

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – AUGUST 4 EDITION

Camp Connect adapts, hosts sold-out day camps

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Even during a typical summer, Camp Connect leaders have to be prepared to deal with challenges, from homesickness to hurricanes to health issues.

But this summer proved to be one of the most challenging in [Camp Connect](#) history.

Because of the global coronavirus pandemic, in early May – after the summer staff had been hired, a theme had been set, and camp registration was in full swing – director Suzanne Akins made the difficult decision to cancel overnight camps.

Although a heartbreaking decision, it was the wise and safe one, Akins said.

“We wanted nothing more than to have our full staff on campus, running camps for hundreds of campers the way we always do,” she said. “But the risk was just too high.”

While disappointed that the summer wouldn’t be as expected or planned, the Camp Connect leadership team – Akins and head counselors Wesley Hanson and Gabriela Reinheld – didn’t let themselves mourn too long.

They did what they do best: they prayed, got creative, and began dreaming about what the summer could be.

Instead of the planned six sessions of summer camp, they created day camps designed to give children a much-needed time of fun and play during an extraordinarily unusual summer.

“The main need we saw was to give kids a normal day. That was our goal,” Akins said. “We felt they needed to have a normal day of playing, interacting, being outside, and swimming. Just a normal summer day.”

With safety in mind, they designed one series of day camps for elementary students and another for middle-school students. Camps were kept small to allow for social distancing. Temperatures were checked at drop-off, most activities were outside on Epworth By The Sea’s large lawn, masks were required for anything done inside, and lunches were brought from home. All six camps sold out in less than 24 hours.

Meeting kids’ and parents’ needs was top of mind when planning, Akins said.

“For parents, it filled a need for childcare, but it also gave them and their kids a mental health day,” she said. “They really wanted that for their kids. A lot of parents teared up telling us how much it meant.”

It was important, too, that the day camps – “Field Day Fridays” for elementary students and “Middle School Mondays” for those who had just completed sixth, seventh, or eighth grades – included elements of Camp Connect.

“We wanted to try and incorporate a lot of the main camp games and camp experiences into one day,” Hanson said. “We bottled up a week of camp into one day, which was pretty challenging!”

For 13-year-old twins Susannah and Samuel Duke-Barton, Middle School Monday was a chance to have a new camp experience during a summer when much had been cancelled.

“It was good to feel a tiny bit of camp,” said Samuel, a rising eighth-grader at Arthur Williams Middle School in Jesup. “We didn’t get to have the full week (of camp), but it was still fun to have one day, and it was good to get outside.”

They enjoyed swimming, the ropes course and rock wall, and familiar games like Gaga Ball and Mafia, Susannah said.

“It was fun to experience the camp all in one day,” she said.

Camp Connect has been an important part of Susannah and Samuel’s spiritual development since third grade, said their mother Rev. Rebecca Duke-Barton, pastor of Jesup First United Methodist Church.

“We are so grateful for the Camp Connect staff to find a way to add a little bit of camp into this summer,” she said “It refreshed their souls to be there and reminded them that even in a time of uncertainty, the love of God remains.”

While being adaptable and creative is embedded in the DNA of camp leaders, their passion is to remind kids of God’s love and the hope that they have because of Him. And even though it wasn’t how they initially planned, it’s always good to be with campers, Akins said.

“It felt very hopeful,” Akins said. “Like the world is not going to be as it has been, forever; that we will return to some sort of normalcy at some point. This is our passion, and to have time with the kids was just right.”

Lindsey uniquely gifted to serve as Director of Connectional Ministries

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

[*Click here to watch a brief video interview with Allison Lindsey and Kara Witherow, editor of the South Georgia Advocate*](#)

Allison Lindsey loves the local church.

Serving, resourcing, and meeting others' needs is her passion, which is one reason why she's uniquely gifted to serve as Director of Connectional Ministries.

The first lay person to serve as director, she steps into the role having served on the Connectional Ministries staff for eight years. Prior to that she chaired the Conference Nurture Team, served on the design team for Confirmation Retreat, and was involved with much of the conference's retreat ministry's programming.

"Allison is uniquely equipped to serve in this role at this very important time in the life of our annual conference," said Bishop R. Lawson Bryan, South Georgia's episcopal leader. "She is an inspiration to me because she is a 'maximizer' – always seeking ways to maximize the ministry of the local church and of the annual conference. Her reputation for excellence is known and appreciated not only in South Georgia, but also around the denomination. Through Allison's witness and leadership, the ministry of the laity continues to move to center focus in our conference. Her sense of joy in serving Christ through the connectional system is contagious!"

In her new role as director, Lindsey is reimagining and re-envisioning Connectional Ministries and its role within the Conference. She spent last week in an online training session with new Directors of Connectional Ministries and District Superintendents from around the United States. During the training, which focused on Adaptive Leadership, the group discussed the principles of alignment and attunement. Lindsey said she's spent considerable time processing those principles and how they apply to Connectional Ministries.

"I cannot think of a better way to live out our faith and our connection than aligned and attuned," she said. "How can Connectional Ministries be structured to steward the vision of the Annual Conference and the gospel in making disciples in a way that harnesses the power of being aligned and attuned to Christ's work for us in the world and in relationship with one another?"

Having served as Douglas First United Methodist Church's director of children's ministries for 10 years, Lindsey knows well the impact local churches have and the challenges they face. She looks forward to continuing to resource congregations and help clergy and laity live out their calling to make disciples.

"I love that Connectional Ministries has become a 'go-to,'" she said. "You might not know who to call, but we are the best place to start. If we don't know the answer or have a resource to share, we can connect you to the resources you need or point you in the right direction. It's the connection at its best when we are sharing and helping one another in ministry. It is one way I see us very much Alive Together in Christ."

If you talk to Lindsey long you'll hear the words "listening and learning" several times. As she begins her role as director of Connectional Ministries, she's taking time to listen and discern needs within the Conference. She takes seriously her role in learning how she and her team –

director of camping and retreats Suzanne Akins and Associate Director for Hispanic Ministries Rev. Daniel Medina – can best serve the Conference.

“My goal right now focuses on creating space to listen,” she said. “A hope that goes along with that goal is that our District Superintendents, our clergy, and our laity will offer me honesty and transparency to share their hopes, dreams, struggles, and needs so I can then begin to see where the opportunities for impact lie and begin to see how we can walk alongside our churches in ministry.”

While the coronavirus pandemic has caused uncertainty and stress, Lindsey has also seen it as a time to reset and refocus.

“Local church leaders are restarting and resetting, and it’s the perfect time to re-evaluate and look at the vision and mission of our church in these changing times.”

And with all the Church will face in the coming year, Lindsey sees Connectional Ministries’ mission and ministry as critical to helping preserve and strengthen the United Methodist connection by using its greatest and – at times - untapped asset and resource – its laity.

“Serving as Director of Connectional Ministries is a huge honor,” Lindsey said. “Our tradition places value on the partnership of clergy and laity and I want to highlight and strengthen this partnership for mission and ministry. It’s my story, and I would love for others to pioneer ways to live out their giftedness and calling and to share and encounter Jesus Christ each and every day in a way that is life-changing for everyone around them.”

Conference prepping for virtual Annual Conference session

The 2020 Annual Conference session will be held online in just 11 days.

In his [Book of Recommendations and Reports](#) welcome letter, Bishop R. Lawson Bryan noted that the words of Ephesians 2:5 have been fulfilled in the South Georgia Conference even during a global pandemic.

And now he wants the virtual Annual conference session to be a celebration of the ways South Georgia congregations have been Alive Together in Witness during this unprecedented time.

The technologically-assisted Annual Conference session began Sunday, Aug. 2 with a clergy session. Special services will span over the course of several days with the business session scheduled for Saturday, Aug. 15. Here’s an overview of how the time will be spent:

- **Saturday, Aug. 8:** Virtual Commissioning Service begins at 2 pm with Bishop R. Lawson Bryan preaching ([Link to watch](#))

- **Sunday, Aug. 9:** Virtual Ordination Service begins at 4 pm with Bishop R. Lawson Bryan preaching ([Link to watch](#))
- **Tuesday, Aug. 11:** Virtual Retiree Recognition Service begins at 7 pm ([Link to watch](#))
- **Thursday, Aug. 13:** Virtual Memorial Service begins at 7 pm with Dr. Craig Rikard preaching ([Link to watch](#))
- **Saturday, Aug. 15:** Virtual Annual Conference Session, 8:30 am - 4 pm ([Link to watch](#) for guests)

A detailed schedule of the August 15 Annual Conference Session may be found [here](#).

Clergy and lay members to Annual Conference will be sent an email with a private link to join the August 15 Annual Conference Session. The email will also include their voter identification and additional instructions. Guests will be able to watch the live stream at www.sgaumc.org/aclivestreaming.

A countdown checklist for Clergy and Lay Members to Annual Conference:

- Have you participated in one of the online platform and voting training sessions? Two additional training sessions are scheduled, August 10 at 6 pm and August 11 at 10 am. An email will be sent with the link to join.
- Do you have your [Book of Recommendations and Reports](#) (BOR) purchased or printed and ready to reference?
- Have you watched and read [these additional videos and reports](#)?

Of this year’s gathering, Bishop Bryan says, “Although this year’s Annual Conference session will be different than any we’ve ever experienced, I look forward to being Alive Together with each of you in new and exciting ways.”

Stay tuned to www.sgaumc.org/annualconference for up-to-date 2020 Annual Conference news and information.

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Apply today for Renfro Trust Grant

Connectional Ministries is accepting applications for the Southeastern Jurisdiction Renfro Trust Grant. This grant is a brick and mortar grant specifically for small, rural churches. Guidelines, requirements and applications can be found [here](#). Completed applications must be submitted to [Allison Lindsey](#) by our **conference deadline: Monday, August 24, 2020.** (*Note: application will say August 1*)

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Conscious Culture Building

**FROM THE BISHOP
R. LAWSON BRYAN**

Have you heard the saying, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast every day?” Culture refers to the habits and behaviors that characterize how we actually live each day. Strategy refers to the plans we make for our churches – like plans for church growth, youth ministry, and so on. As good and as needed as those plans may be, if the local church culture is not conducive to them, they will not succeed.

Strategy is what we say we want to do; culture is how we really act. And culture always wins.

Times of disruption, such as what we are experiencing with the coronavirus, give us the opportunity to take a look at the health of our local church culture. When our normal “busyness” comes to a halt and everything seems out of kilter we can come to new understandings of what is most important and are able to see fresh expressions of local church ministry. Instead of our local church’s culture being present but not recognized, now is the time to recognize and assess the real culture of our church. A good name for this is Conscious Culture Building. As we find new normals and restart in-person services and ministries, what kind of culture is God calling us to build?

A specific example of Conscious Culture Building is found in the description of Pentecost in Acts 2. Pentecost is the 50th day after Easter, and this year it was on May 31. It is the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the believers gathered in Jerusalem and the Christian Church was born. Acts 2 describes the new culture that emerged in the lives of those earliest Christians: they met daily in the Temple, broke bread together in their homes, engaged in prayer and study of the Apostles’ teaching, shared their possessions to meet each other’s needs, and finally, they gave joyous witness to Jesus and the Resurrection. They consciously built a culture of worship, table fellowship, prayer, study, generosity, and testimony.

How would you describe the culture of your local church?

Last February, our conference staff – about 30 in all – met for a day of Conscious Culture Building. We reflected on past and current habits and behaviors. Then we asked what kind of culture we want to consciously build among ourselves in order to serve Christ and the South Georgia Conference effectively and fruitfully.

With Claire Bowen as our facilitator, we collaborated for hours. By the end of the day, we expressed our desire to consciously build a staff culture that is shaped by three core values:

1. We are a strong team with a basis of trust.
2. We nurture an environment where creativity is expected.
3. Building on a strong past, we invest resources into our present and future.

Then we asked ourselves what steps we can take to consciously and intentionally create this culture. The work groups identified specific actions we can take, such as:

- More interaction (spend more time together in planned partnerships, spiritual formation)
- Default to trust (give people the benefit of the doubt)
- Have respectful conversations (good faith effort to discuss “this is how I see it” with another person)
- Have crucial conversations (don’t avoid the elephant in the room)

Quite rightly, we are focusing a lot of attention on how to have a safe “rolling restart” of certain in-person gatherings. But I invite us to add another line of thought to our preparations: what kind of local church culture do we want to have?

Your conference staff is working on that. If you would like resources or would like us to bring this process into your local church, please email Allison Lindsey (allison@sgaumc.com).

And as we prepare for Annual Conference on Aug. 15, let’s keep asking ourselves: What kind of culture do we want to consciously build in South Georgia?

Alive Together in Conscious Culture Building,

R. Lawson Bryan

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Hearing and Doing

Summer Quarter: Many Faces of Wisdom

Unit 3: Faith and Wisdom in James

Sunday school lesson for the week of August 9, 2020

By Rev. Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: James 1:19–27

Key Verse: James 1:22

Purpose: To affirm the importance of letting what we say we believe guide our actions

A Betrayal of Trust

People expect their doctor to be guided by certain specific ethical standards. The Hippocratic Oath is one of the earliest – and most widely known – medical texts. To this day, physicians promise to “use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrong-doing.” Furthermore, they swear, “Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick, and I will abstain from all intentional wrong-doing and harm, especially from abusing the bodies of man or woman, bond or free.”

The origins of the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) can be traced to the establishment of a system of Marine hospitals in 1798. Following the end of the Civil War, these were consolidated into the Marine Hospital Service, and the position of Surgeon General was established. In 1889, the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (PHSCC) was established. Its stated mission is “to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the people of the United States.” According to the PHSCC, this mission is achieved through rapid and effective response to public health needs, leadership and excellence in public health practices, and advancement of public health science.

In 1880, W.F. Foster, a former Confederate Colonel, was a candidate for re-election to the Alabama Senate representing Macon County. Foster proposed a deal with a local Black leader, Lewis Adams. If Adams could successfully persuade the Black constituents of Macon County to vote for Foster, Foster would, if elected, push the state of Alabama to establish a school for Black people in the county. Adams succeeded, Foster won his seat in the Senate, and followed through with a grant from the state to establish the school. Adams hired Booker T. Washington as principal of the new school. Washington opened the Tuskegee Normal School for Colored Teachers on July 4, 1881, on the grounds of the Butler Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

In addition to academic subjects, Washington was determined to train students in skills, morals, and religious life. He believed these practical skills coupled with righteous character would impact the communities from which they had come, and to which he hoped they would return. He wanted his students to see labor as practical, but also as beautiful and dignified. Washington urged the students “to return to the plantation districts and show the people there how to put new energy and new ideas into farming as well as into the intellectual and moral and religious life of the people.” Washington gradually attracted notable scholars to Tuskegee, including the botanist George Washington Carver, as well as raising money to support its mission. When Washington died in 1915, Tuskegee’s endowment exceeded \$1.5 million, and the campus had grown to nearly 2,300 acres.

In 1932, Taliaferro Clark, head of the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS), formed a study group of the venereal disease section. His initial goal was to conduct a study to follow untreated syphilis in a group of African-American men for six months to one year and then follow up with a treatment phase. At that time there was no effective generally accepted treatment for syphilis. Thomas Parran, Jr., the Health Commissioner of New York State (and former head of the PHS Venereal Disease Division), recommended that, “If one wished to study the natural history of syphilis in the Negro race uninfluenced by treatment, this county (Macon) would be an ideal location for such a study.”

In collaboration with Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University), PHS enrolled a total of 600 impoverished, African-American sharecroppers in the study. Of these men, 399 had latent syphilis, with a control group of 201 men who were not infected. The men were promised free

medical care from the federal government of the United States. When they lost private financial support, a treatment program was deemed too expensive. Clark, however, decided to continue the study, interested in determining whether syphilis had a different effect on African-Americans than it did on Caucasians. The researchers disguised placebos, ineffective methods, and diagnostic procedures as treatment. The subjects were told they were being treated for “bad blood,” a colloquialism that described various conditions such as syphilis, anemia and fatigue. The men were initially told that the study was only going to last six months, but it was extended to 40 years. The men who had syphilis were never informed of their diagnosis, despite the risk of infecting others, and the fact that the disease could lead to blindness, deafness, mental illness, heart disease, bone deterioration, collapse of the central nervous system, and death. Penicillin became the recommended treatment for syphilis in 1947. Nevertheless, PHS researchers convinced local physicians in Macon County not to treat the participants, in order to track the disease’s full progression.

In the mid-1960s, a PHS venereal disease investigator, Peter Buxtun, learned about the Tuskegee study and expressed his moral and ethical concerns about it to his superiors. In response, PHS officials formed a committee to review the study, but ultimately opted to continue it, with the goal of tracking the participants until all had died, autopsies were performed, and the project data could be analyzed.

Dissatisfied with their decision, Buxtun leaked the story to a friend who was a reporter who passed it on to a reporter with the Associated Press, Jean Heller. Her story was published in the *Washington Star* on July 25, 1972. The following day the story appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*. Within a few weeks – and a Congressional hearing – the study was found to be medically unjustified and forced to shut down. By that time, 28 participants had died from syphilis, 100 more had died from related complications, 40 spouses had been diagnosed the disease, and 19 children had been born with congenital syphilis.

A Congruence of Word and Action

In the opening paragraphs of his letter, James has moved quickly to raise some significant concerns and sharing his counsel. He has dealt openly with the opposition, challenges, difficulties, and trials confronting these early believers who are scattered across the region.

James challenges them to “Consider it an opportunity for great joy” (1:2b, NLT). He urges them to take a broader perspective on the trials they face. It is easy to lose focus when the going gets tough. James wants them to remember that there is a bigger context. There is more in store for them than what they can see in the present moment. Like exercising a muscle to exhaustion, testing produces greater strength. In this case, the strength to endure, persevere, stand fast, overcome. James is confident that developing this kind of endurance leads to maturity.

An essential part of growing to maturity is to accept the wisdom God offers. Wisdom is the recognition that there is more to this life than satisfying our physical appetites. Wisdom leads

one to “walk blamelessly.” And when a person is walking blamelessly – in a way that honors God’s mission and purpose – that path leads to righteousness, justice, and equity.

God’s wisdom is a gift meant to enrich the quality of our relationships and the strength of our communities. 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 (see Luke 10:27).

Living this kind of life – a wisdom-directed life – requires a particular single-mindedness. James warns his readers about being double-minded. We can be distracted not only by trials, but also by wealth and ease. When we have all we need and more, there is a real temptation to become more focused on keeping what we have than in ways we can use what we have to serve and bless others. We can begin to see others as competitors rather than as fellow citizens of the kingdom God sent his son to establish. We fail to recognize God as the source of “every good gift, every perfect gift” (1:17a), and begin to follow the way of the world: “Everyone is tempted by their own cravings; they are lured away and enticed by them” (1:14).

This is where James says clearly: “everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to grow angry” (1:19b). Let’s be clear: James is calling believers to listen carefully to those who speak wisdom’s truth. He is not saying that we should find someone who is proclaiming a message that affirms the voices in our heads to satisfy our cravings, and attend to that message. Living in a world that does not love God or follow God’s ways makes it easy to justify following our own desires. Again, we depend on the gift of God’s wisdom to discern what leads to life and what leads to death.

When we attend to God’s way of living (“walking blamelessly”), it does conflict with the way of the world and with our natural desires – our cravings. Our first impulse may be to take offense. “Why are you trying to keep me from doing what I want?” We act like toddlers who are told to share our toys. This kind of anger doesn’t lead to greater maturity: “because an angry person doesn’t produce God’s righteousness” (1:20).

*Therefore, with humility, set aside all moral filth and the growth of wickedness,
and welcome the word planted deep inside you—
the very word that is able to save you. James 1:21*

Notice that it starts with humility. This is another way to talk about acknowledging our position before God. It is really just another way of saying “the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord” (Proverbs 9:10). It is the willingness to acknowledge that God deserves our respect, our obedience, and our utmost regard for the ineffable wonder of God’s presence, power, and glory.

Once we accept the nature of God’s character, the decision to “set aside” all that is opposed to God, it opens up the way to the kind of single-mindedness James commended earlier – to

“welcome” God’s word – God’s wisdom. But it is not enough to only accept the word of God; “You must be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves” (1:22).

It seems that James is quite familiar with those who are well-versed in God’s word, but who fail to let it rule their lives. Jesus warned about “the legal experts and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat” (Matthew 23:2). Jesus repeatedly says, “How terrible it will be for you legal experts and Pharisees! Hypocrites!” (23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29). Why? They know the Law; they know what God requires; they teach others; but they fail to practice “the more important matters of the Law: justice, peace, and faith” (23:23).

James compares them to those who look in a mirror, “They look at themselves, walk away, and immediately forget what they were like” (1:24). God’s word does reveal the true nature of our character. God shows us the kind of people we were created to be, the depth of our disobedience, and the possibility of our restoration. Unfortunately, many hear that message, see that vision, and choose to “walk away.” Once they have, it is as if they had never heard it or seen it.

The good news is that this vision is not beyond our comprehension. “There are those who study the perfect law, the law of freedom, and continue to do it. They don’t listen and then forget, but they put it into practice in their lives. They will be blessed in whatever they do” (1:25). Those who experience the fullness of God’s blessing are those who not only receive God’s wisdom, but who are guided by it in their daily lives – in their relationship with God and with one another. They discover that the “perfect law” sets them free from bondage to their cravings and free to live into the gracious abundance of God’s kingdom. Again, James sounds like he has overheard his brother: “You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teaching. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31b-32).

Once again scripture affirms the enduring value of wisdom – of letting our thinking be shaped by the will of God. 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). This is important because wisdom leads one to “walk blamelessly.” And when a person is walking blamelessly – in a way that honors God’s will and purpose – that path leads to righteousness, justice, and equity. These are the characteristics that mark a covenant community – a community where people are living in right relationship with one another.

If those who claim devotion to God don’t control what they say, they mislead themselves. Their devotion is worthless. James 1:26

James must have been in the crowd the day the Pharisees and legal experts came to Jesus and asked him, “Why are your disciples breaking the elders’ rules handed down to us? They don’t ritually purify their hands by washing before they eat” (Matthew 15:2). That day Jesus quoted scripture to call out the depth of their hypocrisy: “This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me. Their worship of me is empty since they teach instructions that are

human rules” (Matthew 15:8-9, Isaiah 29:13). What you say is a reflection of what guides your heart. “Then [Jesus] called the crowd to him and said to them, ‘Listen and understand: it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles’” (Matthew 15:10-11).

Still, the bottom line for James, “True devotion, the kind that is pure and faultless before God the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their difficulties and to keep the world from contaminating us” (1:27). The test for whether a community reflects the nature and character of God is how it treats those who are most vulnerable. The world’s value system may be based on money, power, and pleasure, but those who choose to participate in God’s beloved community love their neighbor (and particularly those most in need) as themselves and they express that love in practical ways, by what they say and what they do.

A Lingering Shadow

Kafui Dzirasa was the first African American awarded a PhD in neuroscience at Duke University in 2007. He is a medical doctor and a scientist. He has led a National Institutes of Health-funded research lab for almost a decade, and was awarded the Society for Neuroscience Young Investigator Prize in 2019. He is an American Association for the Advancement of Science Alan I. Leshner Public Engagement Fellow, and he has hosted TEDMED three times.

He is a scholar, teacher, mentor, speaker, and mental health advocate. He has served on national commissions, advanced federal policy, and has even “held court with a president of the United States.” He has published in scientific journals, and as a peer reviewer, he has worked to advance the scientific rigor of his colleagues. In spite of all of his accomplishments, he laments, “Yet, most days, I am unseen and unknown.”

Dr. Dzirasa shares his story in an article published online in Duke Today. “I started medical school 20 years ago full of the belief that everyone was equal and that scientific evidence was fair, unbiased, and always reflected the truth. Yet, I was soon confronted by overwhelming images of black men in my textbooks who all had advanced-staged sexually transmitted diseases. Surely it wasn’t only black men that get STDs? These subtexts about race and health infected many of the narratives that accompanied daily morning rounds in the hospital.”

The Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the African American Male was established and continued in a climate of racism. The clinicians who led the study assumed that African-Americans were particularly susceptible to venereal disease because of their race and that they were not interested in medical treatment. Taliaferro Clark said, “The rather low intelligence of the Negro population, depressed economic conditions, and the common promiscuous sex relations not only contribute to the spread of syphilis but the prevailing indifference with regards to treatment.” In fact, one writer, after researching the project, said he felt like the physicians were fixated on African-American sexuality. They seemed to believe that African-Americans willingly had sexual relations with infected persons.

As a result of the Tuskegee experiment, many African Americans developed a lingering, deep mistrust of public health officials. In a 1999 survey, 80 percent of African-American men said they believed the men in the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment had been injected with syphilis. A 2016 paper published by the National Bureau of Economic Research found “that the historical disclosure of the [Tuskegee experiment] in 1972 is correlated with increases in medical mistrust and mortality and decreases in both outpatient and inpatient physician interactions for older black men. Our estimates imply life expectancy at age 45 for black men fell by up to 1.4 years in response to the disclosure, accounting for approximately 35 percent of the 1980 life expectancy gap between black and white men.”

This lingering mistrust led President Clinton to issue an apology in 1997, stating, “The United States government did something that was wrong – deeply, profoundly, morally wrong... It is not only in remembering that shameful past that we can make amends and repair our nation, but it is in remembering that past that we can build a better present and a better future.” A year later on May 16, 1997, Bill Clinton formally apologized and held a ceremony at the White House for surviving Tuskegee study participants. He said: “What was done cannot be undone. But we can end the silence. We can stop turning our heads away. We can look at you in the eye and finally say on behalf of the American people, what the United States government did was shameful, and I am sorry.... To our African American citizens, I am sorry that your federal government orchestrated a study so clearly racist.” The final study participant passed away in 2004.

In 1999, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) established a national program to reduce racial and ethnic health disparities. The Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program gives funds to state and local health departments, tribes, universities, and community-based organizations. Recipients use these funds to build strong partnerships to guide and support the program’s work. In November of 2018, the YMCA of Coastal Georgia, in partnership with Healthy Savannah, was awarded a five-year, \$3.4 million collaborative grant.

The CDC affirms that, “A core principle of public health is that every person should be able to reach his or her full health potential. The CDC seeks to remove barriers to health linked to race or ethnicity, education, income, location, or other social factors.” CDC is currently working with 31 partner organizations across the country to reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic populations with the highest burden of chronic disease such as hypertension, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity. These partner organizations use community-based, participatory approaches to identify, develop, and disseminate effective strategies for addressing health disparities, particularly through culturally tailored interventions to address preventable risk behaviors (like poor nutrition, smoking, and physical inactivity).

“You must be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves” (1:22). Pray that our resolve to follow the way of wisdom may grow stronger each day so that we may not betray the trust that others have placed in us.

Discussion Questions

- How do you feel when you realize someone has betrayed your trust?
- When have you responded in anger to someone who helped you see you were pursuing a goal that was contrary to God's purpose and mission?
- What should people of faith be willing to do to repair the damage that has been done to others by pervasive and persistent injustice?

Ashley Randall is the pastor of Garden City UMC. He serves as a co-chair of the steering committee of Healthy Savannah, working with a network of more than 200 public and private community organizations to lead and support a culture of health in the Savannah area by: creating an environment that makes a healthy choice an easy choice; building a collaborative network that identifies and shares resources & collects and disseminates information; and promoting best practices, innovative programs, and advocating for effective policies.

healthysavannah.org

Living Faith

Summer Quarter: Many Faces of Wisdom

Unit 3: Faith and Wisdom in James

Sunday school lesson for the week of August 16, 2020

By Rev. Ashley Randall

Lesson Scripture: James 2:14–26

Key Verse: James 2:26

Purpose: To recognize that living faith produces fruitful, faithful service

A Good Long Life

Abraham. Father Abraham. *Father Abraham had many sons.* If you grew up going to vacation bible school or summer camp, no apologies if you suddenly find this song stuck in your brain. Abraham is one of the most important characters in the story of God's covenant relationship with humanity. Around one-third of the book of Genesis is devoted to relating the story of the covenant God established directly with the Hebrew people through Abraham.

Abraham's influence does not end with the close of the Hebrew scriptures, though. Abraham is mentioned by name around 70 times in the New Testament. Both Jesus and his adversaries refer to those who are – or claim to be – “children of Abraham.” So it seems worthwhile to rehearse his story as we prepare to consider what James has to say about faith and works.

We are first introduced to Abraham (who is called “Abram” at that point) as one of the sons of Terah. Terah and his family live in Ur, but Terah decides that he should move to Canaan. He packs his family and starts the move, but when he gets as far as Haran, he decides to settle there.

It is here that the Lord speaks to Abraham, “Leave your land, your family, and your father’s household for the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing” (Genesis 12:1-2). And Abraham packs up his family and goes to Canaan.

When he arrives, he finds there are already people living there. Nevertheless, “The Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘I give this land to your descendants,’ so Abram built an altar there to the Lord who appeared to him” (12:7). Abraham explores the area, building altars and worshipping the Lord until a famine impacts the area.

Abraham keeps going south (and west) until he gets to Egypt. As an immigrant and an outsider, he is concerned about his safety. He tells his wife, Sarah (“Sarai” at that point), to tell people “you are my sister so that they will treat me well for your sake” (12:13). Abraham’s hunch was right. People do recognize Sarah’s beauty. She gains the attention of the Pharaoh, is taken into the Pharaoh’s household, and Abraham profits materially from the situation.

Things don’t go so well for Pharaoh. “Then the Lord struck Pharaoh and his household with severe plagues because of Abram’s wife Sarai” (12:17). When Pharaoh questions Abraham, he admits his deception, takes his wife and all the possessions he has acquired, and heads back toward Canaan.

After negotiating the resolution of a family conflict with his nephew, Lot, the Lord speaks to Abraham again: “From the place where you are standing, look up and gaze to the north, south, east, and west, because all the land that you see I give you and your descendants forever. I will make your descendants like the dust of the earth” (13:14-16a).

Lot finds himself in trouble. Abraham comes to his rescue. On his way back to his family, Abraham encounters Melchizedek the king of Salem and the priest of El Elyon.

Abraham receives a blessing from this mysterious character and makes him a gift of one-tenth of everything he has with him.

The Lord appears to Abraham again, this time in a vision. “Don’t be afraid, Abram. I am your protector. Your reward will be very great” (15: 1b). But Abraham is concerned. He doesn’t have any children – no heirs – no one to carry on his family name. “The Lord’s word came immediately to him.... ‘Your heir will definitely be your very own biological child.’ Then he brought Abram outside and said, ‘Look up at the sky and count the stars if you think you can count them.’ He continued, ‘This is how many children you will have’” (15:4-5).

It is at this point – after Abraham has abandoned Canaan because of a famine, after he has conspired with his wife to deceive Pharaoh, after he has arranged with his nephew, Lot – that we are told: “And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness” (15:6). The Lord reiterates the promise of land and children. Still Abraham seems skeptical: “Lord God, how do I know that I will actually possess it?” (15:8).

The Lord gives instructions to Abraham to prepare for a formal covenant by sacrificing several animals. “After the sun had set and darkness had deepened, a smoking vessel with a fiery flame passed between the split-open animals. That day the Lord cut a covenant with Abram: ‘To your descendants I give this land’” (15:17-18a).

Get ready for this. It’s big. Sarah has come up with her own solution for the problem of Abraham not having his very own biological child. She has a servant she acquired in Egypt, Hagar. She suggests that Abraham might be able to have a child with her. Hagar becomes pregnant and Sarah becomes jealous. Sarah complains to Abraham about Hagar’s attitude. He tells Sarah, “Since she’s your servant, do whatever you wish to her” (16:6). Sarah is so harsh with Hagar that she runs away. Now a messenger of the Lord speaks to Hagar, “Go back to your mistress. Put up with her harsh treatment of you.” The Lord’s messenger also said to her, “I will give you many children, so many they can’t be counted!” (16:9-10). She does return and “Hagar gave birth to a son for Abram, and Abram named him Ishmael” (16:15).

The story skips ahead 13 years. The Lord speaks to Abraham again, affirms the promise that Abraham will have many descendants and that they will possess the land of Canaan. On this occasion, God renames Abram and Sarai so that their names reflect the nature of their transformation through their covenant relationship with God, and circumcision is introduced as a mark of the covenant.

God also assures Abraham that Sarah will bear him a son. “Abraham fell on his face and laughed. He said to himself, ‘Can a 100-year-old man become a father, or Sarah, a 90-year-old woman, have a child?’” (17:17). He assures God that Ishmael will do. God is undeterred. “No, your wife Sarah will give birth to a son for you, and you will name him Isaac. I will set up my covenant with him and with his descendants after him as an enduring covenant” (17:19). God adds that he will also bless Ishmael, just in a different way.

Three strange visitors come to Abraham’s camp. He offers them generous hospitality. They foretell of Sarah’s pregnancy. Sarah overhears and she laughs. When questioned about her amusement at the preposterous prediction, she lies.

The visitors (now more clearly identified as messengers from God, or perhaps actually God) are on their way to deal with the injustice that has corrupted the people of Sodom. God decides to inform Abraham about God’s plan to address the situation, and Abraham becomes an advocate for leniency.

Lot, who is living in Sodom now, is warned to escape before the city and its neighbor, Gomorrah, are destroyed. Lot's daughters conspire to ensure their future by taking advantage of their intoxicated father, before we return to focus on Abraham, again.

Abraham and Sarah – who is pregnant now, or soon will be – conspire again to deceive the King of Gerar, Abimelech, by telling him that they are brother and sister. Once again, the lie is revealed, this time when God appears to Abimelech in a dream. Abraham admits his deceit, and again profits from the conspiracy.

A few months later, Sarah gives birth to a son. Abraham names him Isaac. “On the day he stopped nursing, Abraham prepared a huge banquet” (21:8b). Sarah notices Ishmael laughing and feels threatened. She asks Abraham, “Send this servant away with her son! This servant's son won't share the inheritance with my son Isaac” (21:10). “This upset Abraham terribly because the boy was his son. God said to Abraham, ‘Don't be upset about the boy and your servant. Do everything Sarah tells you to do because your descendants will be traced through Isaac. But I will make of your servant's son a great nation too, because he is also your descendant’” (21:11-13).

The next morning Abraham gives them few provisions and sends them on their way. When they run out of food and water, Hagar is prepared to lay down and die, but God calls out to her, shows her a well, and continues to provide for them.

Meanwhile Abraham enters into a treaty with Abimelech, and lives “as an immigrant in the Philistines' land for a long time” (21:34).

The story skips ahead another 12 or 13 years. The Lord speaks to Abraham again, but this time it is not an affirmation of the covenant promise. It is a test. “Take your son, your only son whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah. Offer him up as an entirely burned offering there on one of the mountains that I will show you” (22:2).

Abraham gets up the next morning and prepares for the trip. On their way to the mountain, Isaac asks his father, “Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the entirely burned offering?” (22:7b). “God will provide,” Abraham responds.

Once they arrive at the place, Abraham builds an altar, arranges the wood, binds his son, lays him on the altar on top of the wood, and prepares to use the knife on his son.

At the last moment, God's messenger calls out to Abraham. “I'm here,” he says. “Don't stretch out your hand against the young man, and don't do anything to him. I now know that you revere God and didn't hold back your son, your only son, from me” (22:12). God provides a ram for the sacrifice. Father and son return home.

The story of Abraham is almost complete. Sarah dies and Abraham purchases a burial site for her that will also become his final resting place. Abraham also arranges to secure a bride for his son.

Abraham marries again, too. Keturah gives birth to six sons. Before he dies, Abraham makes it clear that Isaac is his heir. The rest of his sons receive “gifts,” but they are sent away. “Abraham lived to the age of 175. Abraham took his last breath and died after a good long life, a content old man” (25:7-8).

Word and Deed

James has already made it clear that it is not enough to merely accept the word of God: “You must be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves” (1:22). Those who experience the fullness of God’s blessing are those who not only receive God’s wisdom, but who are guided by it in their daily lives – in their relationship with God and with one another. They discover that the “perfect law” sets them free from bondage to their cravings and free to live into the gracious abundance of God’s kingdom. And when a person is walking blamelessly – in a way that honors God’s will and purpose – that path leads to righteousness, justice, and equity. These are the characteristics that mark a covenant community – a community where people are living in right relationship with one another.

The test for whether a community reflects the nature and character of God is how it treats those who are most vulnerable. The world’s value system may be based on money, power, and pleasure, but those who choose to participate in God’s beloved community love their neighbor (and particularly those most in need) as themselves and they express that love in practical ways, by what they say and what they do.

James expands on this theme in the opening of chapter 2. While it is not part of the assigned reading for the series, it’s important to notice the concern James expresses for the preferential treatment some are showing the wealthy persons who join them for worship, especially as it contrasts with the dishonor they are showing the poor. Here is a clear indication that they have adopted the agenda of the world and its priorities, rather than the values of God.

James wants his readers to understand that when they discriminate against others – particularly when that discrimination is based on worldly standards – they are failing to fulfill the “royal law:” “Love your neighbor as yourself” (2:8, also Leviticus 19:18). According to James, when they show favoritism to the wealthy at the expense of the poor among them, they are committing a sin and they are just as guilty before God as someone who commits adultery or murder (see 2:10-11). James calls again for believers to consistently connect hearing and doing: “In every way, then, speak and act as people who will be judged by the law of freedom” (2:12).

From here, James raises the question: “My brothers and sisters, what good is it if people say they have faith but do nothing to show it? Claiming to have faith can’t save anyone, can it? (2:14). He presents a couple of hypothetical situations where there is an encounter between a believer and someone in need and declares that words alone are not enough. Those who follow Christ are called to act. Those who follow Christ are called to show love in practical ways.

Near the end of his ministry Jesus told a parable to illustrate the final judgment. People are separated into two groups: righteous and unrighteous. The basis for the separation seems to surprise each group, but particularly, the unrighteous: “Then they will reply, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and didn’t do anything to help you?’ Then he will answer, ‘I assure you that when you haven’t done it for one of the least of these, you haven’t done it for me’” (Matthew 25:44-45).

This is consistent with what Jesus said earlier in his ministry. He has warned his followers: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you dressed like sheep, but inside they are vicious wolves.... Therefore, you will know them by their fruit” (Matthew 7:15, 20). For James, the “fruit” is the practical acts of service for those in need.

Words are not enough. “Not everybody who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will get into the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter” (Matthew 7:21). Doing the will of God is following the way of wisdom. When people follow the way of wisdom, it transforms the character of the community and the quality of the relationships in that community.

Even though James is clearly influenced by the teaching of Jesus, he chooses to go back to the example of Abraham as a paragon of one who demonstrated faith through faithful action. This is particularly interesting – and to some extent perplexing because Paul in another context is calling on the example of Abraham to prove that faith alone is the basis of salvation (see Galatians 3:6-18; Romans 4:1-25).

It is worth noting that Paul and James are writing to congregations who are living through different circumstances. Most of the members of the congregations to which Paul is writing are not of Jewish descent. There are other missionaries who are spreading the message among the congregations Paul has planted that in order to follow Christ, it is necessary to first convert to Judaism and be circumcised. Paul believes this is nonsense, so he points to this verse in Genesis, “And [Abraham] believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness” (15:6). Paul reminds the Galatians that this occurs before Abraham is circumcised.

Let me ask you to remember that although this follows Abraham’s willingness to leave Haran and “go to the land that I will show you;” it also follows (and precedes) Abraham’s deception concerning his relationship with his wife as well as the other questionable choices Abraham makes along the way to becoming the father of a great nation. In fact, the example of Abraham’s life seems to more clearly illustrate Paul’s greater claim that our salvation rests entirely on God’s grace: “God’s righteousness comes through the faithfulness of Jesus Christ for all who have faith in him” (Galatians 3:22).

On the other hand, James is writing to congregations who are primarily immersed in Judaism. They have also been deeply impacted by the crucifixion of Jesus. For them, Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his “only” son has been one of the interpretive motifs for understanding

and proclaiming what God has done for us. Abraham's bold action becomes the fulfillment of God's gracious choice of Abraham decades earlier. "In fact, his faith was made complete by his faithful actions" (2:22b).

Following the example of Abraham with that of Rahab the prostitute is another interesting choice of James. She is certainly not a paragon of virtue; still James commends her for connecting her faith to practical deeds of service.

The defeat of the city of Jericho is the beginning of the story of the conquest of the promised land following the escape of the Hebrew people from Egypt and the wandering in the wilderness. Rahab's affirmation that "the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below" (Joshua 2:11) is a sign of her faith, but her hospitality, her protection, and her advice on how to avoid capture are the actions that led to the defeat of the city and the rescue of her and her household.

Rock O' My Soul

There is another song about Abraham you may have learned in vacation bible school or at summer camp: *'Rock o' my soul in the bosom of Abraham. Oh, rock o' my soul!'* It is an old African-American spiritual that was first documented by William Francis Allen, in the 1867 collection *Slave Songs of the United States*. As an elementary school child, I'll admit I was more focused on making sure I did the motions correctly than I was on unpacking its meaning.

The song's primary motif comes from Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus sets the scene succinctly: "There was a certain rich man who clothed himself in purple and fine linen, and who feasted luxuriously every day. At his gate lay a certain poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. Lazarus longed to eat the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Instead, dogs would come and lick his sores" (16:19-21).

After these rather graphic details, Jesus moves quickly on: "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom" (16:22a, KJV). The rich man also dies, but goes to a place where the dead exist in torment. The rich man pleads with Abraham to "send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I'm suffering in this flame." Abraham explains that his life of leisure has won him no special privilege in the afterlife; whereas now after years of being on the receiving end of terrible things – like neglect, indifference, and dishonor, Lazarus is being comforted.

Abraham's special relationship with God makes him not only our common ancestor, but also provides us an intimate connection to God. For centuries, the bosom of Abraham has represented a place of security, both in life and after death. Resting in the bosom of Abraham has served as an image of resting in a place where the evil one could not reach and where the righteous rest securely.

A child of Abraham being comforted in his arms connects with the common experience of a sick, frightened, or wounded child resting safely in the arms of his or her father or mother. If we don't remember a specific experience, our imaginations recreate the memory of awakening from a bad dream, calling for our parents, and being caught up in the security of their arms and rocked back to restful sleep.

The African-American spiritual incorporates all of these images and adds this rocking motion to the comforting rest in Abraham's arms. Perhaps you can imagine how these images might comfort someone living as a slave – trying to survive in a world of cruelty, injustice, and great darkness. Even in the face of evil, a child of God can take comfort in the gentle, steady, soothing rhythm of being rocked in the safe space of Abraham's embrace.

May we learn to see the needs of those around us. May we respond in acts of faithful service. May we commit ourselves to putting our faith in action through practical acts of love. May we learn to give ourselves and all that we value to God and to one another. May we learn to move to the gentle and steady beat of God's love as we hold one another close through these days of trouble, trial, and tribulation.

Discussion Questions

- How would you explain God's acceptance of Abraham in spite of his flaws and lapses in judgement?
- Where have you seen deference shown to those who are wealthy among people of faith?
- Who is God calling you to "rock in the bosom of Abraham"?

Rev. Ashley Randall is pastor of Garden City UMC. According to his count, the Bible says Abraham actually had eight sons – not as many as Jacob, but then Jacob had four "wives."

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Counting the Joy

LEADERSHIP REALLY MATTERS

ANNE BOSARGE

REV. JAY HANSON

What do you do when you don't know what to do? How do you make decisions when you're not sure where you want to end up? How do you lead with confidence when you're just as uncertain as the people you're leading? How do you stand firm when the traditions and methods you've used for years seem to be eroding?

James 1:2-4 says, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.”

Trials are guaranteed and difficulties are expected. As James says, it’s “*when* you meet trials” not “*if* you meet trials.” Many of us in leadership feel the weight of many trials right now. Past experience didn’t prepare us. Seminary didn’t provide us with emergency response protocols for what we’re going through. Those with a history in the church can’t rely on institutional knowledge to guide us into the future. Even “experts” don’t agree on the best response!

What if we, like James, learn to count it *ALL* joy? Even if you don’t know where your congregation will be at this end of this season, do you know where you hope to be personally? Maybe we are called to think less of the institution and more about growth toward Christian perfection? Let’s spend some time counting all the joys:

1. Freedom: We are no longer bound by the traditions of the past and can worship God in new ways that help us experience His character and nature anew. The church can be the church without a building.
2. Awakening: Believers are being awakened to a hunger for His Spirit and a renewed passion for worship.
3. Opportunity: There is an opportunity to move the Gospel into new spaces and places – into homes, parks, and onto Internet platforms like never before.
4. Dependence: Leaders must admit their need for help and depend on God for guidance.
5. Surrender: There is joy in letting go of the pressure and expectation of knowing and submitting to God’s all-knowing guidance.
6. Growth: We are experiencing a pruning of programs and ministries we once determined essential to spiritual growth. We are discovering spiritual growth happens in a variety of ways, some of which might be more effective than the way we have done things in the past.
7. Priorities: All of a sudden many things that seemed to matter a great deal no longer seem very important. We have had a perspective shift that only comes when what is nonessential is stripped away and we are left with what is most essential.

It’s hard to find joy in the trials. But when faith in God is all you have left, you’re in right place. At the end of yourself is where you experience the love, grace, and fullness of God. Count the joys, friends, so that in your steadfastness you will be made perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

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

John Wesley's sister Anne (Nancy)

JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS

DAVE HANSON

John Wesley had seven sisters who grew to adulthood. Anne, who was nicknamed “Nancy,” was just two year older than John.

She and a twin brother were born on May 17, 1791. Her twin brother died seven months later; she lived. She was in her teens when “Ol’ Jeffery,” the friendly Epworth ghost, began to act up in the parsonage. Her father thought that perhaps the ghost could be frightened away by noise, so he sent Anne into the attic to blow a horn. She was terrified, but completed the task to no avail. Another time she was sitting on her bed and it began to move. She jumped off!

She served as a governess for a time, but returned home when her mistress died. She married John Lambert, a successful land surveyor. The Wesley family went into debt to provide her a generous dowry. They had a happy marriage. John Wesley danced at their son’s baptism. He was the godfather. When having some financial problems, the Lamberts moved in with her parents. Soon, however, they moved to London. Charles Wesley visited them there and expressed some concern about John’s drinking habits. When John Wesley became ill in 1741, Anne cared for him at the Foundry. Anne was at her mother’s bedside with her sisters when their mother died. We know little more about her. It is thought that her only son, John, died as a youth.

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

Retired Clergy Birthdays – August 2020

- 8/02 – Roger Mays: 1418 Eason Stalvey Rd.; Hahira, GA 31632
- 8/05 – Gordon Dukes: 126 Nelson Ave.; Garden City, GA 31408
- 8/05 – Joe Romigh: 3055 Cabernet Court; Cumming, GA 30041
- 8/06 – Rick Holt: 286 Knoll Rd.; Thomasville, GA 31757
- 8/07 – Wayne Anthony: 6511 Houston Rd.; Macon, GA 31216
- 8/07 – B.G. Roberts, Sr.: PO Box 3207; Brunswick, GA 31521
- 8/07 – Ricky Varnell: 11-25 Sunbury Rd.; Claxton, GA 30417
- 8/08 – Don Adams: 1104 Wingate Street; Dublin, GA 31021
- 8/08 – Jim Nelson: 3584 Hidden Acres Dr.; Atlanta, GA 30340
- 8/09 – Creede Hinshaw: 2924 Hillandale Circle S; Macon, GA 31204
- 8/09 – Byron Scott: 740 Bethel Rd.; Surrency, GA 31563
- 8/10 – Allison Rhodes: 18 Lenox Pointe NE, Suite B; Atlanta, GA 30324
- 8/13 – Mike Huling: 514 Earl Ave.; Claxton, GA 30417
- 8/15 – Nathan Godley: 322 E. Oglethorpe Ave.; Savannah, GA 31401
- 8/15 – Charles Houston, Jr.: 505 Fort King George Dr.; Darien, GA 31305

8/16 – Dick Reese: 6593 Patriot Dr.; Columbus, GA 31909
8/17 – D. Eugene Pollett: 30 Branson Mill Dr. NW; Cartersville, GA 30120
8/19 – Jim Giddens: 4 Cottenham Circle; Savannah, GA 31411
8/19 – Jeffery Seeley: 3301 Stinsonville Rd.; Macon, GA 31204
8/19 – John H. Stephens: 881 Nesbitt Rd.; Pavo, GA 31778
8/20 – Cleo Gilchrist: 108 Easy St.; Dublin, GA 31021
8/20 – Dave Hanson: 106 George T. Morris Cir.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
8/20 – Bev King: 140 Long Pines Circle; East Dublin, GA 31027
8/21 – John Eckert: 237 Bartholomew Blvd.; Jeffersonville, IN 47130
8/22 – Tom Edwards: 315 Phillips Ave.; Port Wentworth, GA 31407
8/22 – Jesse France: 514 I.G. Lanier Rd.; Pembroke, GA 31321
8/22 – John Powell: 2728 Moore’s Station Rd. #17; Dublin, GA 31021
8/23 – Joe Johnston: 2109 W. Gramercy Dr.; Green Valley, AZ 85622
8/24 – Jim Burgess, III: 661 East Plum St.; Jesup, GA 31546
8/24 – Sam Lamback, Jr.: 821 Wesleyan Dr.; Macon, GA 31210
8/25 – Charles Puryear: 106 Sandra St.; Thomasville, GA 31792
8/25 – Elliott Sams: 6400 Poplar Ave.; Memphis, TN 38197
8/28 – David Carter: 102 Rivoli Oaks Circle; Macon, GA 31210
8/28 – Robert Clark: 2022 E Pinetree Blvd.; Thomasville, GA 31792
8/30 – Jenny Jackson-Adams: 17 Lands End Dr.; Greensboro, NC 27408
8/31 – Lynn Hurley: PO Box 26; Attapulcus, GA 39815
8/31 – Willie Beasley: 4451 Mahan Dr.; Valdosta, GA 31632

OBITUARIES

Rev. James H. Snell, Jr.

James H. Snell, Jr., better known as Jim, died unexpectedly on the night of July 21, 2020. He was 89 years old. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Joanne; one daughter, Viki Mullins (Lee); son, James H. Snell, III (Diane); son, Thomas Snell (Sheryl); one granddaughter, Kate Snell, and six grandsons, Samuel Snell (Jessica), Drew, Michael (Margaret) and Mark Mullins, Matt and Danny Snell; as well as several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents, a brother; a sister; and a granddaughter, Jessica Diane Snell.

Jim graduated from Bass High School, The University of Georgia and Candler School of Theology at Emory. The first church he served was Plainville UMC. He also served churches in Temple, Dalton, Rome and Summerville in the North Georgia United Methodist Conference and was transferred to the South Georgia United Methodist Conference in 1970, where he served churches in St. Marys, Columbus, Millen, Eastman, Dawson, Metter and Glennville. After he retired in 1995, he and Joanne traveled for two years after which they made Loganville, Ga. their permanent home.

During his tenure as a pastor he served on numerous District and Conference Boards. He has taught the Good News Sunday School Class at Snellville United Methodist Church for the past 22 years. He loved the Good News Class and called them his little congregation.

He will be missed by family and friends alike. Due to the current COVID-19 regulations, there will be a graveside service for the family and a memorial service will be held at a later date.

Condolences may be sent or viewed at www.wagesfuneralhome.com. Tom M. Wages Funeral Service, A Family Company, 3705 Highway 78 West, Snellville, GA 30039 (770-979-3200), has been entrusted with the arrangements.

Scripture Readings – Aug. 4

Aug. 9

Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

Psalms 105:1-6, 16-22, 45b (UMH 828)

Romans 10:5-15

Matthew 14:22-33

Aug. 16

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

Genesis 45:1-15

Psalms 133 (UMH 850)

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28

Aug. 23

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Exodus 1:8-2:10

Psalms 124 (UMH 846)

Romans 12:1-8

Matthew 16:13-20

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 8/4/2020 edition

Annual Conference Commissioning Service, Virtual – Aug. 8

Those approved for provisional membership or full connection at the clergy session will be commissioned or ordained in a local church setting with only family present. The Commissioning Service is set for Saturday, August 8 at 2 p.m. The service will be live-streamed. More information: www.sgaumc.org/annualconference.

Annual Conference Ordination Service, Virtual – Aug. 9

Those approved for provisional membership or full connection at the clergy session will be commissioned or ordained in a local church setting with only family present. The Service of Ordination is set for Sunday, August 9 at 4 p.m. The service will be live-streamed. More information: www.sgaumc.org/annualconference.

Pastoral Care as a Gateway to Recovery, Part 3 – Aug. 11

“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 3: August 11, 10:30 am – noon | [Register](#)

Annual Conference Retiree Recognition Service, Virtual – Aug. 11

The 2020 Annual Conference Retiree Recognition Service will be held Tuesday, August 11 at 7 p.m. to honor and recognize retiring clergy. It will be a virtual service. More information: www.sgaumc.org/annualconference.

Annual Conference Memorial Service, Virtual – Aug. 13

The 2020 Annual Conference Memorial Service to remember clergy and clergy spouses who have passed away this past year is set for August 13 at 7 p.m. It will be a virtual service. More information: www.sgaumc.org/annualconference.

2020 South Georgia Annual Conference session, Virtual – Aug. 15

The 2020 Annual Conference session will be held virtually Saturday, Aug. 15 from 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. More information: www.sgaumc.org/annualconference.

Golden Cross Sunday – Aug. 16

Golden Cross began in 1908 with the commitment of Methodists in Dallas, Texas to provide the first health care to persons who could not afford it. They began to receive offerings for the expenses of the poor patients at Methodist Hospital in that city. By 1930, the concept was officially adopted throughout the predecessor denominations of The United Methodist Church. Today Golden Cross is a ministry that reaches out in love to the laity in our Annual Conference who are experiencing financial difficulty due to excessive medical expenses. Through Golden Cross, United Methodists care for members of our local churches in time of emotional stress and financial need. The South Georgia Conference has designated the first Sunday of July to be the Sunday to receive a special offering for Golden Cross. Each church is asked to observe Golden Cross Sunday to receive an offering and send it to the conference treasurer.

CPC Zoom on Depression – Aug. 27

Conference Pastoral Counselor Rev. Deborah Wight-Knight will host a Zoom on depression from 10:30 a.m. until noon. The guest speaker will be Rev. Grace Guyton.

Certified Lay Ministry Training – Sept. 12

In this six-session course held at The Pointe in Leesburg, participants will develop a team of leaders and supporters within their current congregation who will encourage them throughout the course and beyond. Through the classes, they'll build relationships with other South Georgia lay leaders and learn, practice, implement, share, and be inspired to take what they've learned and put it into action. The cost for the class is \$300 per person, which includes lunch, snacks, and curriculum materials for the entire course. Contact Anne Bosarge at anne@thechapelministries.com for more information.

Sexual Ethics Workshop – Sept. 17

According to the Conference Sexual Ethics policy, this workshop is required every three years for any person serving under appointment by the bishop (clergy, local pastors, extension ministers, appointed lay speakers). The Sexual Ethics Workshop will be held Thursday, Sept. 17 from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Pittman Park UMC in Statesboro. [Register here](#). Cost is \$35, which includes lunch (collected at the door). Checks can be made payable to South Georgia Conference. For questions, email cpcassistant@sgaumc.com. Please note that spouses and lay employees who are not appointed by the bishop are not eligible to attend the workshop.

Methodist Children's Home Work Day Offering – Sept. 20

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.

Certified Lay Ministry Training – Sept. 26

In this six-session course held at The Pointe in Leesburg, participants will develop a team of leaders and supporters within their current congregation who will encourage them throughout the course and beyond. Through the classes, they'll build relationships with other South Georgia lay leaders and learn, practice, implement, share, and be inspired to take what they've learned and put it into action. The cost for the class is \$300 per person, which includes lunch, snacks, and curriculum materials for the entire course. Contact Anne Bosarge at anne@thechapelministries.com for more information.