

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – JANUARY 19 EDITION

COVID-19 battle impact's Pine Forest UMC pastor's life, faith

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

For more than 100 days, Rev. Wes Moye lay in a hospital room, surrounded by the countless nurses, doctors, and machines that worked to keep him alive.

Now home after his harrowing battle with COVID-19, he's surrounded by his wife, Jan, and the rest of their family as he continues to recover and rehabilitate.

Throughout the four-month ordeal, Rev. Moye was surrounded by the love, prayers, and support of the Pine Forest UMC congregation, friends around the South Georgia Conference, and fellow believers around the connection.

Diagnosed with COVID-19 in September, Rev. Moye, who serves as senior pastor of Pine Forest United Methodist Church in Dublin, spent 38 days on a ventilator. Unconscious for most of that time, Rev. Moye battled double pneumonia, sepsis, and went into heart failure. Doctors feared he would have brain damage and told his wife to prepare for the worst.

“God was merciful,” said Rev. Moye, who was paralyzed from the neck down when he woke from his coma. “I’m overwhelmed by the grace of God, the goodness of God, and the love of God’s people.”

After spending six weeks rehabilitating, Rev. Moye is now home, working with therapists to regain movement in his legs and feet.

He doesn’t question why he endured this ordeal, but instead points to God and His grace.

“There’s no way I could be bitter with God about why this happened. Why not me?” he asks. “The goodness of God outweighs anything I’ve gone through, and I mean that from the bottom of my heart.”

Rev. Moye has been a Christian since he was 17, and although the experience impacted his life and faith in profound ways, his faith remained steadfast and unwavering.

“God got my attention and reminded me that this is a season to draw closer to Him and to realize my first and top priority is Him,” he said.

He’s been reminded of the beauty of the community of faith and the importance of fellow believers.

“Through the years, and especially with this, I’ve realized that we are better when we are together. It’s a cliché, for sure, but it’s true,” he said.

An outpouring of love and support from around the South Georgia Conference has come his way, and hundreds of cards and letters have been sent to show him and his family that they're being prayed for.

"The community of faith has been incredible, and I have come to honor that and recognize that more now how important that is."

And even though Rev. Moyer isn't active on Facebook, members of his family and church staff are. While he was hospitalized they posted regular updates and asked for prayers. At one point during his illness, Rev. Moyer's son estimated that more than 40,000 people were praying for his dad's recovery.

"I was amazed at the outreach that Facebook has," Rev. Moyer said. "God used Facebook, no question about it!"

His heart breaks for those who haven't been as fortunate as he and for those who have lost loved ones to the illness.

Rev. Moyer longs for the day when he can once again stand in the pulpit and be reunited with his Pine Forest UMC family and prays for that day to come soon. He recognizes that the "nightmare" he endured has a higher purpose, and even in the hospital was sharing God's love with others.

"I'm learning more and more that it's not my place to second guess God. We know that all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord, and I believe that," he said. "It's all about God. I want my life, in the end, to glorify Him. I want to be remembered as someone who loved the Lord, loved people, and gave my very best toward the kingdom of God and toward expanding the kingdom."

[Want even more of the story? Watch this brief video with Rev. Wes Moyer](#)

Hazlehurst UMC turns shipping container into clinic

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

A group of South Georgia United Methodists has turned a can into a clinic.

Partnering with Rev. Bobby Gale and his Unto the Least of His ministry, Hazlehurst First United Methodist Church's youth group has turned a shipping container into an obstetrics and gynecology clinic. By the end of the month, it will be completed, filled with more than \$5 million in medical supplies and medicines, and shipped to Africa.

The clinic, which will be placed in Ghana, will serve approximately 5,000 people who currently have little to no access to health care. Fully solar powered, the container clinic has two patient rooms, an office, and a bathroom. Medical professionals will be assigned to the clinic by the Ghanaian government, Rev. Gale said.

“I know the importance of good medical healthcare and how it can change people’s lives,” he said. “God has taken a tin can – these old containers – and turned it into a miracle. Maybe now a mother won’t have to go to the riverside to have her baby. Maybe she’ll be able to have it with a little bit of decency and encouragement. That right there is what the church is supposed to be doing.”

Youth and adults worked side-by-side on the project, installing walls, insulation, the solar unit and batteries, building a closet for the batteries, wiring for 120-volt and 220-volt outlets, and more.

Rev. Allen Hartsfield, senior pastor of Hazlehurst First UMC and a former electrician, provided leadership on the project and installed the wiring. Jonathan Hartsfield, Hazlehurst First UMC’s youth director and former engineer, handled all of the solar work.

The project was an opportunity for the church’s congregation and youth to participate in something together that would benefit others.

“Seeing what we can do from here, together with our community, that’s going to go across the world and help a tremendous amount of people, was important,” Jonathan Hartsfield said of the project.

Joshua Parker, a 16-year-old junior at Jeff Davis County High School, was one youth who helped construct the container clinic.

Excited about the project, Parker says it was one way to serve others and share Christ’s love.

“It’s a way we can worship God outside of singing hymns and listening to sermons,” he said. “It’s another way we can worship God, through loving people by sending this, showing our love to our neighbors.”

This is the second container clinic of 10 Rev. Gale hopes to build and send to Ghana. The first was constructed by Hopewell and Crosby Chapel United Methodist Churches in Baxley. Two more are being planned, one to be built by Wrightsville United Methodist Church and the other a partnership between Northview United Methodist Church in Perry and Andrew United Methodist Church in Kathleen.

“It’s a beautiful act of mercy,” Rev. Gale said. “God is taking a tin can – a container – and turning it into something fabulous.”

What churches need to know about the new round of PPP loans

When the recent \$900 billion COVID relief bill was signed into law, the federal government also approved a second round of Paycheck Protection Plan (PPP) loans for small businesses – including churches and other non-profit organizations.

This means some South Georgia United Methodist congregations are eligible for another round of PPP loans. This second round of PPP loans is similar to the first, but does have several important differences. Loans will be available to first-time qualified borrowers and to businesses that previously received a PPP loan, provided they meet several requirements. If churches did not file for an original PPP loan, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 allows them to file for one now, under the original rules. One major factor to consider is that to be eligible for a Second Draw PPP Loan, the borrower must have experienced a revenue reduction of 25 percent or greater in 2020 relative to 2019.

“Unlike most Small Business Administration loans, the Act specifically provides that churches and other non-profit organizations are able to qualify for these loans,” said Dr. Derek McAleer, Director of Administrative Services. “Many of our churches found the PPP loans to be a great help in 2020, as they cover both salaries and utility expenses. Some may benefit from a second round, if they meet the requirements.”

Designed to provide economic relief to small businesses, churches, and non-profit organizations, this second round of PPP loans also provides funds for expenses outside of just payroll. These additional funds are one of the major differences between the original PPP program and the new one.

For more information, speak to your local banker. Some churches may find the [UM Connectional Credit Union to be of assistance](#).

United Methodist Connectional FCU prepares for the second round of the PPP

UMC FCU is continuing to prepare to help United Methodist Churches in the administration of the Paycheck Protection Program. We are awaiting notice from the Small Business Administration and Treasury Department for when we can begin processing applications. At that point, we will open an online portal for ease of process and communication. As you have questions, please contact Jonathan Curtis at jonathanc@unitedmethodistcu.com. UMC FCU is an exclusive credit union for all members of the United Methodist Church in the North Georgia, South Georgia, Florida and Alabama-West Florida Conferences of the United Methodist Church.

Join Bishop Bryan for reflection and conversation this month – Jan. 19, 25

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the South Georgia Conference,

“Come to the table!” Those are the words my grandmother used to alert us kids that food had been prepared and it was time to come together for a meal. That's the same invitation I extend to you as we gather for times of reflection and conversations starting at noon on Tuesday, Jan. 19. Come to the table!

The goal is to continue living out this year’s conference theme, “Alive Together at the Table,” by having regular opportunities to connect with each other around a virtual table. The format will be rather free flowing, just as conversations around the dinner table are. I will share ideas and information I hope will be helpful to you. You will have the opportunity to give your own input as to what you would like to see us discuss. Imagine a forum where South Georgia people are at the table with other South Georgia people—and all are conversing about things that matter to South Georgia.

At a time when those in our churches, communities, and nation need to come to the table together, let’s get out front and lead in that direction! I hope you will join me and help launch these conversations.

Mark your calendar for the following dates in January and February. Conversations will begin at noon and last no longer than an hour.

Tuesday, January 19 | Monday, January 25
Tuesday, February 16 | Tuesday, February 23

[Zoom Registration](#)

[Register now](#) :: Once you register, you will receive the Zoom link to participate. We will use the same link each time we gather at the table, so please save it for future conversations. If you misplace the link at any point, feel free to register again.

I look forward to seeing you Alive Together at the Table,

R. Lawson Bryan



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 the South Georgia Youth Workers Retreat!

The South Georgia Conference's Youth Worker Winter Retreat is THIS WEEK, January 21-22, at Little Ocmulgee State Park. This retreat has been designed BY local church youth workers FOR local church youth workers! There are still a few spots available. Contact Suzanne Akins at suzanne@sgaumc.com if you would like to attend.

Dr. King's life shows us how uniquely equipped we are to provide what the world needs

By Bishop R. Lawson Bryan

We must not expect others to do that which we are uniquely equipped to do. What do I mean by that? The longer I live, the more I realize that the Christian faith addresses the hopes and fears of humanity in a very practical way. And the more passionately we embrace the life of Jesus the more He will equip us to live in ways that enact His will on earth. Though we usually do not recognize it, Christians have a whole set of “spiritual muscles” that we have developed over years of worship, Bible study, fellowship, giving, and service.

As we celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., I ask you to please join me in remembering this: Dr. King’s life shows us how uniquely equipped we are to provide what the world needs. He led the civil rights movement not with physical weapons, not with the rhetoric of hate, not with political manipulation, but with spiritual power.

Standing in Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church’s pulpit and looking out over the sanctuary is a spiritual experience. It reminds us that Dr. King was - above all - a preacher of the Gospel. His words were the result of his own study of the Word. That is why his words could be prophetically honest about how things were and yet profoundly hopeful about how Christ could create a new future. He insisted on non-violent behavior as a witness to the Prince of Peace. He was committed not only to the message of Jesus but also to the non-violent method of Jesus.

The parsonage Dr. King lived in is located a short distance from the Alabama state capitol in Montgomery. The living room, dining room, and bedrooms are furnished just as they were when the King family lived there. But the room I most wanted to see was the kitchen. The kitchen is where he went at midnight on Jan. 27, 1956, as his wife and 10-week-old daughter slept in the master bedroom. He had already received death threats by mail and phone. But that night, the caller said, “...if you aren’t out of this town in three days, we’re going to blow up your house and blow your brains out.” Shaken by that call, Dr. King went to the kitchen, buried his face in his hands, and prayed aloud: “Lord, I’m down here trying to do what’s right ... But ... I must confess ... I’m losing my courage.” Dr. King later explained what happened next: “I could hear an inner voice saying to me, ‘Martin Luther, stand up for righteousness. Stand up for justice. Stand up for truth.’”

Even with all the brutality he experienced, Dr. King never wavered from the message of Jesus and the method of Jesus. He told those who joined the movement, “As you press on for justice, be sure to move with dignity and discipline, using only the weapon of love. Let no man pull you so low as to hate him.”

We share that same Christian faith that guided Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. You and I are more ready than we realize to truthfully name the dividing walls of hostility in life, acknowledge that Jesus dismantles those walls and becomes our Peace, and joyfully participate in the new humanity that God is creating through Jesus.

Leaders: 7 Ancient Secrets

OUR CONNECTION MATTERS

ALLISON LINDSEY

“All leaders are learners. The moment you stop learning, you stop leading. I learn as much as I can, from as many as I can, as often as I can.” Rick Warren

The beginning of a new calendar year in the local church is often a time when new leaders are stepping into ministry roles, committees are making plans, and leaders are taking part in visioning and ministry mapping for the new year. It can be a very exciting time! Our context in 2021, however, is different. We are still doing all of these things while also navigating this marathon of a pandemic. Our churches continue to inspire through their adaptability and creativity in reaching people for Jesus, meeting the needs of others, and nurturing their flock.

Throughout the month of January, new resources are being released to equip and empower [leaders in our local churches](#). This focus launched with Jason Moore of Midnight Oil Productions leading our conference in the BOTH/AND webinar. This live event focused on maximizing hybrid worship for both in-person and online audiences. If you missed the live webinar, the recording is available for a limited time and can be requested by emailing me at allison@sgaumc.com. I hope you will take advantage of all the new [“Leading At the Table”](#) resources. Your conference staff is here to connect you to tools and resources to help you lead with confidence.

I love to share practical resources, and one of my favorite books for leaders is [“The Way of the Shepherd”](#) by Kevin Lehman and Bill Pentak. This book’s contemporary parable (a story within a story) shares seven ancient secrets to managing productive people. These principles can be applied to so many different aspects of our lives, both personally and professionally.

You will find a great article and somewhat of a “CliffsNotes” version on this book [here](#).

The seven ancient secrets are:

- 1. Know The Condition of Your Flock**
- 2. Discover The Shape of Your Sheep**
 - [S.H.A.P.E training](#)
 - [Strengths Coaching](#) with Jay Harris. Join us for our upcoming Conversation @ The Table with Jay at noon on January 28. [Register here](#).
- 3. Help Your Sheep Identify With You**
- 4. Make Your Pasture A Safe Place**

5. The Staff of Direction

6. The Rod of Correction

7. The Heart of the Shepherd

There is a common thread woven throughout these “ancient secrets.” This common thread is in our connection and the way we are in relationship with one another. What an amazing example and teacher we have in The Good Shepherd!

I think the most valuable thing we can do as leaders is to never stop learning. What things are you learning about yourself and your church during this time, and how are they helping you lead?

There are many resources available to you throughout our connection of The United Methodist Church to learn and grow. Do not hesitate to reach out to your conference staff if you are looking for a specific one. We are here to serve you! Thank you for your commitment and ministry in leadership. Thank you for the ways you teach me through our relationships. Thank you for the privilege to be in leadership alongside you.

Allison Lindsey is the director of Connectional Ministries. She has a passion for the local church and its people. Contact her at allison@sgaume.com.

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Called for the World’s Belief

Winter Quarter: Call in the New Testament

Unit 2: Jesus and Calls in His Ministry

Sunday school lesson for the week of Jan. 24, 2021

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Background Scripture: John 17: 14-24

Key Verse: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message.” (John 17: 20)

Lesson Aims:

- To understand the disciple John and his writing.
- To understand Jesus’ intent when praying the High Priestly Prayer.
- To understand how this prayer is related to us.

The Apostle John (John the Beloved)

John is considered the youngest of the twelve. Tradition claims John wrote the following books: The Gospel of John, John 1, 2, 3, and Revelation. The authorship of some of these books is

debatable, however, I customarily follow tradition. John almost certainly wrote the Gospel of John. Tradition claims John is the only disciple to die of old age. The others were said to be martyred.

Jesus called John before the others. He was a young fisherman by trade. It is important to remember that John was one of three disciples who formed the *inner circle*, along with Peter and James. These three were part of the Jerusalem Council and held great sway over the early Christian church. When arguments arose or decisions needed to be made, the inner circle calmed the troubled waters and made difficult decisions. The early church was very dependent upon these three.

John never wrote his name in his Gospel. He did, however, identify himself in the Gospel as “the one whom Jesus loved” (five times). John may have been quick-tempered; this would explain Jesus referring to him as a “son of thunder.” However, when with Jesus he could be very compassionate and caring. Above all, he was loyal.

John was definitely close to Jesus. His seat at the Last Supper placed his head in Jesus’ bosom. This was symbolic of being close in heart. He also followed Jesus after his arrest in Gethsemane. Peter followed at a distance and even denied knowing Jesus. John was at the cross, along with Mary and a few women followers. When Mary Magdalene experienced the empty tomb and told the disciples of the remarkable event, it was John who raced to the tomb, along with Peter. John was the first to arrive, and first to walk inside the tomb.

The Gospel was mainly written for Gentiles. He writes his Gospel in Greek. It is important to remember that John refused to use the word *miracle*; he chose instead to use the terms *signs and wonders*. This strongly indicates that John believed that every supernatural act was pointing to God. The supernatural acts said something about Jesus. The miracles were a sign that the Kingdom of God was here in Jesus.

Do we look for God in our past? Our future? Our day? Exactly how do we seek God in daily living? When it appears obvious that God has done something great in life, do we see it as a sign? A sign of what?

John’s Gospel

John’s Gospel is by far the more philosophical, mystical, and spiritual. John appears to be most interested, not in what is seen on the surface, but what is beneath the event or words. In John 1 he writes all things were created by the Logos. The Logos is behind everything, bringing order and redemption. John seems to call, “Look more deeply, seek the Logos in all things.” I have oversimplified. Still, whereas the authors of the synoptic Gospels seem more concerned with the events and teachings that proved Jesus was and is God, John calls, “Look more deeply.” Jesus and his Kingdom are present in life, moving in life, and giving life!

John can be difficult to read, but, his audience understood his Gospel. Jesus employs a lot of pronouns; thus, it is important for me to offer who Jesus is speaking to and of.

1. The text opens with *your word*. This phrase means *the Father's word*.
2. In verses 14-19 the pronoun *them* means the disciples.
3. Verse 20 reads: "I pray for all who will believe." Jesus is praying for all who will follow him in the future! *Their message* refers to the message of the disciples.
4. The pronoun *you* in verses 21 through 24 means *the Father*. In verse 22-23 the pronouns *them and they* are the followers of Jesus.
5. The pronoun *we* means Jesus and the Father. The reason the Holy Spirit is not mentioned here is because John has recorded earlier in the discourse that Jesus will send the Spirit after his death, resurrection, and ascension. The Spirit will come upon them at Pentecost.

Do you find it difficult to read John? What specifically makes us read John a little slower than the other Gospels?

High Priestly Prayer

John 14-17 is Jesus' farewell discourse. Within this discourse is John 17: 1-24, known as the High Priestly Prayer. Some name this prayer as Jesus' Farewell Prayer. It is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in the Gospels. The high priest was head of the Sanhedrin, and the only one allowed in the Holy of Holies. Jesus prays his prayer as the great interceder, the one who rules over all, and the one who invites us into the realm of the holy and eternal. In the prayer, Jesus prays for himself, his disciples, and the world. It is a powerful prayer of spiritual intimacy as Jesus states his relationship with the Father, with his disciples, and the world. It is a multilayered prayer of love for the entire world!

It is believed this discourse was given just after the last supper in Jerusalem. It is important to know that this discourse is given to the 11 disciples; Judas has left and betrayed Jesus. Remember, the Eleven still do not expect Jesus to be crucified. Their ignorance concerning Jesus' death reveals they have *heard without listening*.

It is obvious Jesus is praying for the unity of the Church today, and the Church of the future. If you were offering your personal farewell prayer within your church, would you be comfortable doing so? If so, why? If not, why not? Exactly for what would you pray concerning your church?

Not in The World and Hated

Jesus taught we are in the world, but not of the world. Jesus spoke truth which challenged the souls of everyone listening. He was light to the world. These two terms were not comforting to those who lived in a state of sin and those trying to hide their sins. As we've studied previously, light makes the rodent run for the darkness, for, to remain in the light is to be exposed. I listened several years ago to a lyric in which the singer claimed that "light had no romance with the

darkness” (sorry, I can’t remember the singer). Jesus had no romance with darkness and those who followed Jesus quickly learned the lives they lived were to stand in contrast to the darkness. The disciples of Jesus were to be loving, compassionate, truthful, enlightening, and joyful. I could extend this list with no difficulty. Jesus himself said he brought a sword into relationships. There exists a sharp distinction between the dark, egocentric values of the world and the compassionate heart of the Christian. Those who hated Jesus were thus going to hate the disciples. In the years of the early Church, tension between the Christians and the world grew ever tense. Eventually, the Church was horrendously persecuted. One can never state the Christian life is easy; the selfishness pride of the world ensures it will never be easy. No, it isn’t easy, but it is fulfilling and meaningful. We experience dimensions of love the world cannot know. We have insights the world cannot see.

Though we feel a growing distance from the darkness, we still live in the world. Temptations and obstacles are part of every day. The potent prayer of Jesus offers the other side of the coin. We are in the world, *but not of the world*. Jesus, the despised and rejected, indwells the Christian. We walk in the world with distinction. Our behavior, actions and beliefs clearly come from another place and another person. They set us apart.

Have you experienced ostracism, dislike, and even hatred because you are a Christian? Can you cite examples? Do you believe Christians are disliked and mistrusted today? If so, can you cite examples? What do you think should be your church’s response to dislike and hatred?

Sanctified from the World

The Biblical term *sanctified* means to be set apart. Specifically, the sanctified of Christ are set apart from the world. We are sent into the world with God’s mission and purpose. No Christian’s life is without gifts and graces to share the Gospel. The Holy Spirit has empowered us for this purpose. Yet, as we walk in the world our hearts belong to God and God’s Kingdom. The world is becoming a strange land for followers of Jesus.

To be sanctified also implies that we are consecrated. Those consecrated in Jewish life were often anointed with oil. The Holy Spirit is understood to be God’s anointing oil. Jesus was consecrated for his mission as the Holy Spirit descended upon him at his baptism. The followers were consecrated on Pentecost. The Holy Spirit descended upon them as cloven tongues of fire. The Spirit has indwelled all who give their life to Christ. Therefore, we are consecrated by the Holy Spirit, and thus, empowered to do what God has asked.

Do you believe you are sanctified? Do you believe your church is sanctified? If you answer affirmatively, on what do you base your answer? For what do you believe you have been set apart? Do you believe your church knows her purpose in relation to the world? In her neighborhood? What is special about your church that makes you believe she knows her purpose and takes action based on that purpose?

The Glory of God

I was assigned a great task in seminary. I was to do a word study on the word *glory*. Over time, the terms glory and glorified have been used in a variety of ways in Christendom. A word study asks the student of the Bible to read every occasion in which the word glory is used, as well as its derivatives. In other words, we read every use of the term and its context. My study, as well as the study of others, reveals that most always the word glory means *the nature and character of God*. To witness God's glory is to see his nature and character in his followers and Church. Glory refers to any manifestation of God in which it is clear that God is present. The word glory also is used to describe the nature of the resurrected body of Jesus and those who appeared on The Mount of Transfiguration. In this instance, the glorified bodies clearly point to the power and love of God. Who has the power to raise the dead? Who has chosen to manifest the divine nature and act in eternal love? God!

In our lesson, the glory of the Father that is given to Jesus is the *divine nature and character of God*. This is why Jesus prayed, "*Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.*" To experience Christ is to experience God. In verse 24 Jesus closes his prayer, "*Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.*" Jesus previously prayed in verse 21b, "*May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*" It is obvious Jesus intends for his Church to so bear the nature and character of God that the world may see Christ in those who follow Jesus. We are to bear the image of Christ in the world!

The prayer goes on to state that our unity is made possible through the glory of God. It is God's nature and character that draws us to Christ, and to one another. We share a unity in the glory of God. Jesus makes certain we know that if one follows him, they will live in unity with one another. How can we be a part of the unified Church if we forgo fellowship and worship? How can the world see the Christ, who is redeeming all things, in those who choose to walk their own path?

The world needs the unity of the Church to draw the world into unity. Psalm 133 proclaims, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people dwell together in unity." Notice the psalmist states it is good and pleasant when *God's people* live in unity. Again, the Church's ability to live in unity becomes a witness to a divided world. Ephesians 4 reminds us that everything is moving toward the ultimate unity that arrives when God's Kingdom is fully manifest in our world. We cannot ignore how important our unity is, nor can we neglect the powerful redemption unity makes possible. The world in 2020 and into 2021 moves in suspicion, paranoia, violence, and division. These days can, however, serve as the perfect time for the Church to dwell in unity! The world needs to see the power of God's unity and the good life it provides. It is for the unity of the Church and the world that Jesus prays in his farewell discourse.

How important is church unity for you? How important do you think church unity is when seeking to redeem the world? Do you think the church is unified or fragmented? Why? What do you think the universal Church needs to do to establish unity in love and purpose? What do you believe your local church needs to do for unity?

Praying for The Future?

When reading our lessons, I always submit myself to interrogation. I allow the text to question me. When reading our lesson for this Sunday I asked myself, “When did I last pray for the future, and those yet to be born?” Sadly, I can’t remember the last time. We must remember Jesus sees differently. He sees through the eyes of redemption. His vision is stronger, wider and deeper. We tend to pray just for those in our lives. On occasion we pray for those personally unknown, yet known by other members of our Sunday school class or congregation of worship. Jesus’ words should have served as a clue that he may not return in a matter of days. Jesus is praying for a *future!* Jesus sees all who will need our unity in Christ. He sees all who are in need of light, truth, and unity. In chapter 13 of John, it records “*Jesus knew from where he had come, and that the Father had placed all things into his hand, and knew where he was going.*” I have prayed for those in my past who shaped me. It is important to know our past and give thanks for every event and purpose that shaped us. I have prayed for God to use me in my day. I have prayed for sight to see God in all things. And, I have rarely prayed for the future. Jesus knew from where he had come. He knew where he stood that day and where he was going. He was on the path to crucifixion and resurrection. In the High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prays for the future into which the disciples and yet-to-be Christians walk.

Another grand truth emerges from the farewell discourse. It is often read too quickly with little thought. Jesus prays for the current Disciples and followers to come, to be *with him*. Jesus is stating he is in our future! I frequently meditate on the thought: “*I am not afraid of my day for I have seen God in my past. I am not afraid of my future, because the God of my yesterdays will be there in the future. Thus, I am not afraid of my day.*”

How much attention do you give to the Church of tomorrow? When you consider the church of tomorrow, what struggles do you believe they might face? What triumphs do you believe are possible? Do you feel today's Church takes on the glory of Christ? Does the Church bear the character and nature of Jesus? Do we personally bear his nature and character?

Prayer

Loving God, we give thanks for your love and mercy. Thank you for filling our life with purpose. Sanctify us wholly that we might bear the image of Christ in the world. Grant us the courage to live in your high purpose and will. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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

Called to Prophecy

Winter Quarter: Call in the New Testament

Unit 3: The Call of Women

Sunday school lesson for the week of Jan. 31, 2021

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Background Scripture: Luke 2:36-38; Acts 1:12-14; Acts 2:16-21; Acts 21:8-9

Key Verse: “In the last days, God said, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men will dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17)

Lesson Aims:

- To understand the meaning of prophecy and the prophets.
- To realize the importance of women in the birth and proclamation of Jesus and his Church.
- To understand Joel’s prophecy.

Importance of women in the early church

As cited in earlier Sunday school lessons, women like Sarah, Hannah, Ruth, Rahab, and of course, Mary, acted in faith, love, and hope. Their faithfulness occurred in a culture of patriarchy. Women possessed little power. However, women in the Old Testament, under the Spirit’s power, stepped up, crossed over, and spoke with love and truth. Our lesson today begins by noting Anna’s prophesy. Anna was an elderly woman approximately 85-90 years old. After the loss of her husband, she devoted her life to worshipping and praying in the temple. If we were searching for someone to proclaim a prophetic word, it would *not* be Anna! First, she was a woman! I believe we already know that women had little power and held little authority. Secondly, our culture would judge her too old for such an important task. However, God sees what we never see. Thirdly, Anna would not be educated. Women had to sit apart in the synagogue and were not allowed to teach or ask questions until they were home. The Lord almost always chooses those the world never considers.

Joseph and Mary were taking Jesus to Jerusalem for his circumcision. Anna approached them with words of recognition. She proclaimed Jesus was the redeemer of Jerusalem. Remember, the Jewish people rarely spoke of the Messiah and his relationship with the Gentile world. The emphasis of the text is her prophetic word. Yet, it is always good to look at the instruments that proclaim that word and why God chooses and appreciates them. Today we stand on the

foundation that Jesus laid, and men and women through the years have built upon that foundation. Anna is a great witness to the sovereignty of God and his omniscience.

We live in another time and place from the first and early second century Christians.

Our study book has a great section on women who served God. I did not feel it beneficial that I repeat the content in our lesson book.

Can you name women who have greatly contributed to your walk of faith? Do you think the church today grants women an important role?

Who is a prophet and what is prophecy?

Prophecy isn't always future-telling. There is far more prophecy that addresses the present. Of course, there are parts of the prophecies that consist of prediction. The best description I can offer is that prophecy was offered by those who perceived the current culture through the eyes of covenant. They held God's plumb line as a measure of Israel's character. The plumb line was the Covenant. Prophecy examined the culture by asking, "Where do we stand in relationship to God and the Law?" The prophet speaks truth to falsehood. He or she will proclaim the certain judgement or blessing to come for Israel's behavior. They were not conduits for fear and condescension; they also spoke hope to the hopeless, light to darkness, and salvation to the oppressed.

The prophet is always called of God. They often introduce their prophecy with, "*The word of the Lord came. . .*" The introduction employed by the prophets infers the prophet wanted people to know their words did not originate from them, but from God. It is for this reason that I feel a sense of great caution when a person says, "God told me to. . ." People who say this are usually devoted Christians with a loving heart. However, when we make the statement, we are equating our words with those of biblical prophecy!

God knows us, and our culture! Past cultures reap upon themselves the consequences of refusing to acknowledge the Lord's will. Cultures that believe in the worth, the dignity, and importance of every soul will reap the reward of a meaningful life. There is a standard by which everyone and every society is judged. Amos 7:8 reads: *And the Lord asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel."* The plumb line involves a line with a weight tied to the end. One stands and holds the plumb line against a wall to see if it is straight. If it is not straight it will have to be torn down; if it is straight it becomes a foundational wall upon which other stones may be mounted. The plumb line is the Law of God. Each of us, and each culture, must stand against it and be measured. If we are righteous through Christ, we will grow taller as we receive more light. If we are crooked there will come a time when gravity will exert its force and the wall will crumble. It is not surprising that the prophets often received anger and hatred. Remember, the presence of light challenges all. We can respond positively, or shun it. Again, light has no romance with darkness.

Do you believe God still raises up prophets, male and female? Why do you answer as you do? How do we discern a prophetic word from human opinion?

Joel and his prophecy

The book of Joel is placed in a section of the Old Testament we call *The Minor Prophets*. However, using the term “minor” does not imply that the authors were in some manner less than the “major prophets” like Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. The term has more to do with the length of the prophesy and how important they were to the Jewish people. Yet, the content of the minor prophets is powerful.

Joel’s name means *one to whom Yahweh is God*. Yahweh is a Hebrew word for God, however, the vowels are removed. They could not see God, touch God, or write God’s name. God’s name was believed to be unpronounceable. Consequently, we cannot pronounce *Yhwh*. We added the vowels as a way to write or speak the name Judaism would not allow. Again, we see the divide between the divine and human. This makes God’s uniting with humanity in Jesus as remarkable event. Our God, who was believed to be afar and distant, has come in a manner we can see, touch, and personally experience!

We don’t know that much about Joel, other than his family of origin. He most likely prophesied in the eighth century BCE. Again, we see God choosing people who could have lived in obscurity without their calling.

The word of the Lord came to Joel, and Joel was called of God to proclaim that word. Joel is called to prophesy mostly to the southern kingdom of Judah. The Kingdom of Israel had split after the death of King Solomon into the Northern Kingdom of Samaria and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Kingdom of Judah observed worship in the temple of Jerusalem. The Northern Kingdom worshipped in Shiloh.

One of the memorable prophecies offered through Joel reads: *I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions*. This prophesy seems to be eschatological (end times). Old Testament prophets often spoke of the *last days*. Simon Peter recites this prophesy in his sermon on Pentecost. It most likely is eschatological. Peter believed Joel was prophesying about the end times in which the Kingdom of God would redeem the world. Christ would usher in this Kingdom. The resurrection of Jesus and the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost certainly fit Peter’s thinking. However, remember the earliest Christians believed Jesus was coming any hour, any day, and soon. We live on this side of Pentecost. If we use our human understanding of time, it was not the end of the world, and Jesus did not return immediately. This does not mean Peter’s sermon was incorrect. It means that the time of the climatic coming of the Kingdom is unknown to all but God. However, Peter’s expectation of Jesus’ immediate return played a major role in Peter’s sermon during Pentecost.

The Kingdom did come as Jesus ushered it in with his life, death, and resurrection. As we studied previously, *the Kingdom is here, but not yet*. We have been living in God's Kingdom for generations. Still, there is coming a day when Jesus will usher in the Kingdom in all of its glory as the new heaven and new earth are established. Prior to Pentecost, the Spirit rested upon a select few. However, Pentecost was the pouring out of the Spirit on *all* Christians. As new Christians, filled with the Spirit, we walk forward in God's unfolding Kingdom. We bear the attributes of the Kingdom, like love, mercy, grace, light, and peace. Our life is to serve as a window through which others may see God and his Kingdom.

Joel was allowed to proclaim what is to come. The Spirit and the signs of the Kingdom would fall upon God's people. It would touch and use young and old, male, and female. We would understand our past, to find meaning in the present, and have the vision to see where we are going.

Do you believe your church is an instrument of the Kingdom? Do you see yourself as an instrument of the Kingdom? Why or why not? Are we patient with the church, remembering she is on a journey of faith as we are?

Dreams and visions

I found a well-written paragraph in Wikipedia that concerns dreams:

A dream is a succession of images, ideas, emotions, and sensations that usually occur involuntarily in the mind during certain stages of sleep. The content and purpose of dreams are not fully understood, although they have been a topic of scientific, philosophical and religious interest throughout recorded history.

The writer is correct in stating the purpose of dreams is not fully understood. However, they miss the boat concerning biblical dreams. When God inspired a dream, it had purpose. Some of the dreams in the Bible are symbolic and some reveal the purposes of God. Joel and Anna's dreams definitely had purpose. Both proclaimed the arrival of the Messiah and the Kingdom of God.

A dream most often emerges from our past and present pain and joy, our confidence and fears.

We often must engage in some interpretation to understand the dream. Visions take on a greater clarity. The vessel for the vision knows the vision is from the Lord. A vision often is about *where we are going according to the will of God*.

The foundational truth of Joel's prophecy

I find it necessary when I encounter a difficult text to journey beneath the words by asking "What is the major purpose of the text? What is the underlying truth that holds all the words together to convey God's message?"

In Joel's prophesy he is given a glimpse of the Kingdom of God and its powerful presence in the world. Joel sees lives being used to proclaim the Kingdom. He begins by stating when the Kingdom more fully appears, women and men shall prophesy. Notice again, it is women and men! Women spoke the Word of God to his people. Next, he sees young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams. As we age, we grow more sentimental. We begin embracing the good in our past. The older men were the perfect instrument for God's dreams. They had a rich history. Young men have visions in the prophecy. We are never more visionary than when we are young. Young men do dream as well. The two terms *dreams and vision* are rather intertwined. Dreams and visions can on occasion be interchanged. At times prophecy takes on the form of poetry. Hebrew poems stated one line, then repeated the meaning in the second line in a different way. Therefore, we read:

Your young men shall see visions,

And you old men shall dream dreams.

In this case, the second line repeats the meaning of the first. It would prove a mistake to become confused trying to differentiate between dreams and visions. Joel doesn't try to define the terms.

So, what is the reality that gives meaning to Joel's words? Joel witnessed the coming of the Kingdom of God. He saw changed lives as they were filled with the Spirit. People of every age and gender, whether parent or child, were becoming God's instruments in the world to proclaim the presence of God's glorious Kingdom. The divine realm is touching and moving through humanity!

When you are confused when reading a biblical text, do you recognize that your mind cannot yet comprehend it? What do you do then? Do you seek the underlying truth? Does the modern church reflect Joel's prophecy? Do we listen to our older members and learn from their wisdom? Do we listen to those young, who do not yet have experience, but have God-given energy to move into God's future?

The Last Days

The *last days* is an apocalyptic and eschatological name. The Last Days occurs in Old Testament prophecy. The Jewish people believed in a day of judgement and renewal. Read Isaiah 9 and Isaiah 25:7 and forward. These texts will grant the reader a sense of what the Jewish people expected regarding the Last Days. Again, on Pentecost, Simon Peter believed the Last Days had arrived. He was witnessing the divine indwelling of men and women. He sensed power, and he sensed renewal. Peter was acquainted with Joel's prophecy and believed he saw its arrival on Pentecost. Actually, Peter was not wrong. Peter and the other followers expected a more immediate series of events. Messiah would come, and the signs and wonders would occur as they drew all people to Jerusalem for redemption. These events are still occurring in the present. Peter was not thinking the completion of the Last Days might be thousands of years into the future.

Our culture is culture of immediacy. Do we, and our church, look for God in our present day and patiently allow God's future to occur? How do you see us searching in the present for God while patiently letting God's future come? Are we a church of trying to make things happen rather than letting God use our gifts and graces in the present as a step in a journey that leads to the Kingdom's culmination?

Anna's prophecy

Anna's prophecy reveals the importance of women in proclaiming, teaching and living the Gospel. If we removed the contribution of women in the Bible, we find narratives breaking down. Women often held things together. We do not have a narrative on Jesus' childhood, and thus, we don't have one on Mary the mother. Mary cared for Jesus and her children until Jesus was 30. Joseph is believed to have died earlier. If this is the case, Mary reared the children alone. Of course, older children helped care for the younger. Imagine all the meals, all the skinned elbows and knees, and every act of protection that Mary provided. Most of all, we know Mary was a praying mother.

Anna was a praying woman. She entered the Temple regularly to worship and pray. Anna was near the end of her life, yet she was called to proclaim a new beginning. Her heart reached toward God in prayer while God was reaching for Anna to speak an answer to all seeking the Messiah.

Anna converses with Mary and Joseph

Joseph and Mary were bringing Jesus to the temple. On the eighth day a baby was brought to the temple. If the baby is a male, he will be circumcised. Circumcision was a *mark*. It marked the child as Jewish. It brings the child into the Jewish community where they will be taught and instructed in Mosaic Law. Still, the child must accept the tenets of Judaism on their own. It must be their personal decision. The child is given a name during the ritual.

Baptism is the ritual of being *marked*. The baptized child becomes a preparatory member. The child is also given a name. The name is *Christian*. During the years of preparation, the child is taught the faith. Then, another ritual occurs in which the child publicly declares they are choosing to follow Christ. It is their decision. This ritual is called *Confirmation*. I pray this section of the lesson on baptism is helpful for all of us who take the holy vows to help raise the child in the faith.

How seriously do we make take the vow to raise a child in the faith? What do you think the name Christian means in our culture? Do you believe most people in the church understand what is occurring in the ritual?

Anna is empowered to recognize the baby Jesus as the Messiah. Her prophecy is not wordy and is rather short. However, it gives the reason behind all other reasons. What is more important

than to recognize that Jesus is Messiah? Jesus has joined our life, indwelled our heart, and even now is redeeming all things in heaven and earth.

Addition of Philip and his daughters to the lesson

Actually, Philip's daughters are the focus of this text. Once again, we find an instance, early in the life of the church, in which women were used to prophesy. We are not given the names of the daughters. Thus, they represent all women who exercise their gifts and graces. If anyone thought women should not speak for God in any circumstance, it wasn't Philip. He was a disciple. He was present during Jesus' teachings, his signs and wonders, and Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Yet, he allows his daughters to prophesy.

Prayer

O Lord, we praise you and your omniscience. Thank you for judging us as fearfully and wonderfully made. As followers of Jesus, you have revealed to us our worth. Empower us to share Jesus, that every soul may "feel its worth." In Jesus' name, Amen.

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

Addressing Walls

By Dr. Hal Brady

I have just finished preparing a Sunday School lesson related to Joshua's experience of carrying out God's plan in tearing down the walls of Jericho. The walls of Jericho were the first obstacle facing Joshua and the children of Israel as they sought to gain God's gift of the promised land. It's a fascinating account of faith, obedience, and leadership found in chapters five and six of the book of Joshua.

The reason I'm mentioning this today is because walls can be a problem both individually and nationally and always need to be addressed. And such is no less true today.

Ancient Jericho relied on a wall surrounding the city to protect its inhabitants from invaders. And if the truth were known, many of us have built walls in our hearts and minds for a similar purpose: to protect our self-esteem and to guard against challenges to our way of thinking and perhaps our prejudices.

Often such walls end up destroying our relationships with family, friends and fellow Americans. Sometimes these walls of separation are so strong that only the power of God can break them down.

As we focus on the walls of discord that have caused shock across our land, let us pray to God that He will enable us to tear down the walls of separation that divide us and begin to move forward together with renewed hope.

For sure, there are numerous walls that divide us, but I only want to mention three that need to be immediately addressed if there is to be healing in our nation.

First, there are the walls of contact without fellowship! The late Howard Thurman, prominent religious leader and mentor to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., stated in his book, "Jesus and the Disinherited," these words: "Hatred often begins in a situation in which there is contact without fellowship, contact that is devoid of any of the primary overtures of warmth and fellow-feeling and genuineness."

"Contact without fellowship" is certainly a characteristic of social media in our day. Sad, but true, much of the division we are experiencing today in the United States is related to the disrespectful attitudes and verbiage displayed on social media.

People having an anonymous platform of bias, intimidation, and unkindness, with contact without fellowship, have and are causing others to be fed up and reject social media. These social media walls of separation need to be addressed.

Second, there are the walls of rightness without relationships! How many times have all of us sacrificed being "in relationship" for being "in the right" – right about our position, right about our personal prefaces, right about our condemnations, right about our disagreements, and right about our rights. And the relationships have gone down the tubes.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to be in relationship with us." God's will is to be kind.

Max Lucado gave this pertinent illustration in one of his books. A woman in a small Arkansas community was a single mom with a frail baby. Her neighbor would stop by every few days and keep the child so she could shop.

After some weeks her neighbor shared more than time. She shared her faith and the young woman did what Matthew did. She followed Christ.

The friends of the young women objected. "Do you know what those people teach?" they contested.

"Here is what I know," she said. "They held my baby." In other words, they were kind.

Third, there are the walls of selfish power without the interest of the common good! A man of faith was asked by a reporter once why he labored so diligently in lost causes. He was a radical Christian, a pacifist. Everything he belonged to, everything he worked for, in a sense, failed. His work, as a reporter pointed out to him, didn't make any impact on the world at all.

He said, "I don't do these things to change the world. I do these things so the world won't change me."

That's truly a word to the wise if we want our nation to be healed and if we want to be part of the healing process.

Walls need to be addressed!

Dr. Hal Brady is a retired pastor who continues to present the Good News of Jesus Christ and offer encouragement in a fresh and vital way through Hal Brady Ministries (halbradyministries.com).

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How Pure in Heart

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

ANNE PACKARD

On Saturday, January 17, 1736, John Wesley wrote in his journal, “Many people were very impatient at the contrary wind. At seven in the evening they were quieted by a storm. It rose higher and higher till nine. About nine the sea broke over us from stem to stern; burst through the windows of the state cabin, where three or four of us were, and covered us all over, though a bureau sheltered me from the main shock. About eleven I lay down in the great cabin and in a short time fell asleep, though very uncertain whether I should wake alive and much ashamed of my unwillingness to die. Oh, how pure in heart must he be, who would rejoice to appear before God at a moment’s warning! Toward morning, ‘He rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.’” (Matt. 8:26)

Two hundred eighty-five years ago, John Wesley sailed to the colony of Georgia to minister to the colonists and convert the Native Americans to Christianity. He had been called by God, sought and received the approval of friends and family, and gathered loyal companions to accompany him on the journey, thus beginning a lifelong ministry which created an entirely new denomination bringing millions of people to the love of God. But, first, he must survive the storm which hit at night, in the dark, and the cold, breaking the windows to their cabin soaking its occupants and their belongings. John fell asleep, uncertain he would see the morning light and ashamed he didn’t want to die remembering another time in Christian history when faithful disciples were scared by a storm and needed faith.

I’d like to say that John’s survival of this storm paved the way to smooth sailing, but knowing the history of the Methodist movement, I know this is untrue. After the storm, the ship landed at Cockspur Island and, while the officers went into Savannah, the remaining crew drank all of the liquor left on board. After that, John wasn’t allowed to leave Savannah to find the Native Americans to whom he wanted to preach. The people at Fort Frederica were unkind to Charles and he returned to England at the end of that summer. John realized he had feelings for a student he tutored but decided to devote his life to God instead of marrying. To avoid incarceration, John returned to England and preached out of doors, something to which he was quite opposed in the beginning. While preaching, some people threw rotten food at him and there were rainy days and some new members were more emotional than need be.

Despite what some good books and movies suggest, there is usually not just one obstacle in our way even when we are living a Christian life. Our path can have one obstacle after another with bits of faith, hope, and love tucked in between. As we put 2020 into the Ministry of Memory, our hopes are high for the New Year and all of its wonderful blessings, but may I remember that with the blessings will come obstacles that cause fear and require abundant faith. Like the bread at communion, we too must be broken open to fulfill God's plan. So, my 2021 New Year's resolution is to see the obstacles that are put before me as simply a means to a blessed end. The storm, and many other problems, will need to be endured so that I too can experience a lifelong ministry bringing people to God.

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

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

Rev. Paul Dupree

Rev. Paul Whitfield Dupree, 76, of Albany went home to be with his Lord and Savior on Wednesday, December 30, 2020.

The family will host a memorial service at a later date.

Rev. Dupree was born June 15, 1944, in Pinehurst, Georgia to the late Jack and Pauline Dupree. He proudly served our country in the United States Air Force and later followed his calling into the ministry as a pastor in The United Methodist Church. In 1971, he was appointed to the South Georgia Conference and with his wife Carol by his side, served in Kite, Lake Park, Bemiss, Albany, Columbus, Cairo, Vidalia and Kingsland. He served as the Conference Mission's Secretary for 9 years and was appointed as the Conference Director of Missions. Rev. Dupree was the first appointed Evangelist in the South Georgia Conference.

After retiring in 2009, and a few years of traveling to see America, Bro. Paul and "Miss Carol" still felt a call to continue serving the Lord. Because of his love of horses and all things western, they started a cowboy church called the King's Pasture in Kingsland, Ga.

They later returned to Albany to be closer to family and attended Christ United Methodist Church where Bro. Paul taught Bible classes and posted sermons on YouTube.

Survivors include his beloved wife of 56 years, Carol Dupree of Albany; 4 children, Donna Cason of Albany, Steven (Amy) Dupree of Dawsonville, Jacquylene McLemore (Stacy) of Warner Robins, and Susie Jester (Ben) of Cairo; grandchildren, James Cason (Brittany), Addie Huthwaite, Cosette Huthwaite, Hanna Eby (Kody), Marshall McLemore, Olivia McLemore, Keegan McLemore, Caroline White, Caleb White, Coen Jester; great-grandchild Kaden Eby; and a host of extended family and friends.

Hall and Hall Funeral Home was given the honor to serve the Dupree family.

Dr. C. Frank McCook

The Reverend Charles Franklin McCook, PhD., 93, passed peacefully January 1, 2021, at Wellstar West Georgia Hospice in LaGrange.

Frank lived an abundant life of service – service to God, family, church, and country. He will be remembered as a beloved husband, father, grandfather, philomathical theologian, caring pastor, challenging professor, passionate gardener, Army veteran, author, a man of proud Scottish decent, and devoted follower of Christ.

Son of CB and Margaret (Trimble) McCook of Lizella, Georgia, Frank was born July 20, 1927, in Macon. After graduating Macon's Lanier Boys High School ('45), he was drafted in the Army during the end of WWII. It was here he received his call to the ministry.

Upon completion of his military service, he began his career of academics, earning a bachelor's degree from Emory University, followed by his Master of Divinity and PhD from Boston University School of Theology. While in Boston, he served at the Congregational Christian United Church of Christ in Stoneham and Belmont, MA.

Moving his family back to Georgia, Frank served pastoral appointments in South Georgia including, UMC circuit pastor for Hagan, GA, Mulberry Street Methodist Church, Oak Grove Congregational Church UCC, Asbury UMC.

In 1961, Frank joined the faculty of LaGrange College where he remained for 33 years, serving as department chair of religion. During these years he assisted the college in creating a BA degree in Christian Education, devised a religion class specifically for nursing students, developed a summer study course where students studied in Israel, and initiated Project YES for North and South Georgia UMC Conferences to train college students for summer youth work. LaGrange College currently houses Frank's collection of Israeli pottery.

Family and heritage were important to Frank. In the 1970s, he became a member of the Order of the Tartan and later served as the organization's chaplain. He was also involved with Clan Donald USA where he became chaplain for the Georgia branch. In 1994, Frank was asked to become National Chaplain for Clan Donald USA, a position he held for 10 years. His ministry within the Scottish community also included serving as the chaplain of the Stone Mountain Highland Games for 20 years, providing spiritual guidance, christenings, worship services, and weddings.

Pastoring was always a part of Frank's adult life and he continued pastoring churches, including Antioch UCC and North Main UCC – both in Roanoke – and Harmony UMC in LaGrange where he retired at age 90. His favorite text on which to preach was Isaiah 6:1-8. "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me.'" (Isaiah 6:8)

Frank loved his family, his congregants, and his students. It was his students who gave him the endearing nickname of Froggy, which led to an impressive collection of frog figures. He was an accomplished prankster, hard to keep up with, grew the best corn, and could never be trusted near any dessert. If he was sitting down at home, be assured there was always a dog asleep in his lap.

Frank is preceded in death by his first wife Louise Wiseman McCook, and his parents CB and Margaret McCook.

Frank is the devoted husband of Elaine Laster McCook. Loving father of Chip McCook (Judy), Don McCook (Kathleen), Jennifer McCook Johnson (Steve). Adored Papa of Nora McCook (Claire), Meredith McCook Prosak (Aaron), Austin McCook, Caitlin McCook (Jason), Noah Johnson (Courtney), Addie Johnson Brown (Shannon), Carsten Johnson (Kirsten), Hannah Johnson, and seven great grandchildren. Brother to Nancy McCook Spence and proud uncle to numerous nieces and nephews. Brother-in-law to Reba and Teeny Smith, Alvous and Bobby Lassetter, Jane and Charles Custer, Linda and Coleman Cody.

Memorial donations may be made to the Dr. C. Frank McCook Scholarship Endowment Fund, payable to Georgia United Methodist Foundation, PO Box 922087, Peachtree Corners, GA, 30010-2087 (note Dr. McCook Scholarship in memo line). A celebration of Frank's life will be held in the spring.

Rev. Arthur Lanier Bishop

The Rev. Arthur L. Bishop, 76, of St. Simons Island, Ga., passed away peacefully Jan. 7, 2021, at his home.

The Rev. Bishop (aka Art, Dad, Pops, Lanny) was born on Jan. 23, 1944, in Birmingham, Ala. Son of the late Edwin Hines Bishop and Marjorie Lanier Bishop, he grew up in Miami, Fla., and was a 1962 graduate of Coral Gables High School. He earned his undergraduate degree from Florida Southern University, and his Master in Divinity degree from Garrett Evangelical-Theological Seminary. He served congregations in Macon, Putney, Lumpkin, and Columbus, Ga., throughout his 45 years as a full-time minister; the first 20-plus years in The United Methodist Church and the last two decades in the Presbyterian Church (USA). He served in various part-time, interim capacities as well for the Flint River and Savannah presbyteries. He also served as chaplain for the Chattahoochee Council of the Boy Scouts of America and was heavily involved with Habitat for Humanity and other area nonprofit organizations.

Jesus said, "Love each other as I have loved you." Art Bishop did just that. His family, friends, and the countless individuals he served in ministry over the years will remember him to be all about love and kindness. The world is a better place because of his warm heart, humble nature, and genuine care for others. He never met a stranger and was a friend to all.

Art was an avid reader and spent hours watching cable news shows. His love for reading and learning translated into him being the family champion in Trivial Pursuit and Jeopardy. He also enjoyed a good cup of coffee and before his health prohibited it, you could find him with friends at Starbucks sipping coffee and debating current events.

He is survived by his wife of 48 years, Amy Miller Bishop; his brother, Ned Bishop (Phyllis); his sister, Joy Van Zandt (Jack); his two sons, Matt Bishop (Natalie) and Hampton Bishop (Shelbie); and his sister-in-law, Kim Hakala (Steve). He is also survived by his five grandchildren, Ami, MacKenzie, Abigale, Jimmy, and Lanier; and numerous nieces and nephews and their families (Lisa Beckham, Janet Dunlap, Curtis Bishop, Kimberly Strahm, John Van Zandt, Laura Hakala, Sarah Yaden). He is predeceased by his son, Arthur Lanier Bishop Jr.; and daughter-in-law, Susan Lumpkin Bishop.

The family held a private memorial service on Saturday, Jan. 16. In lieu of flowers, any donations made in his honor should be made to the youth mission trip fund of St. Simons Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Wesley Jones

Rev. Joseph Wesley Jones Jr., of Moulton, Alabama, died Sunday, Jan. 10 in Huntsville at the age of 67 following a brief illness.

A retired United Methodist pastor who spent almost 30 years serving 10 churches in the South Georgia Conference, Wesley is survived by his wife, June, of 48 years. They met at Andrew College (Cuthbert, Georgia), married in 1972 and graduated together from Andrew College and LaGrange College (LaGrange, Georgia).

Wesley received his Master of Divinity degree from Emory University's Candler School of Theology in 1987. He was active in local and international missions, including trips to Belize, Cuba and Panama. A book collector, voracious reader, singer, gardener, painter and part-time Santa Claus who had many other hobbies, he most enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren and finding new destinations for them to visit together.

Preceded in death by his parents Joseph Wesley Jones and Beatrice Autry Jones, Wesley is survived by three sons: Joey (Gwen) Jones of Boone, North Carolina; Jonathan (Angie) Jones of Cullman, Alabama; and Jeremy (Merida) Jones-Batiste of Atlanta, Georgia.

He is also survived by six grandchildren – JW, Payton, Gabe, Jayce, Cassian and Violet – as well as two sisters, Pennie (Sam) Martin of Melbourne, Florida and Denise (George) Smith of Hiawassee, Georgia; and a brother, Dow (Darla) Jones of Rome, Georgia.

A memorial service will be held at a later date. In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made to Moulton First United Methodist Church (<https://www.moultonfirstumc.org/>).

Elliott Brown-Service Funeral home is directing.

Rev. James Yarbrough, Jr.

James William Yarbrough, Jr, age 79, of Valdosta, Ga, passed away at South Georgia Medical Center on January 11, 2021. He was born in Valdosta, Ga. to J. W. and Erbie Yarbrough on September 6, 1941.

He is survived by his four biological children: James “Jamie” Yarbrough III, Stephen (Tammy) Yarbrough, Teresa (Clyde) White, Kathy (Jerry) Lattin; 25 grandchildren; 31 great grandchildren; one sister Cheryl (Joe) Seigel; one brother, Olin Yarbrough; and one sister-in-law, Shalyn (Kenny) Wilson.

He was currently serving as the pastor at Statenville United Methodist Church. He retired from the United States Postal Service in Valdosta. He was an avid bowler for more than 45 years. He was in charge of the chain gang for Lowndes Vikings football for more than 40 years.

He is preceded in death by his wife of 61 years, Sherry Ann Castleberry Yarbrough, his parents, his parents-in-law, three brothers-in-law, one daughter-in-law and a great grandson, Dalton Wilkes.

A graveside service was held Thursday, January 14, 2021. Reverend Larry Hauser officiated. Condolences to the family may be conveyed online at www.mclanecares.com. Carson McLane Funeral Home.



Scripture Readings – Jan. 19

January 24

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

January 31

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalm 111 (UMH 832)

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 1:21-28

February 7

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

Isaiah 40:21-31

Psalm 147:1-11, 20c (UMH 859)

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Mark 1:29-39

Andrew announces launch of Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education with K-12 Reading Endorsement

Andrew College is launching a new Bachelor of Science program and a standalone K-12 Reading Endorsement that will be available starting Fall Semester 2021.

Andrew College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) Commission on Colleges to award certificates, associate, and baccalaureate degrees.

The new program received approval last week from GaPSC (Georgia Professional Standards Commission).

Andrew College Academic Dean Dr. Karan Pittman shared specifics on the timeline of the process. Pittman stated, “We received confirmation to offer the Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education by our institutional accrediting agency, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), in February 2020. In October 2020, Georgia Professional Standards evaluated the program and made a recommendation that Andrew College move forward with the program, which received final approval at their board meeting on December 10th.”

According to Andrew College President Dr. Linda Buchanan, offering the new program is important to meet a critical need based on the specific needs of elementary students with regard to literacy development in our local communities in Southwest Georgia and beyond. Buchanan said, “We are so excited about offering this degree. We know how critically important reading proficiency is for our children, and the gaps in that ability that must be filled in order for children to succeed in school and life. We are looking for students with a passion for teaching children in rural areas, with a particular passion for instilling a love of reading.”

The Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education is a four-year degree, and the standalone K-12 Reading Endorsement is a three-course program that is a total of nine credit hours. According to Andrew College Director of Elementary Education, Dr. Lourdes H. Smith, these programs will prepare future educators in a multi-faceted approach.

“This program is designed for students who are interested in an opportunity for intellectual, social, and spiritual growth as a way to professionally succeed in becoming an outstanding teacher in the realm of elementary education and reading,” stated Smith.

Teacher candidates will be screened before admission to ensure quality. Candidates must meet admissions standards. After the application form has been filled out and returned, students must complete an interview with program faculty to assess attributes and dispositions beyond academic ability. Students must submit at least two letters of recommendation from former employers/teachers/mentors attesting to the personal character of the applicant.

Students who are interested in the program should contact Lourdes H. Smith, Ph.D., Director of Elementary Education and Assistant Education Professor, at lourdessmith@andrewcollege.edu, for more information.

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 1/19/2021 edition

Alive Together at the Table with Bishop Bryan, Zoom – Jan. 19

Come together at the table with Bishop Bryan for reflections and conversations. How is it with your soul? What is going on in our conference and the general church you need to know? The conversation will begin at noon. We will use the same Zoom link for all of these conversations, so once you register and receive the Zoom link you can save it for future conversations. If you misplace the link at any point, feel free to register again. [Register now](#)

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.

Alive Together at the Table with Bishop Bryan, Zoom – Jan. 25

Come together at the table with Bishop Bryan for reflections and conversations. How is it with your soul? What is going on in our conference and the general church you need to know? The conversation will begin at noon. We will use the same Zoom link for all of these conversations, so once you register and receive the Zoom link you can save it for future conversations. If you misplace the link at any point, feel free to register again. [Register now](#)

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](#)