

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – JANUARY 5 EDITION

2021: a look ahead with Bishop Bryan

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Hope. It's the message of Christmas and the promise of a new year. But after a year like 2020, where can one find hope?

As 2021 begins, Bishop R. Lawson Bryan is hopeful despite the uncertainties and unknowns.

He looks to the Bible – Matthew 2, specifically – to guide him into 2021.

The story he turns to often gets overlooked in the transition from Christmas to Epiphany, but it helps him remember there is hope, and sometimes just one thing needs to change for greater transformation to happen.

Matthew's account of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus' escape to Egypt; of Herod's edict to kill all the male children; and of Herod's death and Mary, Joseph, and Jesus' subsequent return to Israel reminds Bishop Bryan that, despite circumstances, things have, indeed, changed.

"I invite us all to live with that story guiding us into the New Year, to remind ourselves not to enter it thinking nothing has changed," he said. "We may not yet know what has changed, but there has been change."

He urged South Georgia United Methodists to receive Joseph's message themselves and move into the New Year with anticipation.

"Let us draw our attention to that biblical story and have us look for where change is occurring and join it," he said.

One thing that has certainly changed is the General Conference session. Originally slated for May 5-15, 2020, it is currently scheduled for Aug. 29 - Sept. 7, 2021 in Minneapolis, Minn.

This extra time, Bishop Bryan said, allows more opportunity for reflection and discussion.

He also reminded the Conference of all they've been through and survived.

"Since 1736 when John and Charles Wesley landed here in the South Georgia Conference, we have been through a lot of things, but here we are by the grace of God," Bishop Bryan said.

"Perhaps we can give ourselves permission to have confidence that God is at work in us and through us. And perhaps we can take a truly deep breath based on the fact that we have come through so much."

The South Georgia Conference will remain the South Georgia Conference, he said, and will be resilient and survive, no matter the situation.

“We did not wilt on the vine. We are strong in Christ. Christ is strengthening us. The world needs to see that. The world needs to see a group of people who can have difficult conversations about tough matters and don’t wilt but keep their arms around each other,” he said. “That’s us. That’s what it means to be alive together at the table. That’s where we need to be.”

And what, exactly, does being “Alive Together at the Table” mean to Bishop Bryan, especially in the midst of a global pandemic?

“When you come together at the table you are building relationships. That’s what it’s all about,” he said. “One of the things I want to think about in 2021 are relationships. That’s what ‘Alive Together at the Table’ means.”

That’s how Jesus did ministry, Bishop Bryan said. He didn’t use techniques or a process; He brought people together and shared life with them.

“Let’s see 2021 as the year we focus on relationships. Who’s at the table with us? Celebrate them! Who else needs to be at the table with us? Invite them!”

As people are able to receive the COVID-19 vaccination and gather again, churches need to lead the effort, showing people how to have healthy relationships with one another and how to gather safely.

“Churches are the glue that hold communities together,” he said. “Human relationships – that’s my vision for 2021.”

Bikers deliver gifts, cheer to Wesley Glen residents

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

It was more rumbling and revving than prancing and pawing when a group of Macon-area bikers played Santa and delivered Christmas gifts to Wesley Glen Ministries’ residents.

And instead of reindeer, the group rode in on Harley-Davidsons, Hondas, and Indian Motorcycles.

“You could hear (the bikes) before you could see them!” said Dr. Tyler Plaxico, president and CEO of Wesley Glen Ministries. Located in Macon, [Wesley Glen](#) is an agency of the South Georgia Conference dedicated to serving adults with developmental disabilities.

On Saturday, Dec. 12, the [BYKR BROZ](#) Christmas Run brought about 75 bikers together to ride from Warner Robins to Wesley Glen’s Macon campus. Once there, they slowly paraded through campus three times, honking, cheering, and waving, before stopping at each of the seven residential cottages to meet residents and deliver Christmas gifts.

They handed out Amazon Kindles, clothing, games, music compact discs, purses, and more. The residents received most or all of what was on their wish lists.

“(Our residents) were so incredibly grateful,” Dr. Plaxico said. “They love motorcycles and they were overwhelmed with gratitude and joy by all the gifts. Seeing their excitement brought tears to our eyes.”

With their big motorcycles and black vests, the BYKR BROZ, a social and recreational motorcycle club based in Warner Robins, may look tough, but their hearts are soft.

“We try to do a lot of benefits. We have a large group and we look for causes to support,” said BYKR BROZ President Tim “HARDROCK” Harvey. “We just have a lot of folks who care.”

Supporting the community is in the club’s DNA, Harvey said, and when they learned of Wesley Glen and its mission, they wanted to help.

“We heard about Wesley Glen from one of our individuals who has a daughter with special needs. They were talking about what a neat place it is,” he said.

Because of the global coronavirus pandemic, Wesley Glen’s residents have been under shelter-in-place orders since March. Their ability to see family members, socialize, attend worship services, and participate in recreational activities has been severely impacted. Wesley Glen’s day program, which serves 45 participants, had to be suspended for eight months. Safely bringing groups to campus helps show Wesley Glen’s residents they are loved, cared for, and remembered, Dr. Plaxico said.

“In a year like the one we’ve had, it’s so good and almost crucially important to see the innate goodness in human beings and how people can come together and benefit and bless those they have never met,” Dr. Plaxico said. “(The BYKR BROZ) wanted our residents to know that they are thought about, that they matter. It was huge. For a group who has not been able to go out into the community, it was great for the community to come to them.”

For Harvey and the BYKR BROZ, the Wesley Glen Christmas Run was a fun, special day to spread some Christmas cheer.

“I’ve been doing this for a long time, and this was probably one of the best events I’ve been a part of. The excitement was contagious. It was awesome and we loved it.”

The BYKR BROZ visit was a true Christmas gift for the Wesley Glen residents, said Dr. Plaxico.

“It warms your heart to see a bunch of road-hardened bikers tearing up and excited about what we do,” he said. “They have the softest hearts and are incredibly kind people. They were the embodiment of the Christian spirit rolling around on motorcycles.”

2020: Remembering notable United Methodists

By Heather Hahn, *UMNS*

In 2020, United Methodists mourned the passing of groundbreaking bishops, founders of Africa University, giants of the U.S. civil rights movement, and a mathematician who charted the way for astronauts.

Here are 34 remembrances, listed in order of date of death or memorial service.

Bishop R. Kern Eutslser

While still in seminary, the future [Bishop R. Kern Eutslser](#) got a crash course in congregational leadership.

Eutslser helped take over preaching and pastoral duties at a tall-steeple New York City church after the senior pastor died — all while completing his studies at nearby Union Theological Seminary. In 1943, he earned his Master of Divinity with honors.

Those lessons served Eutslser in good stead. Friends remember the bishop as both a master of the pulpit and administration, who was nevertheless down to earth. Eutslser died Jan. 2 at age 100 in his native Virginia.

After serving multiple appointments in Virginia, Eutslser served as bishop of the Holston Conference from 1984 to his mandatory retirement in 1988. He continued to be a mentor in retirement at Reveille United Methodist Church in Richmond, Virginia, where he had previously been a pastor.

“Kern Eutslser was a near-perfect embodiment of why the symbol for the episcopacy is a shepherd’s crook,” said the Rev. Douglas Forrester, the church’s lead pastor. “He was strong yet compassionate, gifted yet gracious, a giant amongst his peers yet always making time for pastors like me.”

Bishop Michael J. Coyner

Throughout his ministry, [Bishop Michael J. Coyner](#) worked to bring people together.

His unexpected death also brought together United Methodists of varied views in an outpouring of love, prayer and grief. A constant refrain in their tributes was Coyner’s fairness and faithfulness.

“Bishop Mike,” as people called him, died Jan. 8 at the age of 70, less than two weeks after being diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus that had spread to his liver.

Coyner was bishop of the Dakotas Conference from his election in 1996 to 2004, when he returned to his native Indiana. There, he served three four-year terms and oversaw the merger of the North and South Indiana conferences in 2010 into a single Indiana Conference. In 2012-16,

he also was board president of the General Council on Finance and Administration, the denomination's finance agency.

"One of his favorite phrases when people asked where he stood theologically was he would say that he is centered in Jesus Christ," said Bishop Frank Beard, who served as a district superintendent under Coyner before becoming bishop of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

The Rev. Lisa M. Scott-Joiner

[The Rev. Lisa M. Scott-Joiner](#) was a dedicated chaplain who helped fellow United Methodist chaplains follow their call. She died Jan. 11 at the age of 57 in St. Louis.

Scott-Joiner, board certified with the Association of Professional Chaplains, served as chaplain supervisor at Barnes-Jewish Hospital in St. Louis. She previously held senior pastor positions at a number of churches in Illinois and Missouri. She also was a past president of the St. Louis Caucus of Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

Starting in 2017, she served as a board director for the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry. She chaired the board's administrative matters committee and served on the endorsing committee that worked with chaplains.

Bishop William McAlilly, Higher Education and Ministry board president, said Scott-Joiner would be missed throughout the United Methodist connection.

"She was dedicated to the work of preparing and credentialing new United Methodist chaplains and leaves behind a deep legacy of service to the church," said McAlilly, who also leads the Memphis and Tennessee conferences.

The Rev. Pablo Sosa

[The Rev. Pablo Sosa](#) knew how to make congregations sing, and his hymns have become part of worship around the globe. He died Jan. 11 in Buenos Aires at age 85.

Sosa served as a pastor in the Evangelical Methodist Church of Argentina and professor of liturgy and hymnology. He edited several hymnals and wrote countless songs in the Latin American Protestant repertoire such as "Santo, Santo, Santo," "El Cielo Canta Alegria" and "Cristo Vive." In 2018, he was honored as [a Fellow of the Hymn Society of the U.S. and Canada](#).

Jorge Lockward, longtime United Methodist worship leader and chair of the World Council of Churches worship and liturgy committee, said Sosa's music made the gospel accessible.

"Every year he wrote a Christmas song that became famous over the radio as well as in church," Lockward said. "Pablo, through his ecumenical engagement in song, also did more for real ecumenism than all of the meetings that theologians and church leaders have."

Linda Green

[Linda Green](#), who helped keep the church informed about the work of bishops and the rise of Africa University, died unexpectedly Jan. 27.

As a reporter for United Methodist News Service from 1995 to 2009, she covered most of the denomination's general church agencies as well as the Council of Bishops.

One of her major ongoing stories was the startup and early growth of Africa University, and she traveled frequently to different African nations to cover the news of the church. [Her 2002 story about AIDS orphans in Africa](#) won the Donn Doten Award of Excellence for Writing from the United Methodist Association of Communicators.

Linda Bloom, assistant news editor at UM News, worked as a fellow reporter with Green.

“Her expertise at cultivating news sources throughout The United Methodist Church was aided by her warmth, her humor and her faith,” Bloom said.

The Rev. Herschel Hoover Sheets

[The Rev. Herschel Hoover Sheets](#) wrote what many consider the definitive history of the North Georgia Conference. Still, the United Methodist leader had far more than Georgia on his mind. He died Feb. 8 at age 91 at The Oaks at Ashton Hills Assisted Living Center in Covington, Georgia.

In his 50 years of ministry, he held just about every leadership role a United Methodist clergy member could, save bishop. He also served as a religion professor at United Methodist-related Young Harris College and adjunct professor at his alma mater Emory University's Candler School of Theology.

He left his mark on the global church as a multiple-time delegate to General Conference — twice as delegation head — and to the World Methodist Conference. He wrote eight books and was a frequent speaker on church governance. In all his roles, he sought to empower laity.

“He was always willing to teach, educate or answer any question. His presence among us will be greatly missed,” said Bill Martin, the North Georgia Conference's lay leader.

The Rev. Frances Helen Foley Guest

The three and a half years that [the Rev. Frances Helen Foley Guest](#) spent with her Methodist missionary parents in a Japanese prison camp during World War II shaped her ministry for the rest of her life.

Guest's parents — Walter Brooks Foley and Mary Rosengrant Foley — were assigned first to India in 1926, and then to the Philippines in 1935. When the Japanese occupied Manila, the family entered an internment camp. Four days after the internment ended, a bomb fell directly on the Foleys' room at the camp. Her father, 45, died from the blast, and her mom lost an arm. Guest was 20 years old.

The Methodist Board of Foreign Missions recognized her resilience and abilities by naming her the first recipient of the Crusade Scholars program (now known as [World Communion Scholars](#)). But, years before the Methodist Church granted women full clergy rights, she was discouraged from becoming a minister. That changed when at age 51, she entered seminary and became a pioneering clergywoman in the Florida Conference.

Guest died Nov. 26, 2019, at 94. New York's United Methodist Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew celebrated her life at a Feb. 15 memorial service.

“She created a set of stories that allowed her ... to tell what had happened, but framed it theologically in a way that was about life, not death,” said her son, Ken Guest.

The Rev. John Wesley Z. Kurewa

United Methodists remember [the Rev. John Wesley Z. Kurewa](#), a founding father and first vice chancellor of Africa University, as a leader who followed the direction of the Holy Spirit in every move he made. Kurewa died Feb. 15 at age 87.

The former secretary of Zimbabwe's Parliament was involved in the development of the university from the beginning. He served as on-site manager of the Africa University project in 1987 — a year before General Conference approved the establishment of a United Methodist-related university in sub-Saharan Africa. The university opened as Zimbabwe's first private university in 1992.

As vice chancellor in 1992-97, he served as the equivalent of a U.S. university president. Kurewa returned to Africa University in 2000 as associate professor in the E. Stanley Jones Chair of Evangelism. In 2015, the Foundation for Evangelism in Lake Junaluska, North Carolina, [endowed a professorship](#) in Africa University's Faculty of Theology named for Kurewa.

“In this man, we found perfect harmony of spirituality and academic excellence, true to the great Wesleyan heritage that sees no contradiction between education and spirituality,” said the Rev. Forbes Matonga, a United Methodist leader in Zimbabwe.

Katherine Coleman Goble Johnson

[Katherine Johnson](#) broke barriers for women and African Americans as she charted the way for astronauts to break across the final frontier. Johnson died Feb. 24 at the age of 101 at a retirement home in Newport News, Virginia.

United Methodists remember Johnson counting steps as a child on her way to worship at what is now St. James United Methodist Church in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. That early love of numbers helped Johnson grow into a renowned mathematician whose pioneering work for NASA took center stage in the book and movie “Hidden Figures.”

As [the New York Times said in her obituary](#), they asked her for the moon and she gave it to them. She helped get astronauts Alan B. Shepard Jr. and John Glenn to space and back. She also calculated the precise trajectories that would let Apollo 11 land on the moon and return to Earth.

In 2015, President Barack Obama awarded her the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In 2017, NASA dedicated a building in her honor. In 2019, she received the Congressional Gold Medal.

Carolyn Bond, who also grew up at St. James in White Sulfur Springs, said Johnson's hometown knew little of her achievements until the release of the movie "Hidden Figures." The city's public library now bears Johnson's name.

"I had no idea she did all of those things," Bond said in 2017. "She never said anything about working with the space program, but she did always ask us how we were doing in school."

Roy Larson

[Roy Larson](#), a former United Methodist pastor turned prominent religion reporter, died Feb. 25 at age 90.

The former Chicago Sun-Times religion editor famously investigated then-Cardinal John Cody in the 1980s for corruption. After working for the Sun-Times from about 1969 to 1985, Larson was editor and publisher until 1994 of The Chicago Reporter. He also helped found the Catalyst, covering education and school reform.

Before his journalism career, he served multiple Chicago-area congregations as a pastor.

"There was a kindness that he had that was a gift," said former Sun-Times photographer John White told the newspaper. "When he was talking to you and communicating to you, you felt the humanity."

Nancy Brown

Those who knew her best remember [Nancy Brown](#) as someone who cared deeply for her church and her community.

Brown, a founding member of United Methodist Church of the Resurrection and a former state legislator in Kansas, died March 9 of complications from cancer. She was 77.

She chaired Resurrection's first visionary committee, early church councils and its social action committee. She also led countless mission trips to multiple countries including Russia, Ukraine, Honduras, South Africa and Zambia. Today, the congregation has the denomination's largest attendance in the U.S.

She served The United Methodist Church at the conference and international levels. She was a volunteer in mission, a two-time General Conference delegate, an ambassador for the [Healthy Families, Healthy Planet initiative](#) and board member of the United Methodist Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

“Nancy’s impact on Resurrection, and around the world, was incalculable,” the Rev. Adam Hamilton, the church’s founding pastor, wrote in a Facebook post.

Virginia Schoenbohm Clymer

[Virginia Schoenbohm Clymer](#), active United Methodist and widow of Bishop Wayne Clymer, died March 21 at age 96.

Both her first husband Wilko Schoenbohm, founder of Courage Center in Minneapolis, and her second husband Bishop Clymer, preceded her in death.

She taught elementary and junior high school for several years in Iowa and later was a child psychiatry instructor and speech therapist in Minnesota. After 32 years working in special education, she retired in 1986. She was a longtime volunteer, including providing a variety of services to her beloved church, Hennepin Avenue United Methodist in Minneapolis.

“While many still recall her genuinely sweet and kind personality, they will also tell you that it belied her fierce commitment to caring for ‘the least of these,’” said the Rev. Frenchye Magee, the congregation’s associate pastor.

The Rev. Joseph E. Lowery

[The Rev. Joseph Echols Lowery](#), a United Methodist pastor who loved to preach and was never afraid to speak truth to power, died at his home in Atlanta on March 27. He was 98.

Lowery walked with the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and gave the [benediction at President Barack Obama’s first inauguration](#). Obama also presented him with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2009.

With King, he was among the 60 Black ministers who formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957. In 1965, King asked Lowery to chair the delegation delivering the demands of the Selma-to-Montgomery March to Alabama Governor George Wallace. Wallace ordered state troopers to stop the marchers by whatever means necessary. Marchers were tear-gassed and beaten on the day that became known as “Bloody Sunday.”

In 1995, Lowery led the 30th anniversary re-enactment of the historic march and Wallace — a fellow United Methodist — personally apologized for his conduct as governor.

Lowery served churches in Birmingham, and Mobile, Alabama, and in Atlanta.

“While Rev. Joseph Lowery was, without question, an important figure in the civil rights movement, it may be less well known by many that his greatest love was being a pastor,” said his friend, retired Bishop Woodie W. White.

The Rev. Sherrie Dobbs Johnson

[The Rev. Sherrie Dobbs Johnson](#) served at all levels of The United Methodist Church. The former district superintendent and wife of retired Bishop Alfred Johnson died March 27 of complications related to COVID-19. She was 71.

Initially a communicator, she directed public relations at the United Methodist Publishing House in Nashville, Tennessee, and later at what is now Clark Atlanta University, a United Methodist-supported historically Black college.

She served as managing editor for United Methodist Women's Response Magazine in New York City from 1981 to 1991 before becoming an ordained elder in the Greater New Jersey Conference. She later was pastor in local churches in New Jersey and New York.

Andris Salter, a UMW executive and Johnson's friend of more than 20 years, described Johnson as a loving, kind woman with a great sense of humor.

"She loved good coffee, good food, good friends and to dance. ... She loved parades and fireworks," Salter said. "Usually on the Fourth of July, she went to several communities just for the fireworks. She brought fireworks, wherever she went."

Faith Richardson

United Methodists who like to track legislative action at General Conference owe a debt to [Clyta Faith Richardson](#), who helped bring the denomination's lawmaking assembly into the computer age. She died April 21 in Watertown, Massachusetts, at the age of 104.

Her late husband H. Neil Richardson was a noted Old Testament professor. Richardson, who went by Faith, left her own mark on the church. She served as secretary of a local church, administrative assistant to the late Bishop James K. Mathews and secretary to the Council of Bishops. In 1984 and 1988, she was secretary of the General Conference — essentially the top organizer of the big meeting.

During the 1988 gathering, she worked with computer programmer John Brawn to create an electronic database to track petitions submitted to the denomination's top lawmaking body. The Petitions Entry and Tracking System, or [PETS](#), served as the predecessor for the current online tracking system.

"That legislative tracking system was put into place in 1992. Up to that time, the conference killed several hundred trees in the process of sending paper petitions to the legislative assembly," said the Rev. J. Richard Peck, [a veteran staff member of 12 General Conferences](#).

Downing Kay

[Downing Kay](#), believed to be the longest-lived native Marylander in the state's history, died May 15 at age 112. As The Baltimore Sun recounts, she also was a lifelong member of what is now The United Methodist Church.

Her memories included dancing to the Victrola, stretching a can of tuna for a week during the Great Depression and tending to her World War II victory garden.

In the last years of her life, the former schoolteacher lived in Towson's Pickersgill Retirement Community, where she delighted in playing Scrabble and taking Zumba classes.

Kay was a longtime member of Grace United Methodist Church in Baltimore, where she regularly attended worship until the last two years of her life.

“She had a real love of community and so she really attended to people,” said the Rev. Amy McCullough, the congregation's lead pastor. “She had a sparkling personality. She was someone who loved life, and you could tell that. She also loved God and loved the church.”

Marie White Webb

[Marie White Webb](#) dropped out of college to support her husband's United Methodist ministry and later became a pioneering church historian in her own right. She died peacefully May 18 in Prairie Village, Kansas, at the age of 99.

Twice widowed, she was preceded in death by her husband of more than 50 years, the Rev. James Kerr White, and then her second husband, Bishop Lance Webb.

In her own way, Webb was a minister too. She taught Sunday school for children and youth, volunteered with many United Methodist Women units and served as president of the Ministers' Wives Association.

After her youngest entered kindergarten, she went back to school, ultimately earning a master's degree with honors in U.S. history. Her thesis led to the publication of “The Methodist Antislavery Struggle in the Land of Lincoln,” in the journal *Methodist History*. She later served as chair of what is now the Illinois Great Rivers Conference Commission on Archives and History — the first woman in that role. She also helped organize the [Dirksen Congressional Research Center](#), which supports scholarly research on the U.S. Congress.

“Marie was a delightful person,” said the Rev. Miley Palmer, a retired Illinois Great Rivers Conference pastor who shared her interest in church history. “She wrote well. I always looked forward to getting a letter from her, especially at Christmastime. The letters she wrote were just real gems.”

Former U.S. Rep. Sam Johnson

[Former U.S. Rep. Sam Johnson's](#) national service spanned years as an Air Force pilot, a prisoner of war and a Republican member of Congress. The United Methodist also was a devoted alumnus of Southern Methodist University, which used his \$100,000 donation [to create a scholarship for military veterans in his name](#).

He died of natural causes May 27 in the Dallas suburb of Plano, Texas, at age 89.

Johnson flew combat missions during the Korean and Vietnam wars. After the North Vietnamese struck down his plane in 1966, he endured torture and captivity as a prisoner of war for nearly seven years. For a time, he shared a cell at the Hanoi Hilton with the late U.S. Sen. John McCain — though the two would have a chilly relationship in later years.

After his release, Johnson directed the Air Force Fighter Weapons School, better known as “Top Gun” institute. After retiring as a colonel, he eventually entered politics. He won a seat in Congress in a 1991 special election and earned a reputation as one of the body’s most staunch conservatives during his 25 years there.

Former President George W. Bush, a fellow United Methodist, said in a statement: “Laura and I are grateful for this man of humility and patriotism, and we take comfort knowing that he is with his beloved wife, Shirley, again.”

Yed Angoran

[Yed Esaie Angoran](#), who served for decades in Côte d’Ivoire’s first independent government and was a leader in The United Methodist Church, died June 13 after a heart attack. He was 73.

He served as a minister of multiple government agencies under Félix Houphouët-Boigny, the country’s first president. He later served as spokesman for Côte d’Ivoire’s National Reconciliation Forum, a body created to resolve the country’s political and social tensions following a coup d’état, two civil wars and the advent of a civilian government.

Angoran’s governmental experience served him in good stead as he took on various leadership roles in the global United Methodist Church. He helped develop [United Methodist missions in Senegal and Cameroon](#), was board president of United Methodist University in Côte d’Ivoire, and served as publishing coordinator of the Africa-French Edition of The Upper Room. He also was a delegate to each General Conference since 2012.

“Angoran was knowledgeable and a key leader in the conversations leading to our integration into the United Methodist family in 2008 and to the ongoing relationships with the global connection,” said Côte d’Ivoire’s Bishop Benjamin Boni.

Betty Ann Boulton

At age 5, [Betty Ann Fisher Boulton](#) began taking piano lessons and by age 12, she was a church organist. Her musical gifts also led to meeting her husband, the future United Methodist Bishop Edwin C. Boulton.

She died July 15 at age 88 at Mercy Hospital in Canton, Ohio, from complications following surgery. Her husband of more than 50 years preceded her in death in 2000.

The two met when he was a student pastor and she accompanied the choral productions he directed. Her musical career thrived as she followed her husband from one appointment to another with her serving as church organist and piano teacher. One older gentleman was so impressed with her, he rallied the town to buy her a grand piano.

She returned to college for a more systematic study of the pipe organ, ultimately receiving her Master of Music degree in organ performance in 1992 and performing in concerts across the United States.

The Rev. Lisa Boulton said that lifelong passion for learning inspired her to enter seminary at age 45 and earn her M. Div.

“My mother taught me by example: We are never too old to learn, grow and become more loving, compassionate, forgiving and present to social justice,” the younger Boulton said.

The Rev. Daniel Z. Rodríguez

[The Rev. Daniel Z. Rodríguez](#), a widely known and beloved United Methodist Hispanic/Latino leader, died July 19 in San Antonio. He was 88.

During a 50-year ministry as a pastor, Rodríguez served as a district superintendent, conference council director and executive director of MARCHA, the Hispanic/Latino caucus in The United Methodist Church. He influenced three generations of lay and clergy leaders in mission with Hispanic/Latino communities in the United States and Puerto Rico.

His advocacy for mission with the growing Hispanic/Latino community was key in the United Methodist effort to develop ethnic local churches. While he answered the call to wider service in the general church, he was most devoted to serving as a pastor and other appointments in his beloved home Rio Grande Conference.

“For many of us who were privileged to share in ministry with the Rev. Daniel Z. Rodríguez, our fondest memory of him is as a caring mentor and role model,” wrote his friend, retired Bishop Joel N. Martinez. “His good counsel, his honest feedback, and his smiles and laughter were gifts we can never repay.”

Ruth R. Handy

[Ruth R. Handy](#), wife for nearly 50 years of the late Bishop William Talbot Handy Jr., died July 20 in Nashville, Tennessee.

Handy grew up in New Orleans and earned a bachelor’s degree from Dillard University, where she met her future husband. The university is one of the 11 schools supported by The United Methodist Church’s Black College Fund.

She played an integral role in her husband’s ministry as pastor and later bishop. She headed Sunday school programs, sang in the choir, worked with United Methodist Women and organized retreats for the wives of ministers and bishops.

She also was an elementary school and later physical education teacher. Like her husband, she also broke racial barriers and was the first African American teacher at Nashville’s Crieve Hall Elementary School. She also was a devoted member of the city’s Clark Memorial United Methodist Church.

Her survivors include her three children Mercedes Cowley, Deedie Davis and the Rev. Stephen Handy, lead pastor of McKendree United Methodist Church in downtown Nashville.

“Ruth Handy invested in women, particularly pastor's wives and United Methodist Women, because she understood the difficulty and necessity of being authentically who God designed you to be,” her three children said in a statement. “In her mind, there were no limits to what a woman could achieve in the church, regardless of the historical labels and barriers put before them.”

Kent McCuskey Weeks

[Kent McCuskey Weeks](#), an attorney and educator, took the idea of a United Methodist university for all of Africa and gave it structure. He died July 30 in Nashville, Tennessee, at the age of 82.

Weeks crafted the legal blueprint and guided the creation of the legal entities that make up Africa University today. He also helped draft the legislation that the Parliament of Zimbabwe approved, permitting the first private university to operate in the southern African nation.

Weeks, who taught higher education law at Vanderbilt University for 25 years, also became a major donor to Africa University. He and his wife, Karen H. Weeks, established an endowed scholarship fund to support at least one Africa University student annually in perpetuity. In his honor, the university named the library's Kent M. Weeks History and Archives Hall.

“We will always remember Dr. Weeks for his invaluable legal expertise... for being a great negotiator who played a pivotal role in negotiating with the Zimbabwean government for the Africa University Charter, and for his visionary work in establishing the governance structures of the university,” said Africa University Vice Chancellor Munashe Furusa.

The Rev. William F. Fore

[The Rev. William F. Fore](#), an ordained United Methodist minister from the California-Pacific Conference, was a television pioneer who aimed for the public airwaves to serve the public interest. He died July 30 in Dallas at the age of 92.

In 1953, Fore — who went by Bill — produced the first children's religious TV program in the U.S. and shortly after brought “Exploring God's World” to CBS. He would go on to lead film and television ministries for what is now the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries.

Starting in 1964, Fore served as executive director of the broadcasting and film commission of the National Council of Churches — a post he held for a quarter century. When Black Mississippians began boycotting local television station WLBT-TV in 1969 after the station refused to give airtime to a Black gubernatorial candidate, Fore secured ecumenical support for the lawsuit that ultimately cost the station its license.

He later played a key role in the early days of U.S. public broadcasting as chairperson of the Advisory Council of National Organizations to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. He also co-founded the National Coalition against Censorship, which aids libraries and other organizations facing censorship of books and films.

“Bill trained as a musician and could have pursued a professional music career,” said Nelson Price, Fore’s longtime friend who worked with him on TV programs. “Instead, his passion was communication and how the church could communicate effectively and make the communications media in our country serve the public.”

Bishop John K. Yambasu

United Methodists remember [Sierra Leone Area Bishop John K. Yambasu](#) for his courage, leadership and love of The United Methodist Church and Jesus Christ. He died in a car accident Aug. 16 while on the way to preach at a funeral. He was 63.

Yambasu had many titles — bishop, chancellor of Africa University and president of the Africa College of Bishops. But the one he most cherished was beloved child of God.

United Methodists around the world praised his faithful leadership in bringing together a diverse group of United Methodists to collaborate on a proposed agreement for separating the denomination, called the [Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace Through Separation](#). They also recalled his leadership during the worst Ebola outbreak in history, a deadly landslide and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic.

Born in southern Sierra Leone, Bishop Yambasu studied at United Methodist mission schools. He was ordained a deacon in 1987 and an elder in 1990.

He served churches in Moyamba and Freetown until he began to focus on Christian education and youth ministry. He also was the Sierra Leone Conference's director for Christian education and youth ministries and founded the Child Rescue Centre in Sierra Leone, serving as its executive director until he became a regional missionary in 2000. He was elected a bishop in 2008 and installed in 2009.

“Bishop Yambasu was a great visionary leader. Bishop Yambasu was a great fighter for the church,” said the Rev. Francis Charley, dean of the Sierra Leone cabinet. “In many instances, human as he was, though, he taught us many things. That’s why today we can stand for the church.”

Martha Hardt

[Martha Carson Hardt](#), wife for 73 years of the late Bishop John Wesley Hardt, died Aug. 22 at the age of 99.

A native of the East Texas town of Malakoff, she earned degrees from the two-year United Methodist-related Lon Morris College, where she met her future husband, and Southern Methodist University. They married when he was a seminary student at SMU.

She supported her husband as he served appointments across the Texas Conference and during his assignment as bishop of the Oklahoma and Oklahoma Indian Missionary conferences.

In 1988, after the bishop’s retirement, the two moved to Dallas where she joined First United Methodist Church and its Aldersgate Sunday School class. The Hardts also made repeated

mission trips abroad, with a focus on Zimbabwe and Indonesia, and were dedicated supporters of the [Lydia Patterson Institute](#) in El Paso, Texas.

“Her involvement with the Aldersgate Sunday School class rooted them further in their Methodist roots,” said the Rev. Andy Stoker, senior minister of First United Methodist in Dallas.

“The class became more informed and greater stewards of the vision for a globally connected denomination. With Martha’s faithful service to the global United Methodist Church, we all became grounded in a passion for a radically-inclusive, missionally-minded local church.”

Bishop J. Woodrow Hearn

[Bishop J. Woodrow Hearn](#) led two U.S. conferences and traveled the world as president of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, helping to revive Methodism in what was then the Soviet Union.

Hearn, who went by Woody, died Aug. 31 at home in Galveston Texas, after a recent diagnosis of melanoma. He was 89.

The bishop’s early career as an ordained elder was in the Louisiana Conference, where he was a pastor in Lafayette, Shreveport, New Orleans and Baton Rouge. He was serving Elysian Fields Methodist Church in New Orleans, when Hurricane Betsy clobbered the city on Sept. 9, 1965. He worked closely with the New Orleans Catholic Archbishop Philip Hannan on relief efforts.

In 1984, the South Central Jurisdictional Conference elected Hearn bishop and assigned him to the Nebraska Conference, where he served for eight years. He then served the Houston-based Texas Conference until his retirement in 2000.

During his tenure as bishop, Hearn was on the board of Global Ministries, serving as president from 1988 to 1992. Hearn was a force for United Methodist missions but also cherished and nurtured ecumenical relationships.

“His true love was the body of Christ, without any other tags on it,” said son Bruce Hearn, chaplain at Wesley Prep school in Dallas.

The Rev. Gilbert H. Caldwell

[The Rev. Gilbert H. Caldwell](#) called himself a “foot soldier” in the U.S. civil rights movement. However, many across his beloved United Methodist Church regard him as a general for justice.

He died of cancer Sept. 4 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. He was 86.

Caldwell participated in many of the civil rights movement’s landmark events — the March on Washington in 1963, the Mississippi Freedom Summer voter drives in 1964, the March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965 and the 1968 Poor People’s Campaign. He marched alongside the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1965 to protest school segregation in Boston.

Within his denomination, Caldwell — a co-founder of Black Methodists for Church Renewal and member of the Reconciling Ministries Network — also took an activist role.

He tirelessly and nonviolently advocated for both racial and LGBTQ equality — even when doing so put him at odds with prevailing state and church laws. As Caldwell saw it, he was following the call of Jesus to be inclusive.

“Gil’s passion for equality, justice and inclusiveness inspired others to embrace his dream of beloved community,” said the Rev. Don Messer, president emeritus of Iliff School of Theology in Denver and Caldwell’s friend of more than 56 years.

“He experienced personally the hatred of racism, but never failed to express love.”

Gary Locklear

[Gary Wayne Locklear](#) retired three times but always rose to the occasion when called back into service in the North Carolina Conference, said his wife, Panthia. He died Sept. 10 from COVID-19 at age 72.

This June, the conference honored him for serving as conference lay leader for the past eight years.

A lifelong member of Sandy Plains United Methodist Church in Pembroke, North Carolina, Locklear taught Sunday school for more than 50 years and [took on multiple lay leadership roles](#). He served as a home missionary, a United Methodist layman called to ministries of love, justice and service.

The Locklears are members of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, the state’s largest tribe and the ninth-largest non-federally recognized Native American tribe in the U.S. Friends say his heritage played an important role in his commitment to ministry. He did mission work in South Carolina, Alaska, Guatemala, Russia and Bolivia. In Bolivia, he laid brick for a rural health clinic that now serves 50,000 people. He also led disaster relief efforts after hurricanes Matthew and Florence.

“Gary was all about discipleship — his own discipleship and encouraging the discipleship of others,” North Carolina Conference Bishop Hope Morgan Ward [said in a video tribute](#).

Ina Schowengerdt

[Ina E. Schowengerdt](#), wife for more than 46 years of the late Bishop Louis Wesley Schowengerdt, loved music and The United Methodist Church. As she supported her husband’s ministry and raised two sons, she lived out both passions.

Schowengerdt died Sept. 16 at age 94 in St. Joseph, Missouri. After their marriage in 1951, she and her husband moved to St. Joseph where the future bishop founded Ashland United Methodist Church from the merger of two small congregations.

Schowengerdt, who played the bassoon and contrabassoon, toured with the Kansas City Philharmonic and St. Joseph Symphony. She later played with the St. Louis Symphony and St. Louis Opera. She left her musical career after her husband’s election as bishop to support him in his assignment to lead the New Mexico and Northwest Texas conferences.

After his passing, she returned to St. Joseph.

“She had a very deep faith, and church was very important to her,” said her son Glenn L. Schowengerdt. “After dad’s death, she wanted to be part of a Methodist church but had to have one with a strong choir. That led her back to Ashland.”

The Rev. Hae-Jong Kim

[Former United Methodist bishop Hae-Jong Kim](#) died Nov. 3 in Fort Lee, New Jersey, after a long illness. He was 85.

Kim was considered a pioneer, planting Korean immigrant churches with zeal. He planted the first Korean church in New Jersey and 15 other Korean churches, including the Korean Community Church of New Jersey, and provided direct and indirect support to those churches.

But his ministry was not without controversy. Elected to the episcopacy in 1992, he served the New York West and Western Pennsylvania conferences before retiring in 2004 and then resigning as part of the resolution of a complaint filed against him.

The details of the January 2005 disciplinary complaint were kept confidential. As part of the resolution process, he resigned as bishop while retaining his clergy credentials. He resumed his ministry as a pastor of Alpine Community Church in 2008.

“Through his dedication, sacrifice, support and encouragement, the Korean church grew and bore fruit,” said the Rev. Sang-Kong Choi, pastor of Christ United Methodist Church of North Huntingdon in White Oak, Pennsylvania.

Polly Anne Hodapp

[Polly Anne Hodapp](#) — the wife for 58 years of the late Bishop Leroy C. Hodapp — was born five years before the Great Depression and died in Evansville, Indiana, just two days before her 96th birthday.

She met her future husband when they were students at what is now the University of Evansville, a United Methodist-related college. They married after he graduated from the theological school at Drew University in New Jersey.

She served at his side as the bishop led conferences in Illinois and Indiana. She also traveled to countries on every continent except Antarctica.

“She was unpretentious and had the gift of making you feel at ease whether it was at an annual conference, a Council of Bishops meeting, or in her living room,” retired Bishop John L. Hopkins said.

“Wherever Leroy was traveling, he called Polly nightly to check in and tell her how much he loved her. Their personal devotion to each other reflected their love for Jesus and his church.”

The Rev. George Ogle

During his years in South Korea, [the Rev. George Ogle](#) was referred to by many titles: missionary, evangelist, organizer, educator, father of Korean workers and poor people, and a strong advocate of the Korean democracy movement.

Ogle, whose Korean name was Myung-geol Oh, died Nov. 15 at the age of 91. Earlier this year, the government of the Republic of Korea recognized him with the People's Medal for his contribution toward Korean human rights and democracy.

Ogle first went to South Korea in 1954, soon after his ordination in a predecessor of The United Methodist Church. He spent most of the next two decades ministering in the country. But in 1974, the Korean government deported Ogle after he spoke for eight young men who were falsely accused and sentenced to death. Back in the United States, he did what he could to bring attention to the case and support the Korean people.

“He was an apostle of justice and a model who took the cross of Jesus Christ and lived faithfully to the call of Christ,” said the Rev. Kil Sang Yoon, retired from the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The Rev. William Bobby McClain

[The Rev. William Bobby McClain](#), the Black theologian and civil rights leader who championed the United Methodist worship book “Songs of Zion,” died after a short illness on Nov. 18. He was 82.

As a teenage pastor, McClain met the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Montgomery, Alabama. After completing seminary at United Methodist Boston University School of Theology, he returned to Alabama in 1962 to work with King and to serve as pastor of Haven Chapel Methodist Church in Anniston.

He would go on to be pastor of the historic and influential congregations Union United Methodist Church in Boston and Tindley Temple United Methodist Church in Philadelphia.

Throughout his ministry, he also remained a committed scholar and teacher. In 1978, he established and served as the executive director of the [Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry at Drew University](#), Madison, New Jersey. In 1999, he was named to the Mary Elizabeth McGehee Joyce Chair in Preaching and Worship at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington. He retired in 2013 as professor emeritus.

He also chaired the committee that produced the hymnbook “*Songs of Zion*,” which sold more than 2.5 million copies.

The Rev. David McAllister-Wilson, president of Wesley Theological Seminary, said McClain was one of the last of the young leaders of the civil rights movement.

“What will be the legacy of Dr. William B. McClain?” McAllister-Wilson said. “About 2 million biblically grounded, theologically sound, prophetically and pastorally infused sermons have been shaped by the teaching of Dr. McClain.”

Hahn is a multimedia news reporter for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org. Information for this story was compiled from reports by UM News staff Kathy L. Gilbert, the Rev. Thomas Kim, Sam Hodges, Linda Bloom, Eveline Chikwanah, Jim Patterson, Tim Tanton and Isaac Broune contributed.

Deborah Coble of the West Virginia Conference, David Burke of Great Plains Conference, and Yvette Moore of United Methodist Women also contributed.

To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free Daily or Weekly Digests](#).

Annual Confirmation Retreat reimagined

The 20th annual Confirmation Retreat may not look like it has the last 19 years, but the focus remains the same: to complement what a church is or will be doing for each Confirmation class and to bring a sense of connectedness to our churches.

Since 2002, the South Georgia Conference has sponsored an annual Confirmation Retreat at Epworth By The Sea for students in the fifth grade and above. This event provides churches of all sizes an opportunity to connect with others through worship, study, and fellowship. While the gathering of more than 500 confirmands won't be happening in person this March, the content will be packaged (both digitally and tangibly) to be used in creative, useful ways for individual church groups.

Here are a few of the resources offered in the Confirmation Package:

- Live opening session/training for leaders only
- Mini video courses on topics of grace, United Methodist History, our connectedness, the journey as a disciple of Christ and more!
- Q&A Zoom sessions with District Superintendents
- Mission Moments spotlighting young people serving in South Georgia
- “How to talk to confirmands about General Conference” digital download
- Spotify playlist of worship/hymns/seasonal songs to match the courses
- Opening and closing videos featuring Bishop Bryan
- Sample schedule layouts
- T-shirts for each confirmand

Registration will be open **January 1-31, 2021 only**. Resources will launch February 1, 2021, for the churches registered and may be used at any time. The cost is only \$10 per person and includes all packaged digital content and a t-shirt. For more information, [click here](#).

Register for South Georgia Youth Workers Retreat

Registration is open for the South Georgia Conference's Youth Worker Winter Retreat January 21-22, 2021, at Little Ocmulgee State Park. This retreat is being designed BY local church youth workers FOR local church youth workers! **Only 30 spots are available.** [Click here](#) for registration information.

Bishop Bryan: We need each other!

FROM THE BISHOP R. LAWSON BRYAN

As Bishop Bryan looks towards a new year with hope and optimism, we asked him what words of inspiration he has for the laity and clergy of South Georgia as we begin 2021. Watch [this brief video](#) and be encouraged!

Called to Follow

Winter Quarter: Call in the New Testament Unit 2: Jesus and Calls in His Ministry

Sunday school lesson for the week of Jan. 10, 2021 By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Background Scripture: Luke 5: 1-11

Key Verse: “Jesus said to Simon: ‘Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’”
(Luke 5: 10b)

Lesson Aims:

- To understand the dynamics involved in the miracle of the great harvest of fish.
- To understand the difference between a miracle and a sign.
- To understand the importance of Jesus’ call that we should “forsake everything, take up our cross, and follow him.”

Each lesson allows us to study the terms, phrases and experiences that weave through it, holding all the pieces together to convey one great expression of God’s truth.

Terms

Lake Gennesaret

Lake Gennesaret is also the Sea of Galilee, the Sea of Tiberias, and the Sea of Kinnereth. It is 13 miles long, 33 miles wide, and it averaged only 141 feet deep. The sea was useful for travel. On

one side of the Sea of Galilee dwelled the Jewish people; on the other were the Gentile settlements. Therefore, when other texts state, “Jesus went to the other side,” they mean Jesus is going to minister to the Gentiles. The major commerce on the lake involved fishing. Fish proved to be a major staple. Jesus’ disciples included men from various occupations. Several of them were fishermen. Jesus himself knew how to fish, though he was a carpenter/mason.

The crowds were flocking to Jesus and he regularly had to deal with large numbers of people. Again, as long as Jesus performed healings and miracles, the people, in child-like wonder, followed him. However, when he engaged in mostly preaching and called for the people to forsake everything and follow him, they were not as interested. With the miracles they might expect God would do something for them. Now Jesus is beginning to preach and call the people to do something for him. Give him obedience! We can understand why the crowds were initially reluctant to take up their cross and follow Jesus. The religious leaders and the Roman government had severely suppressed them. Taking up a cross and following Jesus sounded like more of the same. However, they are not understanding the grace and love of God for them. The call to follow Jesus would be a choice. The people would follow because of transforming grace at work in their lives. They would *want* to follow, not be *made* to follow.

The Word of God

The term “Word” in Greek is *logos*. One of the more interesting facts about the Hebrew understanding of Word is their *creative power*. In the beginning, everything was created through the spoken Word. For example, God *said* “let there be light.” Vows were taken very seriously. When a person gave their word it created a holy, unbreakable bond. I find it sad that vows are not taken as seriously by many. A vow to God is serious! The breaking of a vow to God was akin to the commandment concerning taking the Lord’s name in vain. The epistle of James directly addresses the power of the spoken word.

Jesus was the Logos incarnate. Jesus was the literal Word of God in flesh and blood. The Word wasn’t something Jesus just knew; he was the Word! John begins his Gospel with the remarkable revelation that, “*In the beginning the Word, and the Word was with God and was God.*” The Logos is certainly a facet of the mystery regarding the trinity.

Yet, the Word possessed another dynamic readily apparent when listening to Jesus. A large number of the masses understood that Jesus was speaking *from another place*. He spoke as one having authority, a moral authority. The Jews depended upon the synagogue lessons for the Word. However, this was the Word standing or seated before them. Their hearts recognized the Word of God. One could not listen to Jesus without feeling loved and comforted or we could feel challenged like the religious leaders.

The Word of God is present in our world. The Word is present in the Bible and the heart. Furthermore, God speaks through the events and circumstances of life. We learn the powerful truth and remarkable comfort and assurance of God as we walk through pleasant and difficult

times. It is important to remember that the Bible as the Word doesn't just speak through our reading the words with little concentration, without purpose and lacking respect for it. The person that reads this inspired holy book with an earnest, seeking heart is richly blessed. Think of spiritually kneeling, taking off your shoes, for you are stand on holy ground. What is the major difference between our word and the Word of God? Yes, our words have creative power. When we speak, the words set forth a course of action. However, our words are shrouded with our egocentrism. As those who need humility, instruction, and repentance it is difficult for us to keep our own desires from the words we speak. For example, can I speak caring and helping words to an individual without a personal motive? Yes, it is very possible. However, in some circumstances it remains difficult. The Word of God in action is redeeming and holy.

Do you recognize the presence of the Word in your life? Can you share the places and experiences in which you were very aware you were being blessed by the Word? If you did not possess the Bible (remember, many in the world are not allowed to read Scripture) would you still hear the Word? Through what vehicles would you experience Jesus, the Word make flesh, if you didn't own a Bible?

Jesus taught from a boat

At this time, crowds continued to flock to and surround Jesus. Thus, a boat a few feet from shore was convenient. Jesus didn't board the boat for distance from the crowd, he did it to accommodate the crowd. The boat belonged to his disciple Simon. Some believe casting into the deep water is part of a contrast between shallow and deep. While the difference between the shallow and the deep is true, I personally do not believe it to be a part of what Luke wanted us to recognize.

Boats would become a symbol of safe harbor for some early Christians. Most scholars believed the symbol of the boat was tied to the story of Noah and the story of Peter and the other disciples on the boat with Jesus during a storm.

A boat, almost certainly the type of boat from which Jesus preached and taught, was unearthed and has become a great archeological find. The boat was mostly used for fishing, for Simon was a fisherman. What a great pulpit to preach and teach evangelism! The boat was used to harvest the fish. Tangible items can often make eternal truth more personal and understandable. Thus, Jesus' use of parables, stories of everyday life in Judah. The fish would become an object lesson. The fish were a metaphor for lost men and women.

After Jesus finished, he spoke to Simon and asked him to cast his nets deeper. This was not a word that Simon wanted to hear. He was very tired and frustrated; he was ready to rest. He had fished all night for little harvest. Simon's response to Jesus' request is remarkable, "*because you say so.*" The call of God isn't always couched in joy. As a matter of fact, the call often comes in the midst of difficulty. In obeying Jesus, Simon would have to go against the grain of his personal experience. Simon knew about fishing! Now, the mason who professes to be Messiah is

instructing him on how to better his catch. When it was time for a decision, Simon chose Jesus' Word over his reason and experience. He is going to cast the nets deeper because it was what Jesus asked; there was no other reason.

This type of obedience occurs during special events and experiences in the Bible. For our purposes, and because it is Advent, we recall the call upon Mary. After learning the news she was with child, Mary responded to the angel, "*Let it be.*" How much contentment we would we experience if we learned to give people, things, and circumstances to God and then, let it be. If we asked someone to go against their experience and reason, we would encounter argument. However, Simon understood this request was coming from a special person who spoke *from a special place*, the Messiah.

Can you remember an occasion in which you acted in obedience to God in spite of what experiences, your reason, and even others said? When is the last time you said, "Let it be" to God? Have there been moments when you were physically and emotionally fatigued and were then called to help another in Jesus' name? Did answering God's call enrich your faith? How?

Get away from me

A great harvest of fish was collected in the nets. The nets would need repairing, for the catch was large! Upon seeing the catch Simon fell at Jesus' feet and cried, "Get away from me, I am a sinful man!" On the surface this response appears strange. Miracles usually drew people to Jesus, not away. Remember that John would not use the word *miracle*, but only *signs and wonders*. The net of fish served as a greater sign that created wonder in the observers. James and John were also overtaken by wonder. On occasion, the light is so bright we cannot look upon its brilliance. When Moses had been in the presence of God, he had to veil his face. The Israelites could not look upon the brilliance of the light that radiated from his face. It is a light that fills us with so much wonder we drop to our knees. I read the best definition of wonder years ago on a calendar. It stated: *wonder is involuntary praise*. It is also a light that exposes the darkness that indwells us. Simon falls to his knees for both reasons. Recall that in the Old Testament people did not dare enter the realm of the divine without invitation. One was not even allowed to speak God's name. Simon's act reveals his belief that Jesus is the Son of God. In the nativity narrative we find occasions in which Mary and Joseph and the shepherds were initially filled with fear when the angel visited. Simon is doing the same. However, God is not using an angel to speak, he is using Jesus of Nazareth!

Jesus responded with words that should fill us with wonder, "*Be not afraid.*" Jesus is inviting us to draw near to God, without fear. He will forgive us our sins and empower us to live a new abundant life through the indwelling Holy Spirit. This message was revealed in an intense manner when the curtain of the temple ripped down the middle over Jesus' resurrection. The curtain was proclaiming, "Enter the holy place! Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords,

invites you!” The divine and human were perfectly united in Jesus. They are both present in us. However, there remains far more of our humanity.

The call of Jesus should fill us with even greater wonder: *“From now on you will fish for people.”* So, this is the sign! Jesus’ miracle wasn’t about fishing; it was about God redeeming the world through us. Evangelism isn’t a method; it isn’t something you can only learn in a manual. It is our personal response to Jesus and the ensuing call to share the good news that has liberated us! Manuals help us to hone skills. But even the best skills are powerless without love for Christ.

Can you think of individuals or groups you have invited to Christ? Evangelism isn’t just about words and methods. Evangelism is God using your personal gifts and graces to speak through you. Can you name the gifts you have for evangelism? Can you remember an occasion when you were overwhelmed over what God did? What was your response? Can you recall a time when you witnessed do an incredible work upon, in and through another? What effect did it have upon you?

Prayer

Almighty God, the fields are ripe for harvest. Hearts long to know you. In these troubled times may we hear your Word of comfort and hope. Empower our gift and graces to serve Jesus and redeem the world about us. We bow in wonder that you have chosen to join us, speak to us, and save us. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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

Called in Authority

Winter Quarter: Call in the New Testament

Unit 2: Jesus and Calls in His Ministry

Sunday school lesson for the week of Jan. 17, 2021

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Background Scripture: Mark 2: 2-12

Key Verse: “Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’” (Mark 2:9)

Lesson Aims:

- To understand the reasons why Jesus was so popular, only to die with few at the cross.
- To understand Jesus’ statement: *Your sins are forgiven.*
- To more fully understand compassionate evangelism.

Personal remark

Writing Sunday school lessons is one of the more satisfying means of ministry for me. After writing for two years I've come to understand that the best way to study the lesson is to study the key words and phrases. I try to cover geographical places, the culture, the author and audience, the characters, and the intent. Hopefully this will offer the teacher a deeper well from which to create their lesson along with the teacher's guidebook. God bless all of you with a meaningful New Year. Each lesson is immersed in prayer.

Who is Mark?

Mark was most likely a young, energetic man. Most believed he served Simon Peter as secretary. Mark's Gospel was the first Gospel written. Matthew and Luke use almost the entirety of Mark in their Gospels. A couple of years ago I overheard a church member encouraging a new Christian to read the Gospel of John. Though well intended, it is not good advice. John is very mystical and spiritual. Mark is only 16 chapters and moves rapidly from one event to another, usually prefaced by the word "immediately." Once a person knows Mark's Gospel they know much of Matthew and Luke.

Mark records more miracles than Jesus' teaching. Mark omits the nativity. As cited in other Sunday school lessons, the early Christians believed Jesus would return any day. However, close to 30 years have passed. The Church had received an oral tradition of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection. But now, as the Church moved with power through Mesopotamia into Greek culture, a written account was needed.

Mark's Gospel was accepted and blessed by the early Church. Mark was undoubtedly close to Simon Peter. Some call him a disciple of Peter. His Gospel contains accounts that would have been important to Peter. Also, Peter was an uneducated fisherman. For Peter to use a secretary was not out of the ordinary. Mark's fingerprints were all over Peter's Gospel. One of the clues he is writing Peter's words in his Gospel was the use of "immediately." Out of all the apostles, this term would most likely be applied to Peter. Peter was compulsive, daring, and devoted. As Mark moves from event to event, we can envision Peter's active life. It is believed the Upper Room in the Gospels was owned by Mark's family.

Does it make a difference who wrote a book? Why? Does the audience they are speaking to make a difference? Again, why? Do places make a difference? Why?

The crowded house

A large crowd had gathered at the house where Jesus sat teaching. Mark's book contains a particular structure. The Gospel begins with miracles and ends with more teaching and abandonment. One of the very important dynamics in Mark's structure is the response of the crowd. The Gospel begins with excited crowds almost overwhelming Jesus. However, a large

number in the crowd did not come to hear Jesus preach. They had come for the *show*. Jesus used miracles to help the suffering individual and to gather a crowd. Jesus then wanted to teach and preach. Jesus could see into the human heart and understood their inclination to race from miracle to miracle. Once they began following, he began to offer challenging truth. This shift led to the abandonment. When Jesus died on the cross, even the disciples ran and scattered. Peter was at the cross, but he stood at a distance. John was at the foot of the cross with Jesus' mother and other women who followed Jesus. Where was the crowd? Most likely they returned to their homes and work, and waited for another Messiah. They expected a Messiah with power. Jesus displayed he had power. However, they expected a military leader to overthrow Rome. Jesus was not overthrowing Rome. He was overthrowing all evil with an indescribable love, grace, and moral authority.

A large crowd has packed a house in Capernaum where Jesus taught. Remember, Jesus made Capernaum his home during his ministry. They would have recognized Jesus and heard of his miracles. Jesus was definitely a person of interest. It was in Capernaum that Jesus met James, John, Peter, and Andrew. They were all fishermen. Capernaum was in northern Israel, near the northwestern shore of the sea. Approximately 1,500 lived in the fishing village. The crowd consisted of mostly working-class people. However, religious leaders were also present. The religious leaders followed Jesus regularly. They even followed him to a cornfield where Jesus and his disciples ate corn on the Sabbath. They were seated, the posture of teacher. They had not come to listen for truth. They had come to ensnare Jesus.

Who stood outside? Many needy and suffering individuals could not enter the home. In the text it appears that the crowd did not accommodate suffering people who could not enter. Consider the man on the pallet. He was paralyzed. Without help he could not be brought to Jesus. Again, no one in the crowd or house moved aside to allow a paralyzed man to be carried on a mat. In verse 3 it reads that the four men could not carry him into the house "because of the crowd."

A large crowd is outside the church walls. They live in neighborhoods and communities. Can you identify the crowd of suffering, needy individuals outside your church? Outside your home? Do you believe our culture is far more interested in entertainment than experiences of truth? Can you name the reasons for your belief? Do you think people try to run to excitement and away from substance?

Jesus saw their faith

Jesus identifies faith with the actions of five men. Four carried the paralyzed man on a mat. We might think little faith is involved in simply carrying a man on a pallet. However, place yourself outside the home where Jesus taught. No one is gaining entrance. We would think some in the crowd would have compassion and help the men. Yet, they offered nothing. It would have been easy at this point to return home. *Compassion empowers faith!* Their faith and compassion moved them to attempt a risky means of entering the house. They pulled the pallet atop the roof.

Many of the roofs were made of straw and mud. There was an opening through the roof from inside the home. The opening allowed people to sit atop the house to pray, mediate, or simply escape the heat that collected within the house. Simon Peter was sitting on the roof at Joppa when the vision of the sheet occurred. There are many places in scripture where people sat, met, and rested on the roof. However, the text clearly states the men “dug through” the roof itself and made an opening. Imagine being in the house and watching straw begin to fall from the ceiling. There would be a small ray of light growing ever larger. Suddenly a man on a mat descended. Imagine the faces of those lowering him as the people in the house stared upward. They must have been thinking, “Will this make Jesus angry?” Will the people inside become angry? What about the crowd outside? They have been standing and waiting after being denied entrance. Would they be angry that someone went around them? Certainly, this was a risky act. Yet, real compassion refuses to accept no on behalf of the suffering. Compassion will seek a way.

The fifth man was the paralyzed man. He was unable to use his legs for escape. He was at the mercy of the crowd. Furthermore, he didn't know what Jesus' response would be. However, he and the other four had heard of Jesus and his miracles. They were there for a miracle, not teaching. Jesus was in the house teaching. Most likely he wasn't performing miracles. Now a paralytic is lowered for a healing. Jesus will not deny him. He will be healed and taught.

Have you, or someone you know, been so full of compassion that you had to find a way to help? In this text the action reveals their faith. Do your actions reveal faith? When is the last time your love took a risky action?

Your sins are forgiven

These words of Jesus would have shocked the crowd. The religious leaders would call it blasphemy! Only God could forgive sins! The man did not ask for forgiveness. Did Jesus recognize the need for forgiveness in the man though the paralytic did not ask for forgiveness? Did Jesus offer forgiveness to launch into a teaching? Jesus did see into the hearts of people. He knew more about those around him than they knew of him. Jesus knew them better than they knew themselves. It seems as though the paralyzed man, the four who lowered him, and the hole in the roof would place all the emphasis on the man's need for healing. Yet, Jesus sees his heart above everything else. In reality, all of us stand in need for forgiveness, for God knows us.

Was Jesus specifically addressing the Jewish belief in the *Retribution Principle*? Remember, the O.T. principle teaches that the sinful are cursed with poor health and a lack of wealth. In contrast, the healthy are healthy and financially sound. Thus, forgiveness was often necessary for healing, and, healing was the expression of being forgiven. If all sin was punished through suffering, all of us would suffer. Jesus was going to reveal that the grace and love of God would not be forbidden to the poor and suffering.

Notice, Jesus said the man “was” forgiven. The text reads that seeing the faith of the man and his helpers led Jesus to claim the man was forgiven. It does not read that the man “was going to be

forgiven.” Jesus revealed his care for the soul above everything. Can sin lead to illness? Certainly. If I am a glutton, I will suffer. If I willfully hurt others, eventually I will suffer loneliness. Suffering can be the result of our own sinful habits and choices, or, it can be the result of our abusing creation. If we continue poisoning the air and water, people will suffer. John Wesley claimed there were sins of ignorance, mistake, and willful acts of transgression. Sin is forgiven by God’s grace. We are to receive and appropriate it by living a loving, holy life as a witness to our gratitude. From my perspective it appears in Scripture and life that God rarely judges sin through suffering; at least, not directly. God created our human existence perfectly in Eden. When we act out of harmony with creation, our mate and others, and out of harmony with God, we suffer. We create toxins and expose ourselves to them. We breathe in the unclean air that we created. We drink the water we polluted. I can create suffering for myself if I am not paying attention and a car strikes me. I could extend this list. For the sake of time, I believe it is inappropriate for us to blame our suffering on God. The all-important truth is that without God we are hopelessly lost. Yet, God is with us through Christ, and God loves us!

“The man took up his mat and walked.” The paralytic took up his mat and walked. He had been healed more deeply than he imagined.

Can you name sins that are committed “through ignorance” according to John Wesley? Through mistake? What do you think Wesley meant by willful sin? Have you recently blamed God for your suffering or the suffering of another? Why? Have we been guilty of asking God for healing and health without an examination of our own heart?

Blasphemy

The religious leaders pounce upon Jesus as soon as he spoke of the forgiveness of sins. This was the moment for which they waited. They wanted Jesus to make a mistake, misspeak, and break Mosaic Law. It appears to them he has created one of the vilest of sins. Jesus has dared to do something that only God can do! How dare a man offer forgiveness of sin! However, Jesus was divine, and chose to reveal his divine nature. He could forgive sin and he did.

The narrative reveals that Jesus knew what the teachers of the Law were thinking. Again, we observe Jesus’ divine insight into the heart. He then uses a technique the rabbis used in teaching and debating. Jesus used it often. The technique is that of answering a question with a question.

Jesus asks, “Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’” Most of us would agree that few people, other than doctors, can heal the sick, especially a paralytic. Jesus was saying “If I can heal this paralytic, why is it you doubt my ability to forgive sins?” Now we arrive at the all-important purpose of Jesus. He says, ***“But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”*** With this statement Jesus was proclaiming ***“I am God!”*** Forgiveness was needed for complete healing. The religious leaders most likely would not argue this point. Their problem wasn’t connected to the offer for forgiveness. A man often needed forgiveness to be healed according to

the Retribution Principle. They had a problem with the one who claimed to offer forgiveness. Only God could forgive! Now, this man, Jesus, is offering forgiveness!

Naturally this proclamation did not sit well with the religious leaders. They accused Jesus of blasphemy for claiming he could forgive sins. Blasphemy can be defined as the *willful rejection of obvious truth*. It was also defined by the teachers of the Law as a man's attempt to be equal to God. Jesus would have been guilty of the second definition in the eyes of the religious leaders. After all, Jesus claimed to be divine! It was who he was! There was no sin on Jesus' part. As a matter of fact, it was the religious leaders who blasphemed. Jesus was the obvious truth of God and God's loving nature. They rejected him. The leaders claimed to know who God is, what God desires, and what God commands. Yet, God incarnate stood before them in Jesus and they knew him not. John would write in his Gospel, "He came unto his own and his own did not receive him."

Have our preconceived beliefs created blinders that do not allow us to see the larger picture, the brighter light of God? Do you think our culture ever thinks of the sin of blasphemy? What makes you believe as you do? Jesus used a chaotic, hectic, tense moment to share the truth of God. Have we allowed God to use us in the midst of such circumstances? Can you share how?

Everyone was amazed

Someone once defined wonder as involuntary praise. Amazement is also the expression of our unspoken praise. God has done something wonderful! God has done the remarkable! Praise be to God! Jesus' words and the healing of the paralytic were the sign that the Kingdom of God has come! For the masses of people in the house and outside, the miracle was a note of resounding hope. Hope is the belief that God is with us, no matter the circumstances; hope is the belief that God will use our circumstances for good and for a witness that the Kingdom is here. Everyone needed and needs this blessed hope. The religious leaders rejected it. Those who accepted realized God wanted them as much as they wanted God. The narrative closes with the observation, "We have never seen anything like this!" Grace overwhelms and will continue to overwhelm!

Have you witnessed an action of God that overwhelmed you? Have you had an experience of involuntary praise? Do you have the blessed hope that God is with us, everywhere and at all times? Do you have hope and faith that God will use our experiences for the greater good?

Prayer

O loving God, our hearts are so full of wonder and praise it is difficult to speak. Hear our hearts. Hear our cries from the depths of our soul: God is good! God is with us! Thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ. No matter what the new year might bring, we are comforted and full of hope, for you hold everything and everyone in your divine caring hands. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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

A John Wesley Moment (More about the Germans)

JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS

DAVE HANSON

The small group of Germans who traveled with John Wesley and General Oglethorpe to Georgia had a powerful influence on the young pastor. Wesley wrote in his diary, “There is something special about these Germans. They are so happy and they do the menial jobs on this ship without complaining. They say it helps them with their humility.”

Have you noticed how we all sit up and pay attention to someone who rolls up their sleeves and pleasantly serves? My friend, Sammy Clarke, did that kind of service as the chaplain at Emory at Oxford. Once an observant student asked him, “Sammy, why do you do all this stuff? You give so much of yourself to help us. Why?” Sammy bopped him on the head and simply said, “It’s Jesus, baby!”

Those Germans on the ship Simmons with John Wesley could have said, “It’s Jesus, baby!”

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

Welcome 2021: Better than normal

GROWING IN GRACE

BEN GOSDEN

It’s hard to believe the decade known as the year 2020 is finally coming to an end. I was listening to all of the different ways people aired grievances for this year. “The year we all want to forget,” one commentator said. “Good riddance once and for all, 2020” another remarked. We can all relate. None of us imagined 2020 would turn out this way. We all have one thing or another, in varying degrees, to grieve at the end of this unforgettable year.

Add to it all the fact that I preached Sunday on the text to celebrate the Epiphany: Matthew 2:1-12. The last verse of this passage is always a haunting message to read at the beginning of a new year:

“And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.” (Matt 2:12)

They went home by a different road. Spiritual teacher Ram Dass said that we as humans, in the end, are “just walking each other home.” As we move into the future together we are all on a

journey – home, to God. If life is a shared journey home, doesn't that reshape the way we look at the new year?

Instead of saying, "good riddance" to 2020, what could we learn from such a difficult year?

A few lessons from 2020

Here are just a few lessons we can take with us into the new year to help us on the next leg of our journey together home.

We learned empathy as we faced those early fears of COVID-19 and how it might affect us. How could that empathy guide us into a new year as we face the uncertainty of not knowing yet how this will end?

The pandemic finally opened many of us up to the epidemic of racial injustice in America. We have a long way to go, but 400 plus years of varying forms of oppression is hard to erase. And yet it's a journey we must commit ourselves to, even (and especially) when it makes us uncomfortable.

We learned that we have been too busy for too long and life is better when we learn to slow down, appreciate each other more, spend some extra time around the dinner table, and take evening walks. Instead of wanting to add everything back, what could we leave out of our lives permanently?

This pandemic and the effects of the stress it's causing is teaching many of us that good health is not truly healthy if it's not wholistic. We are whole beings – physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and relational. We must create margin in our life to attend to all forms of health if this is to be a life truly worth living. Instead of making diets and workout routines just another lofty resolution, how could those things become a lifestyle change we desperately need?

Better than normal

When I think of all of the ways we struggle with being self-centered, overly busy, incredibly divided, and ignorant of the hurt and pain around us I don't want things to go back to normal. I want things to be better than the normal we used to know. Epiphany is in just a few days. And the Magi show us the way home – by a different road than the one we've always known. It is a road filled with grace, togetherness, and love. It's where we meet God and maybe even each other anew.

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

Ezekiel bread and the pandemic

By Rev. Ashley Randall, pastor of Garden City UMC

In Ezekiel 4:9 the Lord gives these instructions to the prophet, “Take wheat, barley, beans, small peas, and millet seeds, and put them in one bowl, and make them into bread for yourself” (NCV). About 50 years ago, the folks at Food for Life took this list of ingredients and developed a number of products they claim “harvests benefits beyond what we normally expect from our breads, pastas, cereals, and other foods.” You may have seen one or more of their products in a local grocery store, especially if you have been on some kind of restricted diet.

While that’s interesting, it may be more important to recall that God was not giving Ezekiel advice about how to make a better sandwich; rather God was preparing Ezekiel for a radical witness against the people of Israel and Judah. Ezekiel had been preparing for the priesthood when he had been carried away into exile in Babylon. Even in exile, some of the religious and political leaders of the “house of Israel” continued to show little regard for God or those who had been exiled with them. Instead, they assumed upon their “special” relationship with God as a guarantee that they and the city of Jerusalem were immune to God’s judgment (see Ezekiel 34:1-10).

God appointed Ezekiel to stand as a “watchman” over the house of Israel. Ezekiel’s assignment was to warn the people to turn from “wickedness” and to pursue “righteousness.” And one of the primary ways Ezekiel was supposed to complete this assignment was by going to a central location in the exile community and physically portray the siege and destruction of the city of Jerusalem.

After Ezekiel set up a model of the city, its wall, the siegeworks, and the camps of the enemy around it, God told Ezekiel to lie on his left side for “three hundred ninety days, one day for each year of their guilt” (4:5). And then, “When you have completed these days, lie on your right side to bear the guilt of the house of Judah. I appoint forty days to you, one day for each year” (4:6).

To sustain Ezekiel though this time, God gave him the instructions about what he would eat: “You will eat it the three hundred ninety days you lie on your side” (4:9b). I will spare you the details about how Ezekiel was supposed to cook this loaf; but it is worth noting.

We have been under some kind of restricted activity now for more than 40 weeks. We have been reminded repeatedly that there are a few basic practices we can follow that will limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus: wear a mask, wash our hands, keep our distance. These basic practices will protect the lives of our neighbors, friends, and family. I know this extended period of interruption is difficult, but I also know that there is a promise of restoration in our future.

The vaccines that have been developed and are on their way are one sign of that promise, but as people of faith we have God’s assurance of restoration: “I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be cleansed of all your pollution. I will cleanse you of all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove your stony heart from your body and replace it with a living one” (36:25-26). To encourage Ezekiel, God shows him the transformation of a valley of dry bones (see Ez. 37:1-14).

Forty years after they had been carried into exile in Babylon, the people of God were allowed to return home. God's promise of restoration was fulfilled. As they went, one of them wrote the words that form the chorus of the hymn, "Bringing in the Sheaves."

When the Lord changed Zion's circumstances for the better,
it was like we had been dreaming.

Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter;
our tongues were filled with joyful shouts.

It was even said, at that time, among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them!"

Yes, the Lord has done great things for us,
and we are overjoyed.

Lord, change our circumstances for the better,
like dry streams in the desert waste!

Let those who plant with tears
reap the harvest with joyful shouts.

Let those who go out,
crying and carrying their seed,
come home with joyful shouts,
carrying bales of grain! (Psalm 126)

God appointed Ezekiel to watch over the house of Israel. God warned Ezekiel that many would refuse to listen. God also promised Ezekiel, "if you do warn the righteous not to sin, and they don't sin, they will be declared righteous. Their lives will be preserved because they heeded the warning, and you will save your life" (3:21).

Hold fast to Paul's reminder: "Let's not get tired of doing good, because in time we'll have a harvest if we don't give up" (Galatians 6:9). Let us be faithful as we watch over the communities where God has placed us. May our words and our actions bear witness to God's power to cleanse, heal, restore, and transform.

Ashley Randall serves as pastor of the Garden City United Methodist Church. He is also the Chair of the Healthy Savannah Steering Committee and a member of its Faith and Health Coalition.

Retired Clergy Birthdays - January 2021

1/01 – Cindy H. Autry: 2958 Roswell Lane; Columbus, GA 31906
1/01 – James Hancock: 4360 Manor Millwood Rd. S; Manor, GA 31550
1/01 – Larry Roberts: 12 Foxfire Estates Circle; Waynesville, NC 28785
1/01 – Dan Robinson: 15 Kent Rd.; Tifton, GA 31794
1/02 – Sharon Loyley: 1544 Harris Ridge Rd.; Young Harris, GA 30582
1/03 – Marcus Tripp: 3791 Overlook Dr.; Macon, GA 31204
1/04 – John Harrington: 4820 Oak Arbor Dr.; Valdosta, GA 31602
1/06 – Joyce Harris: 111 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
1/07 – Tommy Martin, III: 606 Chastain Place; Macon, GA 31210
1/07 – Jerry Sharpe: 192 McElmurray Rd.; Waynesboro, GA 30830
1/08 – Annette Brooks: 114 Sunset Dr.; Fitzgerald, GA 31750
1/08 – Ernie Rogers: 1803 Pineknoll Lane; Albany, GA 31707
1/08 – Gary Starrett: PO Box 113; Bolingbroke, GA 31004
1/11 – V.L. Daughtery, Jr.: 3713 Bermuda Run; Valdosta, GA 31605
1/12 – Eddie Braswell: 1110 Moore Dr.; Americus, GA 31709
1/12 – Grady Vance: 127-B Nina Dr.; Eatonton, GA 31024
1/13 – Randy Nease: 195 Zipperer Rd.; Guyton, GA 31312
1/15 – Gary Morris: 2445 Jacqueline Circle; Moultrie, GA 31768
1/17 – Ed Ellington: 675 Arthur Wolfe Rd.; Dublin, GA 31021
1/18 – Steve Rumford: 130 Arlington Row; Macon, GA 31210
1/21 – Billy Wicker, Jr.: 400 Ridgecrest Rd.; E. Dublin, GA 31021
1/22 – Tom Davis, Jr.: 155 Twin Creek Ct.; Athens, GA 30605
1/24 – Joe Dunagan: PO Box 1903; Bristol, VA 24203
1/25 – Frank Harris: 250 Water Tower Court; Macon, GA 31210
1/27 – James Ford: 1751 G 8th St. NW; Hickory, NC 28601
1/27 – Bill Jones: 106 Hilldale Circle; Vidalia, GA 30474
1/30 – Harold Feightner: 107 Harvest Point; Warner Robins, GA 31088
1/30 – Holland Morgan: 2 E. 62nd Street; Savannah, GA 31405

Obituaries

Mrs. Mae Dobbs Jones

Mrs. Mae Dobbs Jones, 93, passed away Saturday, December 19, 2020. Services were held at Tuesday, Dec. 22 at Forest Hills United Methodist Church. Dr. Baxter Hurley and Rev. Teresa Edwards officiated. Burial was at Macon Memorial Park Cemetery.

Mrs. Jones was born in Marietta, Georgia, the daughter of the late Sadie Ethel Mae Deal Dobbs and Thomas Watson Dobbs. She was preceded in death by a daughter, Karen Holleman and her brother, Thomas Dobbs. Mrs. Jones retired from the Georgia Farm Bureau in 1992 and was a member of Forest Hills United Methodist Church.

Mrs. Jones is survived by her husband of 74 years, Rev. Wesley Stewart Jones of Macon; children, Sherrell Goolsby (Larry), Anita Novak (Gyora), and Patsy Brimmer; eight grandchildren; and 19 great-grandchildren.

Visit www.maconmp.com to express tributes. Macon Memorial Park Funeral Home & Cemetery has charge of arrangements.

Rev. Sue C. DeJournett

Reverend Sue C. DeJournett, wife of Dr. Ned R. DeJournett of Macon, died December 23 in Savannah, Georgia. She had survived lung cancer for six years. Services were held at Macon Memorial Park Cemetery on Wednesday, December 30, 2020. Reverend Theresa Edwards officiated.

Reverend DeJournett was born Rosalie Sue Cottrill to loving parents, Ruby and L. Beryl Cottrill, in Parkersburg, West Virginia in 1937. Educated in the public schools of Huntington, West Virginia, Reverend Delournett held BA (1959) and MA (1978) degrees in music from Marshall University (Huntington, WV) and MDiv. degree from Emory University's Candler School of Theology (1993, Atlanta, GA.) Additional studies included terms at Aspen Music School (Colorado), Chautauqua Music Institute (New York), and Westminster Choir College (New Jersey) as well as vocal and performance training with Metropolitan Opera divas Marjorie Lawrence and Blanche Thebom.

Reverend DeJournett was a retired member of the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church, ordained Deacon in 1992 and Elder in 1995. She served pastorates at Warwick, Hopewell and Concord (Ellaville), and Macon's Southside United Methodist Church. While serving the Warwick congregation, she was a contributor to the religion page of The Cordele Dispatch. She was the Chaplain of Wesleyan College (Macon, 1995 -1998), a Trustee for The Methodist Home for Children and Youth, and a member of the Wesley Glen Ministries Auxiliary. She retired from active ministry in 2000 serving a short-term post retirement pastorate at Laurel Branch UMC. She was affiliated with Forest Hills UMC, Macon where she remained active in the ministries of the church and conference.

Prior to ordained ministry, Sue DeJournett was a music educator, voice teacher, performer, and church choir director in Huntington, WV; Cleveland, OH; Lake Worth, FL; Little Rock, AR; and Americus, GA. She taught music in the public schools of Cleveland, Ohio and Palm Beach County, Florida. She was a faculty member at University of Arkansas, Little Rock; University of Central Arkansas (Conway), and Georgia Southwestern State University (Americus). She was a past president of the Georgia chapter of National Association of Teachers of Singing and held memberships in many music related organizations including Music Educators National Conference, Music Teachers National Association, and Delta Omicron Honorary Music Fraternity. Sue performed with opera and oratorio groups in Palm Beach, Florida and Little

Rock, Arkansas and was a frequent church choir soloist. She directed choirs at Johnson Memorial UMC (Huntington, WV), First EUB (Cleveland, OH), First Congregational Church-UCC (Lake Worth, FL), Lakeside and Hunter United Methodist Churches (Little Rock, AR), and Salem UMC (Americus, GA).

In addition to her parents, Reverend DeJournett was preceded in death by a sister, Carolyn Jean Cottrill (WV) and a brother, Rev. Dr. David B. Cottrill (OH). She is survived by her husband of 59 years, Dr. Ned R. DeJournett, daughter, Carol Sue (Keith) Pillow, and grandson T. Andrew Willis, all of Macon; son, Dr. William Ned (fiancé Jennifer Shank) DeJournett of Cookeville, TN; two brothers, Rev. Richard D. (Cheryl) Cottrill of Hoover, AL and Rev. Dr. Donald Charles (Glennell) Cottrill of Baton Rouge, LA; two sisters-in-law, Nancy (Jerry) Phelps of Tallahassee, FL and Susan Cottrill of Cincinnati, OH, and many nieces and nephews.

Memorials may be directed to Wesley Glen Ministries, The Methodist Home for Children and Youth, or Forest Hills United Methodist Church (all in Macon, GA) or The Fuller Center for Housing, Americus, GA.

Visit www.maconmp.com to express condolences.

Macon Memorial Park Funeral Home and Cemetery has charge of the arrangements.

Rev. Michael Alva McAfee

The Rev. Michael Alva McAfee passed away December 29, 2020, at Columbus Hospice. He was born April 29, 1944, in Roberta, GA to the late Henry and Ellen Bankston McAfee. He graduated from Crawford County High School, 1962; Bruton-Parker Junior College, on a baseball/basketball scholarship, 1963; LaGrange College, 1964-1966 and Emory University, Candler School of Theology with a Master of Divinity, 1966-1969. He was ordained a deacon in 1967 and a full elder in 1969. On July 2, 1967, he married Mildred Eidson of Atlanta, GA. Together they served 43 years in the South Georgia Conferences and a delegate to three World Methodist Conferences in Brighton, England; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Seoul, Korea. He retired in 2009 and then served three interims (Waverly Hall, Ellerslie, Trinity UMC, Phenix City and Wynnton UMC in Columbus.)

Mike is survived by his wife of 53 years, Mildred; one son, Mickey and wife Heather, of Columbus, GA; three grandchildren, Dillon McAfee and Trinity McAfee of Columbus, GA; Kayla Swartz of Jacksonville, NC and a great grandson, Hayden Swartz of Jacksonville, NC. He is also survived by a sister, Pat Bailey of Roberta, GA and a brother-in-law, Larry Roberts of Waynesville, NC; and a number of wonderful nieces and nephews.

A service of celebration was held Sunday, January 3, 2021, at St. Luke United Methodist Church. In lieu of flowers the family suggests a gift to St. Luke UMC for Naomi's Village in Kenya, Africa or your favorite area of service.



Scripture Readings – Jan. 5

January 10

Epiphany / Baptism of the Lord

Genesis 1:1-5

Psalm 29 (UMH 761)

Acts 19:1-7

Mark 1:4-11

January 17

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

1 Samuel 3:1-10

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

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

John 1:43-51

January 17

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Psalm 62:5-12 (UMH 787)

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

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Events in the South Georgia Conference – 1/5/2021 edition

Both/And Live Webinar with Jason Moore – Jan. 12

This 2-hour workshop (10 a.m. – noon) will delve into strategies for creating powerful, transformative worship where no one feels like they're an afterthought for both online and in-person audiences. It will explore: Re-imagining worship for both/and; how to create interactive both/and experiences, bringing at home and in-person audiences together in real time, alternative opportunities for online audiences watching in-person livestreams, repurposing in-person worship for online audiences, strategies for adapting practices for both/and, how to avoid letting your groove become a rut, and more! For more Information, contact Allison Lindsey at allison@sgaumc.com. [Register here for the BOTH/AND event.](#)

Basic Lay Servant Ministries, Pelham – Jan. 15-16, 2021

Lay Servant training is designed to educate those persons interested in stretching their faith to participate more fully in the ministries of the church. They have three main areas of focus: Leading, Caring, and Communicating. The basic class is based on Cokesbury's book, "Lay Servant Ministries Basic Course," which teaches a basic understanding of ministry in the United Methodist Tradition. Included in the course is the following: Wesleyan Tradition and Foundations, Spiritual Gifts, Servant Leadership, Caring Ministries, Communicating, and Sharing Your Faith. The Friday evening session is from 6:30 – 9 p.m. and the Saturday session is from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Hand Memorial UMC in Pelham. If you've not had training within the last three years (or ever), sign up for this Basic Training; otherwise, sign up for an Advanced

Training. You must complete all of the scheduled dates above to complete your training. Registration fee for the class is \$40. This cost covers all training materials and lunch on Saturday. (Note: Basic Lay Servant class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) For more information, contact Anne Bosarge at anne@thechapelministries.com.

Winter Certified Lay Ministry Course, Effingham – Jan. 16, Jan. 30, Feb. 13, Feb. 27, March 13, March 27, 2021

In this six-session course held at The Chapel in Effingham, 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 for more information at anne@thechapelministries.com.

Advanced Lay Servant Ministries Training, Pelham – Jan. 29-30

Lay Servant training is designed to educate those persons interested in stretching their faith to participate more fully in the ministries of the church. They have three main areas of focus: Leading, Caring, and Communicating. The advanced class, based on Cokesbury's book, "Each One a Minister," by William Carter, is a study of the book of Ephesians and what it teaches about how we are called to use our spiritual gifts. Registration fee for the class is \$25. (Note: Basic Lay Speaking class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) The class will be held Friday, Jan. 29 from 6:30 until 9 p.m. and Saturday, Jan. 30 from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Contact Anne Bosarge for more information. anne@thechapelministries.com. [Register here](#)