye to begin the formal discernment process.

Within The United Methodist Church and under the umbrella of the United Methodist Women, deaconesses, who are women, and home missioners, who are men, commit their lives to full-time ministries of love, justice, and service. Beginning in 2016, deaconesses and home missioners were considered an official order of the UMC. Deaconesses and home missioners must complete a rigorous application and a course of study that includes the New Testament, Old Testament, theology of mission, history of the UMC and polity and doctrine of the UMC.

After being approved as a candidate for deaconess in March 2019, she completed coursework in theological education at the Brooks-Howell Home in North Carolina and at St. Paul School of Theology in Oklahoma City as well as multiple weekend in-person training events and online meetings and classes.

After completing all educational requirements, Laye was recommended by the Committee on Deaconess and Home Missioner service and approved by the United Methodist Women Board of Directors for consecration and commissioning as a deaconess.

Sandi Hortman, a retired deaconess who served at Open Door Community House and Rose Hill, encouraged Laye, a member of Pierce Chapel UMC, to explore and pursue becoming a deaconess.

It’s is a perfect fit for Laye, said Rev. Meadows-White.
“There are three words that characterize the deaconess role: love, justice, and service. To me, they describe Linda’s priorities and her heart and that’s why I think being a deaconess fits her perfectly.”

The Fellowship at Rose Hill is an extension ministry of the Northwest District and Laye coordinates the weekly meals and programming in partnership with several local United Methodist churches, said Rev. Steve Patton, superintendent of the Northwest District.

“Linda leads a committed and enthusiastic team of volunteers who provide love and support for the Bibb City and midtown Columbus community,” he said. “We are blessed to have Linda in the Northwest District and we celebrate her consecration as a deaconess!”

Laye is grateful to have the opportunity to live out her calling to serve.

“I’m very grateful to the United Methodist Women, to my mother who was very supportive, and to the leaders at Pierce Chapel. My Pierce Chapel family has been so supportive,” she said. “I’m grateful to the UMW globally that have funded this and that make this program available to people like me who want a connection, that feel this calling.

“All are called; few answer. I was lucky enough to get placed where I can serve.”

Bishop Bryan sets 2020-2021 pastoral appointments

On Monday, June 8, while meeting with the Cabinet at Epworth By The Sea, Bishop R. Lawson Bryan fixed the 2020-2021 pastoral appointments for the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church.

2020-2021 Appointments

Click here to download and view the list of appointments by district.

CLICK TO WATCH THE VIDEO

United Methodist Bishops: Act now to end racism and white supremacy

In the aftermath of police killings of unarmed Black people, the bishops of The United Methodist Church today called on all United Methodists to act now by using their voices, pens, feet and hearts to end racism.

In a statement released by Council of Bishops President Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey, the bishops are urging every United Methodist to reclaim their baptismal vows to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves.
“We ask every United Methodist to name the egregious sin of racism and white supremacy and join together to take a stand against the oppression and injustice that is killing persons of color,” the statement said.

The bishops said they are joining with other church leaders and boards and agencies of the United Methodist Church to add strength to the message that “we will no longer remain silent nor complicit but must act now!”

As part of that pledge, for at least the next 30 days, all United Methodists everywhere are asked to join in prayer at 8:46 a.m. and p.m. for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, the time the officer held his knee on George Floyd’s neck. “Pray for all persons of color who suffer at the hands of injustice and oppression. Pray for our church as we take a stand against racism.”

Click here to read the full statement from the Council of Bishops.

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**Ready or not**

**OUR CONNECTION MATTERS**

**ALLISON LINDSEY**


Planning and preparing are two words that have been elevated over the past several weeks in many ways. Churches are planning their “rolling restarts” and making preparations to gather for in-person worship. Some pastors are planning and making preparations to move while at the same time their local churches are planning and preparing to say goodbye along with saying hello to a new pastoral family. COVID-19 has, without a doubt, given new meaning to “planning and preparing.”

Allow me to throw another layer of “planning and preparing” into the mix. June 1 kicked off the 2020 hurricane season – which runs through November 30 – and predictions point to an above-average season. South Georgia continues to see its share of severe weather throughout the year, not just during this unique season, so there is no time like the present to make your plans. Ready.gov and the American Red Cross provide many resources to guide your preparations.

The conference also offers resources such as the “Connecting Neighbors Training” for local church ministry and a new resource we are excited to highlight: “Disaster Response: For Kids By Kids.” Nate Roberson (Leesburg UMC) and Ruthie Akins (The Chapel, Brunswick) have worked to design and share great fun facts about hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires along with experiments, devotions, and more so that kids can be prepared – not scared – to weather a storm with love. The resource outlines what to do before, during, and after a disaster, including helping others. Check out this fun video for making your emergency kit, and check back regularly for new content to be added. What a great way for a family to learn, make plans, and prepare together!
Your Conference Disaster Response Team continuously engages in planning and preparing in order to quickly respond should South Georgia face a catastrophic event. Luis Morales, Conference Disaster Response Coordinator, has built great capacity by adding connectional layers this past year. Bob Greico assists Luis with assessments and logistics, which strengthens a response, and our conference now has District Disaster Response Coordinators (DDRC) in all six districts to provide resources and coordinate a relief if/when needed. We are thankful for their passion and commitment to this volunteer ministry. Please reach out to them should you have questions or to explore available training and resources (contact information):

Kelly Crane: Coastal DDRC | Neal Anderson: Northeast DDRC | Rob Belknap: North Central DDRC | Rick Dorer: Northwest DDRC | Susan Hughes: South Central DDRC | Debbie Weaver: Southwest DDRC

The heart and soul of the capacity to respond when devastation actually does occur rests with our ERTs (Early Response Teams) and volunteers. The ERT volunteers invest the time to be trained and develop the skills to respond at the drop of a hat. They are the first to arrive following a storm when it is safe to go into a community. ERT training is offered throughout the year and hosted by local churches. Click here for more information or to host a training. Due to COVID-19, several trainings were canceled over the past few months. However, plans and preparations are underway to offer these in the near future when this can be done safely.

Local churches are also instrumental to disaster response ministry. Examples include assembling the UMCOR relief kits, monetary donations to meet immediate needs of survivors following a disaster, and opening as shelters during times of evacuation. COVID-19 will significantly change the way sheltering can take place this season. The CDC guidelines are designed to help equip an organization in planning and preparing for sheltering ministry during this pandemic. Thank you, clergy and laity, for the many ways you show the strength in the connection through the ministry of disaster response!

If you think about it, in one way or another each of us are continually engaged in some form of planning and preparing daily, right down to what’s for dinner. Planning ahead and being prepared is the key, and when it comes to natural disasters – it could save lives!

Connectional Ministries, like several of our local churches, is planning and preparing as two of our staff are transitioning into new appointments. Dr. Nita Crump (Director) and Rev. Earnestine Campbell (Associate Director) will be moving into local church ministry. Dr. Crump will be serving Mulberry UMC in Macon and Rev. Earnestine Campbell will be transitioning into a cross-cultural appointment at Epworth UMC in Columbus. Connectional Ministries has been blessed by their ministry and the many ways their faith, knowledge, and passion have guided the work of our collective ministries. We wish them the very best in their new chapter of ministry!

Connectional Ministries is here to help resource you. Our connection matters! This focus on planning and preparing brings Proverbs 16:9 to mind: “The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.” Thanks be to God!
Receiving Wisdom’s Gifts

Summer Quarter: Many Faces of Wisdom
Unit 1: Wisdom in Proverbs

Sunday school lesson for the week of June 21, 2020
By Rev. Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: Proverbs 8
Key Verse: Proverbs 8:10-11

Purpose: To understand that God’s wisdom is more valuable than all the riches of this world

Imagining Community

As we begin this week, let me invite you to engage in a thought experiment. Let me ask you to imagine the ideal community – the place where you would want to live. How would you describe the place where you would want to spend the rest of your days?

First, imagine the geography. Be specific. Is your ideal community on the coast? Is the beach a wide expanse of pristine white sand with gentle waves lapping at the shore, or is it strewn with stones smoothed by the relentless pounding of powerful waves? Perhaps you would rather live in the mountains overlooking great forests of towering trees watered by the tumbling waters of crystal creeks running amongst their roots. Piedmont or plains? Take a few moments and imagine the setting in your mind.

Next, imagine your home. Is it a McMansion or a snug bungalow? It could be brand new – built to your exact specifications, or it could be a classic, built years ago when homebuilders took great pride in their craftsmanship. Take a few moments to walk through the house – from the front door through the living room to the kitchen and back to the bedrooms. How many bedrooms? And the furniture? Anything on the walls?

Now let’s go back out in the front yard. Look up and down the street. Is this a neighborhood, an apartment complex, or perhaps instead of a front yard there is a busy street that runs in front of your high-rise condominium? Are you living in a rural community, the suburbs, or possibly you are one of those people who thrives in the midst of a busy metropolis? Think for a few moments about the way you would describe the city where you live: rural; small town; county seat; bustling center of industry, arts, and commerce.
If you have the physical location pretty well in mind, let’s take some time to consider some of the more intangible characteristics of this ideal community. Consider these questions: Do you feel safe in your home, walking down the street, when you are driving to work or running errands? Do you have confidence that you will be treated fairly on the job, at the market, or when you have to attend to business with government officials? Do you expect your neighbors, your acquaintances, and the strangers you meet in the course of your day to treat you with dignity, honor, and respect? Do you expect them to mean what they say and say what they mean? Do you imagine an ideal community as a place where the presence of hope, peace, and joy flourish – as do the people who live there?

Finally, to close this thought experiment, let me ask what you would be willing to pay to live there. How would you assess the value of living in such a place? What would you be willing to embrace, and what would you be willing to discard, in order to create such a community? Is it an asset you would want your children and their children to inherit?

**Wisdom’s Invitation**

At the opening of Proverbs 8 we find Woman Wisdom raising her voice again. As before, she stands in a place of prominence at the entrance to the city. She has no interest in being subtle; rather she calls out loudly and plainly, imploring people to pay attention to what she has to say:

- Listen to me! For I have important things to tell you.
- Everything I say is right,
- for I speak the truth
- and detest every kind of deception. 8:6-7

She seems to anticipate that there are some who will dismiss her instruction as only sweet-sounding words. Some may consider her naive. They may even question her motives. If not that, perhaps they will doubt the efficacy of what she has to say.

She persists; and assures them that the words she has for them carry great value.

- Choose my instruction rather than silver,
- and knowledge rather than pure gold.
- For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies.
- Nothing you desire can compare with it. 8:10-11

Indeed, the “good judgment,” the “knowledge and discernment,” the “common sense” and “insight” she has to offer leads to “success” and “strength.” Furthermore, the value of her instruction is made particularly evident when those in positions of authority “fear the Lord.”
Because of me, kings reign,
and rulers make just decrees.
Rulers lead with my help,
and nobles make righteous judgments. 8:15-16

Do you see it? Did you hear what she said? Justice and righteousness are established where those in charge seek God’s wisdom, but wisdom is not reserved for those in authority. This wisdom that leads one to walk blamelessly – to walk in a way that honors God’s will and purpose – that leads one on the path to righteousness, justice, and equity – is available to all who open themselves to receive it.

I love all who love me.
Those who search will surely find me. 8:17

Here is the great promise: when the people who “fear the Lord” – who show the utmost regard for the ineffable wonder of God’s presence, power, and glory – welcome the words Women Wisdom has to give them, living in alignment with this instruction creates a community that is priceless – a covenant community where people live in right relationship with one another and with God.

I have riches and honor,
as well as enduring wealth and justice.
My gifts are better than gold, even the purest gold,
my wages better than sterling silver!
I walk in righteousness,
in paths of justice.
Those who love me inherit wealth.
I will fill their treasuries. 8:18-21

Creating this kind of community – inheriting this wealth – is also a choice against the alternative. We don’t like to talk about the ugly habits and predilections that corrupt our communities – that set us against one another. We would rather just pretend they are not there. Women Wisdom calls those who will listen to “confess” – to agree that there are destructive forces in the midst of the community, and to “repent” – to choose the better way – God’s way.

All who fear the Lord will hate evil.
Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance,
corruption and perverse speech. 8:13

“Hate.” It is a strong word. “An intense dislike.” “Despising something passionately.” As people who are committed to “walking blamelessly” there can be no compromise with evil, however it expresses itself, whether it is pride, arrogance, corruption, or perverse speech. Communities where these things are ignored, excused, or allowed to multiply are destined for conflict.
In Proverbs 2 we learned that the enduring value of wisdom is that it carries with it the understanding that my relationship with God and my neighbor are more important than any pleasures that might tempt me to do any less than love God with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind and to love my neighbor as myself (cf. Luke 10:27). Here in Proverbs 8, we learn wisdom is also more important than any riches the world might hold.

**Our World Today**

As we began, I asked you to imagine your ideal community – where we would want to live and how you would want to feel. I would guess that most of you made your choices based on where you thought you would thrive. As my wife and I consider where we might live in retirement, that is what we are hoping to find.

Unfortunately, there are many who do not have the freedom to choose where they live. Regrettably, where they live – the community that surrounds them – is not a community that is shaped by God’s wisdom.

When they go out for a run, they have to think about the clothes they wear and the route they take. Even in their own home, if police come knocking on their door in the middle of the night, they worry they may not see the sun rise the next morning. What if they make a purchase with a bogus bill, will they be shown the kind of respect we would want to be shown if we made the same mistake?

God has designed us to live in community. For this community to thrive people must be honest and truthful in their dealings with one another. They must treat one another with respect, acknowledging every person’s right to fair treatment without bias toward them because of their race, age, or status. They must be conscientious to avoid playing favorites or to persist in claiming a position of privilege.

The kind of community God desires is not an impossible dream. It is within our grasp, if we will turn to God. Our goal must be to know God and God’s ways more fully and to commit ourselves to follow the path of righteousness, the way of wisdom – to “walk blamelessly.” People of faith must value community as a place where the presence of hope, peace, and joy flourish.

**Discussion Questions**

What are some of the policies, principles, and practices that keep your community from becoming the ideal community you imagine?

What would you be willing to give up in order to devote more of your attention to growing in wisdom?

How can people of faith practically express their hatred of the expression of evil in their community in tangible ways that move the community toward God’s vision?
Rev. Ashley Randall is the pastor of Garden City UMC. He is working with a group of faith leaders across Chatham County to help establish the Savannah Area Interfaith Justice Ministry as part of the DART network of congregation-based community organizations (thedartcenter.org). Contact him at ashley@gardencityumc.com.

Feast with Wisdom

Summer Quarter: Many Faces of Wisdom
Unit 1: Wisdom in Proverbs

Sunday school lesson for the week of June 28, 2020
By Rev. Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: Proverbs 9
Key Verse: Proverbs 9:6

Purpose: To understand the transformation of our world that is possible when we enter into intimate fellowship with God’s wisdom

Life around the Table

Competing in triathlons has helped me sustain my focus on maintaining my physical conditioning over the last few years. Swimming, biking, and running were all activities I had practiced since I was a kid. For me, the combination of these three sports has helped me avoid most of the injuries that some aging single-sport athletes experience.

I have found the variety of physical challenge also benefits my mental health. Exertion causes the body to release endorphins. The results include an improved sense of well-being, clearer thinking, and more restful sleep.

Many athletes report similar results. These benefits alone would be enough to keep me committed to this discipline, but there is another benefit that is even more rewarding than the physical and mental consequences – one I am even more aware of now that I am missing out on it during the pandemic.

Prior to the shutdown precipitated by the pandemic, I was a part of a group of people who gathered at 5:30 a.m. two or three days a week at the Chatham County Aquatic Center. That early in the morning, our greetings aren’t much more than a few mumbled “hellos.” There is not much conversation for the next hour or so while we are churning out the laps. We do have a brief opportunity to chat in the locker room as we prepare to go to work, but what has made this a valued part of my routine is what happens on Friday.
Friday is the morning when a group of us make the short trip to Midtown Deli to gather around tables and share a meal. It may not be much more than a bagel and a cup of coffee (the best bagel you can buy in Savannah; mediocre coffee), but the fellowship is what has transformed us from a diverse group of strangers into a family.

We talk about what is happening around town, across the county, and around the world. We celebrate the birth of kids and grandkids. We discuss upcoming competitions. We coordinate how we will provide a meal for one of our group who has a health challenge. We discuss questions of meaning and purpose. We comfort one another on occasions of grief. Sharing a meal around a table – week after week – has created a fellowship that has enriched my life.

I could share a similar story about the group of friends I run with two or three days a week. We run for about an hour or so, but what keeps us coming back (and what I am deeply missing right now) is the time we spend in conversation over a cup of coffee when the miles are completed.

Invitation to a Feast

In Proverbs 9, Woman Wisdom has moved beyond the invitation to come and learn from her to come and eat with her. She has prepared a sumptuous feast (almost sounds like “Beef Bourguignon”). What might have looked like an offer to take a desk in Wisdom’s classroom has become an invitation to take a seat at the banquet table in her home.

Notice the description of her home, as well. She has worked to build it. It has seven pillars. These images suggest that her home has a stable foundation – perfectly stable when we note the significance of the number seven. Wisdom’s home is the ideal dwelling place with no flaws or defects.

Previously she has proclaimed her invitation from prominent places in the public sphere – the city gate, along the main road, from the highest point in the city. In addition, this time Woman Wisdom sends out her servants to make the invitation known to even more people.

The nature of this invitation reminds me of the parable Jesus tells in Luke 14:16-24. In that parable a man prepares a meal, sends out an invitation, but then hears that many of his invited guests have made excuses for why they are unable or unwilling to accept. At that point the man instructs his servants, “Go quickly to the city’s streets, the busy ones and the side streets, and bring the poor, crippled, blind, and lame.” Even after this expanded invitation, there is still room around the table, so the man sends his servants out again. “Go to the highways and back alleys and urge people to come in so that my house will be filled.”

In Proverbs, Woman Wisdom issues her invitation to the “simple” and to “those who have no sense.” Today that characterization might lead us to think that she is inviting those who are impaired or who have some mental disability. Certainly, those people are welcome at Wisdom’s table. We might also entertain the idea that Wisdom’s appeal is to those who are teachable –
those who are open to receiving instruction. They are not arrogant or proud. Their thinking may be naive or immature; but they are open to learning and can benefit from what Wisdom has to offer.

It is essential that you remember that this is an invitation to a feast. It is not an invitation to a workshop, a study group, or a seminar. “Come, eat my food, and drink the wine I have mixed” (9:5). Sharing a meal is intimate fellowship with another. Furthermore, it is not just fellowship with Wisdom; it is fellowship with all those who gather at Wisdom’s table. This fellowship creates a community. This fellowship leads one to “walk in the way of understanding” (9:6b). This fellowship leads to life.

**Different House, Different Table**

Proverbs 9:13 reminds us that there is another woman in another house who is offering another invitation. She is Folly. We have been introduced to her before. We have been warned about her.

Folly is an unruly woman. She is undisciplined, impulsive, obnoxious. Nevertheless, she calls out from her prominent location in the public sphere. She issues her invitation to the same “simple” folk who wander by her house. She attempts to entice those who pass by with the promise that her meal is “sweet” because it has been obtained unscrupulously – it’s stolen. She hasn’t worked for it or paid those who produced it. It costs her nothing to share. And there is no sense of shame in how she acquired it; indeed, there seems to be a sense of perverse pride in that she beat the system.

The writer of Proverbs seems to admit that her invitation is not only compelling, but convincing. Indeed, there are those who have accepted her invitation. What is not apparent to those who are passing by is the fate of those who have accepted her invitation. “Her guests are in the depths of the grave” (9:18b). Folly’s invitation is the path to destruction, despair, and death.

Folly has no interest in building a community that values our relationship with God and our neighbor. Folly is all in on satisfying our insatiable appetites. Folly is not committed to establishing a community where people are honest and truthful in their dealings with one another, but twisting the truth and telling lies to create confusion, division, and chaos. Rather than treating people with respect, acknowledging every person’s right to fair treatment without bias toward them because of their race, age, or status, Folly encourages pursuing narrow self-interest for short-term gain. Folly is always looking for a way to profit from another’s misfortune and shows no remorse.

**Extending Wisdom’s Table**

The world pandemic has illuminated some of the vulnerabilities, inequities, and disparities that exist around the world. Some see these challenges as consequences of the globalization of markets and the unbridled pursuit of profit-maximization. The challenge of recovering from this
crisis has prompted a number of people who believe that challenges and uncertainties can pave the way for innovative solutions to engage in conversation. One of those persons is Kailash Satyarthi.

Kailash Satyarthi was born in India and studied to become an electrical engineer. In 1980 he gave up his career and founded the Bachpan Bachao Andolan (Save Childhood Movement) – committed to ending child labor, slavery, and trafficking. To date he and his team have liberated nearly 100,000 children in India. In 2014 he was the co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, along with Malala Yousafzai, “for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education.”

Over the past few months Satyarthi has been contributing to the conversation about how the citizens of the world might establish a “compassionate economy.” “The state response to fighting the pandemic, reviving the economy and protecting law and order are all fine. However, equally important is the emotional response while dealing with the most vulnerable.”

Satyarthi proposes a four-tier approach to help us deal with the challenges our world faces. It is based on four elements: Compassion, Gratitude, Responsibility and Tolerance. “I am proposing nothing new here. All these elements are already present and are rooted as basic human values across cultures and religions. The attainment of liberty, dignity, justice, equality, sustainability and peace should be the key goal of our civilization. These are not merely ideals and principles but are achievable realities.”

First, he advocates for the “globalization of compassion.” At its essence he is appealing to each of us to “feel others’ pain and suffering as our own” – to acknowledge the humanity of the marginalized and excluded and then to reorder our priorities to alleviate their suffering and improve their situation.

Secondly, Satyarthi challenges each of us to build a “supply chain of gratitude.” “From the moment we are born to using food, water, clothing, housing, education, health, entertainment, security and all other facilities, there is someone’s contribution in every wake of life. Business leaders in their boardrooms and politicians in parliament should feel grateful for the hard work and sacrifices of many others in contributing to their wealth and power. I strongly feel that building a supply chain of gratitude is essential for cultivating mutual respect, love and harmony in all facets of life.”

The third element is the creation of an “Internet of Responsibility.” As John Donne said, “No man is an island.” Our problems and our solutions are all interconnected; we must acknowledge and practice living with shared responsibility.

Satyarthi’s fourth element is “creating a Universe of Tolerance. Intolerance has been the most common reason for clashes within civilisations. On the other hand, tolerance has nurtured co-
existence among diversities and differences.” It is principle of adopting a stance of humility rather than insisting on pride and arrogance.

Satyarthi adds that political leaders, citizens, and consumers must realize “that universal human rights are not merely guiding principles, but enforceable realities and essential conditions for justice, inclusion, harmony and peace.”

In closing one of his op-eds, Satyarthi says, “There is no substitute to a shared future of humankind. How we shape it is up to us.”

The kind of community God desires is not an impossible dream. It is within our grasp, if we will allow God’s wisdom to guide our thoughts and actions. Our goal must be to know God and God’s ways more fully and to commit ourselves to follow the path of righteousness, the way of wisdom – to “walk blamelessly.” People of faith must value community as a place where the presence of hope, peace, and joy flourish.

Wisdom invites us to feast at the table. Will you invite others to join you there?

Discussion Questions

How have you experienced the transformation that occurs when people share a meal together?

What is one lifestyle change you could make to reduce the “noise” that keeps you from hearing Wisdom’s invitation to her table?

Why is Folly’s invitation still so persistent and persuasive?

How do Satyarthi’s four elements align with your understanding of God’s wisdom?

Rev. Ashley Randall is the pastor of Garden City UMC. He is working with a group of faith leaders across Chatham County to help establish the Savannah Area Interfaith Justice Ministry as part of the DART network of congregation-based community organizations (thedartcenter.org). Contact him at ashley@gardencityumc.com.

To read more:

“Globalizing compassion amidst COVID-19” by Kailash Satyarthi, Friday, 27 March 2020

“The need for a compassionate economy to protect vulnerable communities” by Kailash Satyarthi, Monday, 4 May 2020
Summer Quarter: Many Faces of Wisdom
Unit 1: Wisdom in the Gospels

Sunday school lesson for the week of July 5, 2020
By Rev. Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: Matthew 11:7-19
Key Verse: Matthew 11:19

Purpose: To acknowledge the resistance people who follow God’s wisdom experience

A Matter of Perspective

Amy Grant grew up in a religious and loving home in Nashville, Tenn. She regularly attended worship services Sunday morning, Sunday evening, and Wednesday night. The hymns she sang there shaped her faith and the message that would be part of her witness, but her church prohibited musical instruments in its worship. For her musical inspiration she turned to a crowded coffee house on Nashville’s Music Row, and the Carole King and James Taylor albums she listened to at home.

In 1976 – weeks before her sixteenth birthday – she signed with Myrrh Records, which released her debut album the next year. Over the next decade or so, Ms. Grant produced dozens of albums that sold millions of copies, regularly made the Billboard charts, and earned her Grammy and Dove Award nominations.

When she started, contemporary Christian music was a little-known niche-market that was rarely heard outside of church basements and youth rooms. Some have said she probably did more than any other figure to put a warm and winsome public face on the growing evangelical movement. Her performances were polished, professional, and energetic. She captured the attention of the secular press, major-league concert venues, and national retail marketers.

While many evangelicals hailed Grant as a musical ambassador to mainstream culture, others greeted her professional triumphs with complaints that she was too worldly and too sexy. From the beginning, her career was marked by the controversy between those outward-looking evangelicals who believe the church’s mission is to seek and save the lost and those who believe the church is charged with the responsibility to preserve believers’ holiness and moral purity.

Her energetic performance on the 1985 Grammy Awards telecast offended some evangelicals who considered her leopard-print jacket and bare feet improper. Her partnership with the Target retailer, which sponsored some of her tours, angered opponents of abortion who were boycotting the chain’s parent company, Dayton Hudson, because of its support for Planned Parenthood.
A writer in the evangelical magazine “Christianity Today” criticized Ms. Grant’s 1997 release, “Behind the Eyes,” for its “complete absence of explicitly Christian lyrical content.” The ensuing controversy prompted the Gospel Music Association to adopt content requirements for its annual Dove Award entries.

“I never invested much emotional energy into putting out those grass fires,” she said. “I always kind of assumed that it is part of human nature to misunderstand people and assume the worst. So I didn’t say, ‘Oh, how awful it is to be misjudged.’” (Rabey, Steve; May 11, 2002, “Religion Journal; A Chastened Singer Returns to Christian Basics,” The New York Times)

In 1999 she divorced Gary Chapman – another popular contemporary Christian music artist. A year later she married country music star Vince Gill, who was also recently divorced. Almost immediately, her music disappeared from many Christian retail stores and radio stations, and she received no more invitations to perform at high-profile Christian events.

Grant never tried to justify her divorce. She has said, “The Bible clearly says God hates divorce.” She adds, “I have come to see that Christianity is not really about the life perfectly led, but it’s about not giving up on the process and believing that there’s a much bigger picture to God’s purpose for all of us than our ability to screw it all up. We wouldn’t need a savior if everybody did everything all right.”

Those of you who are familiar with the controversy that has dogged Amy Grant may not be familiar with a very similar story that has developed recently around the contemporary Christian music artist, Lauren Daigle, and vice versa. She released her debut album, “How Can It Be,” in 2015. It reached No. 1 on the Billboard Top Christian Albums chart and earned her a Grammy nomination. Her third album, “Look Up Child,” released in September 2018, has become the highest-charting Christian album by a woman in more than 20 years.

In October 2018 Lauren Daigle accepted an invitation to perform her single,“ Still Rolling Stones,” on “The Ellen DeGeneres Show.” Because Ellen DeGeneres is openly gay, people accused Daigle of letting her newfound fame lead her to compromise her values.

A few weeks later Daigle was a guest on a radio program that is distributed by the iHeartRadio platform. The host asked Daigle about the criticism she had received. He wondered if Daigle found the criticism over being on “Ellen” to be “devastating” or “disappointing” or if she expected it. Daigle responded, “The second you step outside of what people want for you…that’s when the criticism comes.” One lesson she said she’s learned from the experience is that it’s not fair to expect those who aren’t in her position to understand the decisions she’s facing. Other people are simply too far removed from her situation.

In another interview with WAY-FM Radio, Daigle defended herself by spreading a message of love. “I think the second we start drawing lines around which people are able to be approached
and which aren’t, we’ve already completely missed the heart of God,” she said. “I don’t have all the answers in life and I’m definitely not gonna act like I do, but the one thing that I know for sure is I can’t choose who I’m supposed to be kind to and who I’m supposed to show love to and who I’m not, because that’s the mission right?” she continued. “Be who Christ was to everyone.”

In the midst of the controversy, Daigle said her calling is clearer to her now than it has ever been. Referring to her success as a crossover artist in an interview with “The Christian Post,” Daigle said, “I think a lot of Christian backlash is just because they’re not used to being comfortable in an environment that might feel compromising… So I think that’s the part that I just constantly go back to, ‘What is the Great Commission? To go out into the world, preaching about His love, sharing the good news.’ That’s how I look at it.”

**Who Is Keyser Söze?**

Let me start by saying that the leap from the Book of Proverbs to Jesus questioning the crowd about their perceptions and expectations of the mission and ministry of John the Baptist feels abrupt and disjointed. We move from feasting at the banquet table with Woman Wisdom to responding to questions about a man who made a meal from locusts and wild honey. So let’s just dive in.

John has been arrested and is being held in prison. He is hearing reports about the ministry of Jesus, but he is still not sure that Jesus checks all the boxes to legitimately qualify as the “Messiah.” John sends some of his followers to ask Jesus, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?” (Matthew 11:3). Jesus basically responds to them, “Go tell John what you have seen me do.”

Once they have left, Jesus begins to ask the crowd who remains about their assessment of John the Baptist. Jesus offers them a range of options; quite possibly Jesus is rehearsing the kinds of comments he has heard and overheard as he has been walking from village to village.

John’s ministry did attract lots of attention. People came from all over Judea to hear him preach. Many of them were moved to confess their sin and submit to baptism.

Others took offense at the harshness of his message. It was much easier to disparage him – his message, his diet, his clothing – than to accept the criticism he heaped on them. If his detractors could get people to question the character of the messenger, perhaps people would dismiss the content of his message.

Jesus speaks to the heart of this controversy – this difference of interpretation. “Don’t be confused any longer,” Jesus seems to say. “What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet” (11:9). Jesus not only establishes John’s place in the great line of God’s prophets, Jesus proclaims than John is “more than a prophet.” “He is the one of whom it is
written: Look, I'm sending my messenger before you, who will prepare your way before you” (11:10).

What follows is really quite puzzling. “I assure you that no one who has ever been born is greater than John the Baptist. Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he” (11:11). Jesus seems to be challenging everything we know about greatness. He is turning our ideas about position and prestige upside down. He is calling us to consider how different things look from God’s perspective than from our limited experience. God’s ways are different from our ways. “This world’s wisdom is foolishness to God” (1 Corinthians 3:19).

Jesus seems to recognize that he has left his audience dazed and confused. “To what will I compare this generation? It is like a child sitting in the marketplaces calling out to others, “We played the flute for you and you didn’t dance. We sang a funeral song and you didn’t mourn’” (11:16-17). Those who rely on their own insight are like children who can’t decide from one moment to the next what they want.

The people who were in this very crowd had probably been among those who complained that John was too radical, too austere, too extreme. And even though Jesus seemed a bit more relaxed, they weren’t that comfortable with some of the invitations he accepted. Perhaps Jesus should be a little more careful about associating with some of those people.

The message is clear. If you are unwilling to receive God’s wisdom, you will use any excuse to reject the one who delivers it. John is too strict. Jesus is too accommodating.

Before Jesus proceeds to heap on the “ woes,” he closes with this maxim, “Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds” (11:19, NRSV). The New Living Translation reads, “But wisdom is shown to be right by its results.” The Message paraphrases it like this, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.”

No matter how people assess God’s messengers or God’s message, Jesus is clear that those who seek to follow God must trust God to fulfill God’s promises. Once again, as Paul writes the Corinthians, “Don’t fool yourself. If some of you think they are worldly-wise, then they should become foolish so that they can become wise. This world’s wisdom is foolishness to God. As it’s written, He catches the wise in their cleverness. And also, The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are silly” (1 Corinthians 3:18-20).

**A Dirge or a Dance**

The last few weeks have seen demonstrations across our country and around the world. The death of George Floyd has been the precipitating event, but the harm done to people of color that is being protested has persisted over centuries. A coalition of voices is coming together to raise questions about how we might work together to move forward as a nation to address the persistent problems of systematic racism, injustice, and inequality.
In some ways, the current demonstrations seem to echo the demonstrations that were led by Martin Luther King, Jr. more than 50 years ago. In other ways, they are clearly building on the progress he and others in the Civil Rights Movement initiated.

Then, as now, there are those who object to the way the demonstrations are conducted. People object when professional athletes take a knee during the national anthem. People object when marchers block city streets. People object when signs don’t fully express the sentiment that they think would be fairer and more accurate. People object when the protestors question the modes, methods, and motives of those who have been charged with responsibility for preserving the peace.

It may be years before we are able to see where God is leading us – who was right and who was wrong – but for now I agree with Lauren Daigle: “I don’t have all the answers in life and I’m definitely not gonna act like I do, but the one thing that I know for sure is I can’t choose who I’m supposed to be kind to and who I’m supposed to show love to … because that’s the mission right? Be who Christ was to everyone.”

**Discussion Questions**

Who have you seen become the target for the kind of criticism Amy Grant and Lauren Daigle received?

Would you have been more likely to follow John the Baptist or Jesus? Be honest! Are you more strict with keeping rules or more indulgent and easy-going?

How do you evaluate your perspective in the midst of all the noise?

*Rev. Ashley Randall is the pastor of Garden City UMC. He is working with a group of faith leaders across Chatham County to help establish the Savannah Area Interfaith Justice Ministry as part of the DART network of congregation-based community organizations ([thedartcenter.org](http://thedartcenter.org)). Contact him at ashley@gardencityumc.com.*

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**Have I got a story for you!**

**PATHWAY TO HIS PRESENCE**

**B.J. FUNK**

It is 3 p.m. on Saturday, May 30, 2020, and I have been, as many of you, glued to the television over an outbreak of violence in many of our cities. The initial reason is the murder of an African American, George Floyd. However, that has now been overshadowed by the collective reason of perceived mistreatment toward black men and women by white police officers for years.
And it’s even more than that. It’s anger that has been stuffed down in the souls of any black person mistreated by any white person. Not only by the police.

Two other big stories also have my interest. America has just recently hit more than 100,000 deaths from this coronavirus. And crowds are gathered for the launch of a space rocket.

Three huge stories. Three huge prayer concerns.

I sit alone asking the Lord to show me how to pray.

There is a knock at my door. Three African American people stand on my porch. A young woman, a man, and a small child.

I ask, “May I help you?”

The woman says, “Every time I pass your home coming back from work, I want to stop …”

*My mind moves quickly. A few, in considering building a log home, have stopped to ask if they can look inside. I guess that is why they stopped.*

But she finishes. “Every time I pass your home, I want to stop and pray for you.”

*Pray for me?*

I am puzzled. They don’t know me. Never seen me. Did not know my name. Yet, they felt led to pray for me?

How could I turn that down?

Of course, I said, “Yes.”

We held hands. She prayed for nothing specific. Just a beautiful prayer of love. When she ended, I said one for her and her family. Then they left.

In these last couple of hours, I have pondered what that was all about. I think I know. Their obedience fulfilled two scriptures for me.

“Before they call I will answer.” Isaiah 65:24. I had just asked the Lord how I should pray. Right after that came their knock.

And “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16

This is how I see it. As I sat in my living room stressing a bit over how to pray, (it was all so large and overwhelming) the Lord whispered to this family to stop and be His answer to me. And the answer was, “Just pray. It isn’t so much what you say. Just pray.”

God sent me a righteous family, whose prayers availeth much.
And then, there’s this. While black and white were fighting on the news, black and white were praying together on my front porch.

I will never forget this day.

He is such a faithful God. Praise His Name.

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

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Happy birthday, John Wesley

WHAT’S OLD IS NEW AGAIN
ANNE PACKARD

The Moore Methodist Museum celebrates John Wesley’s birthday each year on June 28. This in itself can lead to confusion because his real birth date is June 17, but when England’s calendar changed from the Julian calendar to the Georgian calendar, 10 days were lost and that moved his birth date to June 28.

The tagline the Museum uses to celebrate John Wesley’s birthday is, “We’re going to party like it’s 1703!” Usually, at the end of June, the Museum is filled with summer campers who always enjoy a party and the cake that comes with it. We spend a little time thinking about how birthdays would be celebrated in 1703 and how that would differ from 2020.

But this year is different. The Moore Methodist Museum will be open, but no summer campers will be joining us to celebrate John Wesley’s birthday. Masks will replace party hats and we are trying to research how we can offer party food without killing anyone. As I put the announcement of John’s birthday party under the Events tab of our website, www.mooremethodistmuseum.com, I included the tagline, “We’re going to party like it’s 1703!” At least that is not being taken away.

This got me thinking to other similarities between 1703 and 2020. Thinking tends to lead me to research and research seems to lead me to how what’s old is new again. This year is not the only year when John Wesley’s birthday might be muted due to a pandemic. Even the exact year of his birth included a small pox pandemic that killed 1,500 people in Canada, or New France as it was called then. The year prior saw a yellow fever epidemic that killed 500 people in New York. A few years later another small pox outbreak killed 36 percent of the population of Iceland – more than 18,000 people.

The point of June 28 is not the party or even the cake. It is not about a birthday celebration. It is about hope. The hope of the sixteenth child born to rather poor parents in a rather obscure part of the world. The hope of love and the power it holds to change the world. The hope of a hot meal
or medicine or comfort. The hope of lifting our voices in song. This year we might not celebrate the birth of John Wesley with a party, but maybe that’s not how it should be honored. We will celebrate his birth with the hope of meeting again in the places we hold most dear to sing our hearts out to the Lord and holding each other close.

Anne Packard serves as Conference Historian and director of the Arthur J. Moore Methodist Museum on St. Simons Island. Contact her at director@mooremuseum.org.

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### Retired Clergy Birthdays – June 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6/02</td>
<td>Jan Durham</td>
<td>103 Willeford Dr.; Savannah, GA 31411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/03</td>
<td>Cindy Garrard</td>
<td>PO Box 39; Midland, GA 31820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/03</td>
<td>Joyce Payne</td>
<td>423 Nandina Ct.; Warner Robins, GA 31088</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/04</td>
<td>Frank Parr</td>
<td>24 Wyly Ave.; Savannah, GA 31406</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/05</td>
<td>Pam France</td>
<td>41 Holsteiner Lane; Dallas, GA 30132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/06</td>
<td>W. Raymond Wilder, Jr.</td>
<td>2001 South Lee St.; Americus, GA 31709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/06</td>
<td>Sandra Wilson</td>
<td>4657 Twin Oak Dr.; Macon, GA 31210</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/07</td>
<td>Bob Williams</td>
<td>PO Box 665; Dublin, GA 31040</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/08</td>
<td>Marcia Cochran</td>
<td>344 Stone Mill Dr.; Brunswick, GA 31520</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/09</td>
<td>John Clements</td>
<td>468 Edwards Creek Rd.; Alamo, GA 30411</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/09</td>
<td>Whit Kirkland</td>
<td>551 Kirkland Dr.; Byron, GA 31008</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/09</td>
<td>Sylvia Ross</td>
<td>2000 Cambridge Ave. #331; Wyomissing, PA 19610</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/09</td>
<td>Matt Woodbery</td>
<td>Box 4028; APO AE 09096</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/10</td>
<td>Bill Huddle</td>
<td>5310 Winding Lakes Dr.; Cumming, GA 30028</td>
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<td>6/10</td>
<td>Charles Smith, Jr.</td>
<td>4102 Serendipity Ct.; Martinez, GA 30907</td>
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<td>6/14</td>
<td>Eul Kim</td>
<td>4320 Jackson St.; Riverside, CA 92503</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/15</td>
<td>Mira Barrett</td>
<td>433 Paul St.; Portal, GA 30450</td>
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<td>6/15</td>
<td>Paul Dupree</td>
<td>2050 W. Broad Ave., #5; Albany, GA 31707</td>
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<td>6/15</td>
<td>Stephen Webb</td>
<td>260 Riverchase Dr.; Bainbridge, GA 39819</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/17</td>
<td>Charles Cravey</td>
<td>6500 Clito Rd.; Statesboro, GA 30461</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/17</td>
<td>William Harris</td>
<td>111 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522</td>
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<td>6/17</td>
<td>Heyward Hiers</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/18</td>
<td>Leland Collins</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/19</td>
<td>R. Randall Ray</td>
<td>139 Cedar Ridge Rd.; Americus, GA 31709</td>
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<td>6/20</td>
<td>Glen Hancock</td>
<td>3098 Rufus Thompson Rd.; Donalsonville, GA 39845</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/20</td>
<td>Saunders Pinckard</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/20</td>
<td>Jim Rush</td>
<td>160 University Park Dr.; Homewood, AL 35209</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/21</td>
<td>Nancylee Cater</td>
<td>PO Box 8547; Warner Robins, GA 31095</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/21</td>
<td>Lonzie Wester</td>
<td>2616 Winchester Rd.; Waycross, GA 31501</td>
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<tr>
<td>6/23</td>
<td>Sue Diebolt</td>
<td>2006 Waverly Ct.; Lancaster, SC 29720</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/23</td>
<td>Don King</td>
<td>140 Long Pines Circle; East Dublin, GA 31027</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/24</td>
<td>Doug Harvey</td>
<td>5109 River Rd.; Jakin, GA 39861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/24</td>
<td>Jack Knight</td>
<td>255 Cross Country Chase; Stokesdale, NC 27357</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OBITUARIES

Rev. Henry Kenyon Erwin

He was born in Damascus, Ga. on May 2, 1920.

He was predeceased by his wife of 63 years, Lila Skinner Erwin, and one grandson. He is survived by five daughters, eight grandchildren, 20 great grandchildren and four great-great grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Methodist Children’s Home, Magnolia Manor, The Georgia War Veterans Nursing Home in Augusta, or a church missions’ program of your choice.

A memorial service will be held at a later date.

Chance and Hydrick Funeral Directors, 2502 Richmond Hill Rd, Augusta, Ga. 30906.

Scripture Readings – June 16

June 21
Third Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 21:8-21
Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17 or Psalm 17 (UMH 749)
Romans 6:1b-11
Matthew 10:24-39

June 28
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost
Genesis 22:1-14
Psalm 13 (UMH 746)
Events in the South Georgia Conference – 6/16/2020 edition

Wesley Glen Day – June 21
Fathers’ Day is Wesley Glen Day across the South Georgia Conference. Show your support for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities by making a gift to Wesley Glen Ministries on June 16 in honor of a strong male role model in your life. Celebrate by wearing your favorite Wesley Glen T-shirt from past years. Post your pictures on social media with the tags: #WesleyGlenMinistries #growingtogether [www.wesleyglenministries.com](http://www.wesleyglenministries.com).

Pastoral Care as a Gateway to Recovery, Part 2 – July 7
“Pastoral Care as a Gateway to Recovery from Addiction” is a three-part series for clergy led by Rev. Deborah Wight-Knight, Conference Pastoral Counselor. Deborah will interview experts in the area of recovery who can help our clergy identify addiction issues, consult appropriately with parishioners and others around the problem, learn about the “Intervention” process, and then know how/where to refer for treatment. These workshops will also look at addiction from a family systems perspective. Part 1: June 11, 10:30 am - noon | Part 2: July 7, 10:30 am - noon | Part 3: August 11, 10:30 am – noon | Register

ERT Basic Certification & Chainsaw Training, Fitzgerald – July 17-18
An ERT and Chainsaw Training will be held Friday, July 17 and Saturday, July 18 at Central UMC in Fitzgerald. The class will be held Friday evening from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. and on Saturday from 8 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. The chainsaw training will begin at the conclusion of the ERT class and will run from noon until 5 p.m. For questions, contact Kelly Crane, Coastal District Disaster Response Coordinator, at [kelcrane@gmail.com](mailto:kelcrane@gmail.com) or 731-499-0491. Register now