

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – FEBRUARY 16 EDITION

St. Mary's Road UMC pastor mixes Bible, baking in online devotional series

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Last summer, Dr. Adriane Burgess baked her way through the pandemic.

With butter, sugar, and flour by her side, Dr. Burgess – like thousands of others – found solace and comfort in the kitchen.

“I was baking at home like everyone else,” Dr. Burgess laughed. “This is something I have always had a passion for.”

She's now combined her love of sweet treats and scripture in a regular Facebook video series named “[Dessert. Devotion.](#)” Part cooking show, part Bible study, Dr. Burgess' videos are charismatic, warm, and wise.

In her videos, Dr. Burgess, who grew up baking with her mother, shares recipes she created or family recipes she and her mom have perfected. She also shares tips and tricks – like sifting flour and using packaged peanut butter cookie mix – with her audience.

“I remember growing up and learning how to grease the pan and run the mixer,” said Dr. Burgess, pastor of St. Mary's Road United Methodist Church in Columbus. “It's something we really enjoyed doing together, and I have always loved trying different recipes and creating some of my own.”

During the early days of the pandemic, she also dreamed of creating a devotional series, something that would teach and encourage, but wasn't quite sure what it would look like. A friend suggested she combine her love of baking and the Bible.

“There are plenty of devotionals and devotional opportunities out there, but I wanted something that would be a little different, really fun and creative, and something I enjoy,” Dr. Burgess said. “So I set off to design a devotion that was upbeat, hopeful, affirming, and fun.”

There's a need for devotionals – short, simple teaching on a Bible verse, biblical topic, or a single truth from the Bible – perhaps now more than ever, she said.

“I saw there was a need for a positive message, for Christian encouragement, a space for reflection, for self-care,” Dr. Burgess said. “I thought this would create a space in our homes ... to treat ourselves – that's the tagline – for spiritual care and to do something that's fun and positive.”

The videos are also a great way for Dr. Burgess – who moved to St. Mary's Road UMC last June in the middle of the pandemic – to let her new congregation see a side of her outside of worship services. They've also helped her stay connected to past congregations, family members, and friends, some as far away as Belize and Germany.

“This has been a way to stay connected with people. It’s been fun to see them share the devotion with their family and friends. We all know someone who loves to bake or who is looking for that next devotion.”

It’s impossible to choose a favorite dessert, Dr. Burgess says – her next recipe is always her favorite – and she’s planning to experiment with vegan dishes and desserts during Lent. She’s also preparing a “Dessert. Devotion” Lenten series, with special recipes and a prayer group.

No matter what she’s whipping up, she always has something sweet and an encouraging word to share.

In her “[Dessert.Devotion: Homemade 7Up Pound Cake and Peacemaking](#)” video, she compared baking a pound cake to being a peacemaker and then read Matthew 5:9.

“There are two pieces of advice my mama will teach me even today,” Dr. Burgess said. “The first is, if you want to make a good cake, it’s not just about having the right ingredients, it’s also about how you put the cake together. And when it comes to peacemaking, it’s not just what you say, it’s how you say it.”

South Georgia apportionment giving remains strong despite difficult year

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Despite 2020 being one of the most challenging years in recent memory, South Georgia United Methodists continued to faithfully give to mission and ministry through their apportionments.

Overall apportionment payments for 2020 stood at 84 percent, compared to 87 percent in 2019. The Northeast and Southwest Districts led in overall percentage of apportionments paid, paying 97.11 percent and 93.65 percent, respectively.

And even though actual cash collected through apportionments was down 2.67 percent from 2019, the Conference’s cash position is strong because of a \$510,000 PPP loan, said Dr. Derek McAleer, Director of Administrative Services.

“We are so much better off than we thought we’d be,” Dr. McAleer said. “Even with the financial relief and assistance we provided to our congregations in 2020, we have come this far by faith and by the generosity of the people called Methodist.”

Dr. McAleer attributes the strong giving in part to the solid relationships district superintendents and congregations have developed with one another. Congregations understand where their missional giving goes and what it supports, he said.

“Relationships are critical. Money follows relationships in many ways, and I believe our apportionment collections reflect this,” Dr. McAleer said. “I’m grateful for the relationships our churches have with the superintendents, Bishop Bryan, and other conference leaders. There is a level of confidence there that shows.”

Dr. McAleer also remarked on the strong faith of the South Georgia congregations.

“2020 has been a very difficult year for our people and our churches,” he said. “Some have struggled financially, some have had so much extra work they can’t keep up, and everyone has dealt with lots of stress. In spite of this, people want to be in mission, they want to impact lives for good, and their giving reflects that strong sense of mission.”

Apportionment giving is one of the many ways United Methodists show their connection with each other and their communities, supporting local church resources and United Methodist efforts such as campus ministries, camps and retreats, new church starts, and the revitalization of established churches.

And they extend the conference’s ministry beyond the bounds of South Georgia through such efforts as the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), and Africa University.

South Georgia churches paid \$7,875,492 on a \$9,326,184 budget. In addition to apportionment giving, South Georgia United Methodists gave \$31,459 in gifts for approved Special Sundays and \$499,199 in advance specials and other missional giving (in addition to missional giving on the local church and community level).

General Conference: What we know now

By Bishop R. Lawson Bryan

With our attention appropriately focused on our local South Georgia congregations and ministries during this pandemic, it has been a while since I’ve updated you on denominational matters and what is happening in the connectional system of The United Methodist Church.

I know this may be a longer article than you’re used to from me, but my hope is that it will keep us all on the same page and well informed about the important goings-on in our denomination. I want to remain open and transparent as we walk this journey together.

-- GENERAL CONFERENCE PRIMER --

Here is a primer on all things related to General Conference:

1. **General Conference:** General Conference is the top policy making body of The United Methodist Church that meets every four years. It includes nearly 1,000 delegates elected from Africa, Eurasia, the Philippines, and the United States. South Georgia has eight delegates - four laity and four clergy. General Conference last met in 2016 followed by a special session in 2019 focused on matters of human sexuality. The special session approved a “traditional plan” that retained the traditional language in the *Book of Discipline* concerning LGBTQ marriage and ordination. That is the *Book of Discipline* under which we continue to operate. Even after this special session, there continues to be division as the church struggles to achieve consensus and compliance with regard to

matters of human sexuality. (Note: Bishops do not vote at General Conference; the voting is by the laity and clergy delegates.)

The General Conference was scheduled to next meet in May 2020, but the pandemic caused a postponement until late summer 2021 (Aug. 29 - Sept. 7). However, it still remains to be seen if a global meeting of that nature will be possible with current travel and in-person gathering restrictions. A decision will be made by the Commission on General Conference in the coming week.

This past Saturday, U.S. delegates participated in a webinar where they heard reports about churchwide finances, the Episcopal Fund, General Conference options, the Jurisdictional Study Committee report, and a recommendation from the Council of Bishops about Episcopal Elections. ([Click here to view.](#))

2. **Commission on General Conference:** The Commission on General Conference, comprised of laity and clergy, is charged with planning the global gathering of General Conference delegates. Due to the continuing pandemic, it does seem unlikely that a regular two-week General Conference session could occur in late summer in Minneapolis as planned. There is a sub-committee of the Commission looking into whether the conference could take place online. Even with that, many factors must be taken into account: Internet connectivity, 16-hour time zone difference, interpretation for nine languages, safeguarding voting procedures, how our rules fit electronic meetings, presiding officers, legislative committees, and Christian conferencing. [You can read more in this article](#) about the kinds of considerations being made by the Commission on General Conference. Their next meeting is February 20. It is anticipated that the Commission will announce their decision soon after their meeting, and the leadership of South Georgia will be monitoring this closely.
3. **Legislation:** Delegates to General Conference consider all the legislative petitions that have been sent in by individuals, churches, conferences, boards, and agencies. Many plans have already been submitted concerning ways to move The United Methodist Church beyond the impasse over human sexuality. Once General Conference actually occurs, these various plans can be debated and amended during the session in order to determine which of them might be appealing to the laity and clergy delegates. Questions have been raised about submitting new legislation/plans. Paragraph 507 in the *Book of Discipline* lays out the process for how new petitions could be received
4. **[Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation](#):** Sometimes referred to as “The Protocol” or “A Protocol for Separation,” this plan grew out of a group of 16 people who used a professional mediator to see if they could come up with a way to move beyond the impasse over sexuality. The result is a plan that would lead to a separation in which there would be a new traditional Methodist denomination and a continuing

expression of the current UMC, referred to as “the post-separation UMC.” The legislation providing for this plan would have to be approved by the delegates at General Conference. If approved, annual conferences could decide to join one expression of Methodism or the other. A local church that disagreed with the decision of its annual conference could decide to withdraw and move to the other expression where it was better aligned. Clergy would have the same option. If the Protocol for Separation were to be approved, there would be a period of a year or more during which these decisions could be considered by annual conferences, local churches, and clergy. Some questions that would be uppermost in everyone’s mind would be: What will be the specifics of each of the two denominations? What will be their basic beliefs and core values? How will they be structured? How will clergy be credentialed and appointed? How will they be funded and how will money be spent? It is good to note that while the Protocol does seem to have support, nothing prohibits the Protocol from being amended at General Conference.

I am aware of [one group made up of clergy and laity](#) from every U.S. jurisdiction and three Central Conferences who are working on what a new traditional Methodist global denomination might look like. It is my understanding they will be sharing their plans soon.

5. **[Protocol for Graceful Unity](#)**: There is also another plan that is circulating that I am aware of called the Protocol for Graceful Unity, also referred to as the “Overlapping Conferences Plan.” This is a new plan that emerged during the past year among United Methodists who felt that the options offered by the Protocol for Separation were too limiting. These persons long for a United Methodist Church that provides a place for as many United Methodists as possible, while guaranteeing them defined space to live out their theological convictions. To accomplish this, the Protocol for Unity provides for two large conferences (one traditional and one progressive) in each region of The United Methodist Church. In the U.S., for instance, there would be a traditional conference that covers the entire nation, and there would be a progressive conference that covers the entire nation. The two conferences would have a separate *Book of Discipline*, separate bishops, and separate funding. They might choose to work together on things such as disaster response, but they would be separate and distinct entities under the global umbrella of The United Methodist Church.
6. **Scenarios**: I am already in the process of discussing various scenarios with the leadership teams of our conference: the Appointive Cabinet, the Compass Group, the Laity Cabinet, and the leaders of our General Conference delegation. Since 2018, the Leadership Forum Task Force has been meeting to study proposed plans and ask how they would affect South Georgia. You can be certain that these conversations will continue once we have clarity from the Commission on General Conference as to when the postponed 2020 General Conference will actually be held.

7. **Jurisdictional Conference:** I also want to say a word about Jurisdictional Conference. In the U.S., there are five geographical regions called “jurisdictions.” We are in the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ), which includes 13 annual conferences in the southeastern region of the U.S. The SEJ normally meets for a conference every four years a few months after General Conference. One of the primary items of business is the election and assignment of bishops within the jurisdiction. South Georgia has 16 delegates - the eight General Conference delegates plus four additional laity and four additional clergy. (Note: Bishops do not vote at Jurisdictional Conference; the voting is by the laity and clergy delegates.)

Just as General Conference was postponed, Jurisdictional Conference was also postponed. Because of these postponements, no new elections of bishops have been made. Five bishops were slated to retire in the SEJ in 2020. I was one of these. All five of us agreed to continue to serve until a date can be set for a jurisdictional gathering.

The SEJ Committee on Episcopacy, who makes the assignments of bishops in our jurisdiction, has brought forth three recommendations they presented last month to the SEJ delegates and again this past Saturday. Of course, nothing can be formally considered until the SEJ Conference meets and votes. We have been given permission to share [a video that was presented to the SEJ delegations](#) that will provide more information on the three recommendations.

1. The 5 bishops who were planning to retire in 2020 would retire in 2021 (Ward, Taylor, Swanson, Leland, and Bryan).
2. The SEJ Conference would elect no new bishops in 2021. This would create a significant cost savings and would allow churches and conferences to make decisions related to the upcoming General Conference so that the proper number of elections would take place at the right time. By not electing bishops in 2021, this would mean that an annual conference might share a bishop with another annual conference.
3. The Committee on Episcopacy would make recommendations for the assignment of episcopal coverage of the 15 Annual Conferences in the SEJ by the 8 remaining active Bishops.

-- WHAT WE KNOW NOW --

I realize this is a lot to take in. There are so many moving pieces and so many unknowns. For now, however, here are some things we DO know:

First, whether General Conference occurs this year or at some time in the future, we will continue to be Alive Together as the South Georgia Conference. Many leading indicators, including your strong apportionment giving in spite of the global pandemic, show that we are glad to be the South Georgia Conference, and we plan to stay that way.

Second, the South Georgia Conference will continue to operate under the *Book of Discipline* as approved by the 2016 and 2019 General Conferences.

Third, prior to the next General Conference, whenever that may be, conference leadership and I will continue to provide information and feedback opportunities to the laity and clergy of South Georgia.

Fourth, once General Conference has acted, the leadership of the South Georgia Conference will implement the process we have already established. We will assess the decision made and do a comprehensive evaluation of the implications. We will develop at least one option for our conference to consider and move together. This will enable us to chart a course for the future in which we can continue to serve and remain together as an annual conference. Of course, we don't know what the options will be, but we can choose the option that will enable the South Georgia Conference to write our own story that best enables us to remain Alive Together as an annual conference.

Fifth, we will take whatever comes from General Conference and process it in "South Georgia time." In other words, we will give ourselves time to gain a thorough understanding of the implications for our 588 local churches. We will be Alive Together at the Table so that laity and clergy have ample opportunity to ask questions, receive information, and seek God's guidance through prayer, conversation, worship, study, and collaboration. Remember, the South Georgia table is ours. Let's use it.

-- SCENARIOS --

With this knowledge in mind, let us take a look at two possible scenarios:

Scenario One: The Commission on General Conference announces that General Conference will occur in 2021, either in person or electronically. The Commission will also have to announce what the agenda will be and how the legislative petitions will be considered by the delegates. In that case, I will work with our General Conference delegation and other leadership groups in our conference to share specific information about legislation that is of particular interest to South Georgia. There will also be provision for laity and clergy to give feedback concerning proposed legislation. Our [conference website](#) is already the go-to place for accurate, up-to-date information. This primary communication channel will be augmented by videos, zoom conversations, and district communication events. The newly formed Laity Cabinet is in the process of building out a communication network to connect local church lay leaders, district lay leaders, and the annual conference lay leader. If a General Conference comes about this year we have the infrastructure in place to enable everyone in South Georgia to be Alive Together at the Table.

Scenario Two: The Commission on General Conference announces that General Conference will not be held in 2021. If this occurs I expect to hear disappointment from some and a sigh of relief from others. For example, those who have seen the Protocol for Separation as a hopeful plan for orderly, gracious separation so something new can emerge will, understandably, have a sense of sadness over the delay. On the other hand, those who long for an alternative to the Protocol might view a delay as an opportunity to consider alternatives such as the Protocol for Gracious Unity.

If there is a delay, the Commission will also announce the new projected dates for General Conference. In that case, we will continue to operate under the current *Book of Discipline* and focus major attention on helping our churches and communities recover from the pandemic. We will also want to encourage continuing adaptive behavior among our churches. Many congregations have embraced new ways of being church, and we want to support their ongoing efforts. In addition, we could use the extra time to study legislation such as the plans listed above to prepare ourselves for the next General Conference.

As soon as possible after February 20, I will share more details as they are released by the Commission on General Conference. Through ongoing communication and conversation, I want to keep you well informed and up to date. I have complete confidence that God is at work to achieve His ultimate will.

You have done a remarkable job staying focused on Christ and the work of the Gospel during this unprecedented past year. Let's continue being Alive Together in radical openness to God's preferred future for South Georgia.

Black History Month

OUR CONNECTION MATTERS

ALLISON LINDSEY

"History has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own." – Michelle Obama

I wish I had paid closer attention to history through the years – including when I was in school. I meet people who enjoy a love of history, and I have come to understand the rich lens it gives in the present and looking into the future.

This month we celebrate Black History Month, and as I think about Black history I tend to shelter myself from the difficult pieces. For example, the history of slavery is very difficult to think about and even harder to comprehend, but I have also come to realize that learning our past is necessary; it's necessary to travel back through history to inform our present as well as impact the future.

Last year, learning about the origin and significance of the Watch Night Service (Dec. 31) within the African-American community certainly gave me a greater appreciation for this gathering.

Being able to attend a service virtually at St. Mary's Road UMC in Columbus was powerful. Black History Month embraces looking back and around at history in the making, highlighting the incredible contributions that people of color have made throughout history and continue to make in shaping our future.

Studying Black history has been pivotal in helping me understand the present. I learn from listening and hearing others' stories, which is the desire behind launching South Georgia's new [Book Club](#) with an open invitation. Registration is live now for our first book, "[How to Be an Anti-racist](#)" by Ibram X. Kendi. Rev. Andrew (Drew) Young, pastor of Mosaic Church in Savannah, and I are teaming up to lead six weeks of conversations beginning March 2. Our prayer is to create safe space to learn, ask questions, and see how God works among us. For more information, [click here](#). I hope you will join us!

Throughout February you will see Black History Moments – similar to our beloved John Wesley Moments – on our [Conference Facebook page](#) and in other communications. Led by some of our African-American clergy and laity across South Georgia, these are inspiring ways to learn about contributions shaping history in our conference. [Our first was from Rev. Abra Lattany-Reed](#).

You won't want to miss the "[Alive Together At the Table with Bishop Bryan](#)" this month. On Feb. 16, Bishop Bryan will have a special guest who witnessed an event that is woven into Black history and the experience was life changing. I was also amazed to find out that Rosa Parks was our guest's Sunday school teacher. Join us at this virtual table!

You know I am always ready to resource, and this is no exception. I hope you will take advantage of these resources as a starting point and see where they take you. There are so many more resources at our fingertips through the Internet. I am learning so much, and I am thankful for those who have extended grace and safe space for me on this journey of understanding and my desire to be a change agent.

UMC Resources:

[SGAUMC Multicultural Task Force](#)

[United Methodist Black History Quiz](#)

[United Methodist Women: Black History Month](#)

[Methodism in Black & White](#)

Worship Resources:

[Worship Resources for Black History Month](#)

[Liturgy Resources for Black History Month](#)

Other Resources:

[PBS: Celebrating Black History Month](#): a month of special programming and narratives.

[Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture](#)

I do believe that courage is contagious and that hope can take on a life of its own. I felt this movement through Amanda Gorman’s inspiring spoken word poem during the recent presidential inauguration:

“... *there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it. If only we're brave enough to be it.*” ([The Hill We Climb, Amanda Gorman](#))

This is exactly what Christ has called us to be – light! (Matthew 5:14-16)

May we have courage and share the hope to embrace this beautiful, multicultural world we live in and to reflect and mirror the diversity in our churches that we see in our communities. Every day is history in the making, and beyond February, we should celebrate the rich history of people of color which is, in fact, American history. I’m brushing up on my history!

February is Black History Month. You can learn more about the founders and the origin through the [Association for the Study of African American Life and History \(ALASH\)](#). The 2021 theme is “The Black Family: Representation, Identity, and Diversity.” The ALASH shares that narratives of family offer a rich tapestry of images for exploring the African American past and present and they provide many virtual events and an opportunity to learn more.

Connectional Ministries launches online book club

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

The global coronavirus pandemic may have changed much about the way we socialize, attend worship services, shop, and live our lives, but one thing most everyone can do while staying home is read.

Beginning March 2, Connectional Ministries invites South Georgia clergy and laity to join a virtual book club via Zoom.

From the comfort of one’s home or office – anywhere, really – participants will discuss the week’s book, its important themes, and faith.

“The blessing of the virtual platform is it takes away the geographic boundaries and allows for a big table and rich conversation,” said Allison Lindsey, director of Connectional Ministries.

The group’s first book is [“How to Be an Anti-racist”](#) by Ibram X. Kendi. Leading the discussion will be Lindsey and Rev. Andrew (Drew) Young, pastor of Mosaic Church in Savannah. The study will begin March 2 and run through April 6.

“Everyone enters the conversation of racial justice at different places,” Lindsey said. “Our prayer is to create a safe space to learn, ask questions, and see how God works among us.”

The goal of the South Georgia Book Club, Lindsey said, is to build an online community where people of faith can learn and grow together. The virtual platform will include a weekly one-hour

Zoom conversation along with a closed Facebook group for participants to discuss the book with each other throughout the week as they read.

“I appreciate Drew giving his time, knowledge, and passion to teach with me for this first book. He has truly offered me safe space to ask questions and have thought-provoking conversation around racial justice,” Lindsey said. “A highlight in 2020 for me was Zooming into a Sunday school class at Mosaic UMC when they studied the book ‘[Grace-ism: The Art Of Inclusion](#),’ by Dr. David A. Anderson. We have so much to learn by listening to one another.”

The online platform provides possibilities for others to lead discussions for future books and topics. The fall selection will be announced during the summer and Connectional Ministries welcomes suggestions of favorite books for consideration.

Find more details and registration information online at www.sgaumc.org/book-club.

Join South Georgia’s Easter Virtual Choir!

Easter is just a few weeks away, and what’s more uplifting and unifying than joining together in song?

Be a part of the South Georgia United Methodist Easter Virtual Choir!

By now you’ve probably seen and heard videos of choirs coming together (digitally) to sing choruses, hymns, and songs. Now is your chance to be a part of a virtual choir for Easter. Join with other South Georgia United Methodist voices to celebrate the Good News of Christ’s resurrection!

It’s easy to participate. Just follow the steps [here](#).

Apply today for Camp Connect Leadership Team!

Applications are now being accepted for the 2021 [Camp Connect](#) Summer Leadership Team. Applications are open to college students who have completed at least one year of college. The Leadership Team will commit to nine weeks of camping ministry which will include serving at high school, middle school, and elementary camps. These camp counselors will minister to hundreds of youth and children throughout the summer while making Christian friendships with other staff members that last a lifetime.

For more information, [click here](#) or contact Suzanne Akins, Camp Director, at (912) 638-8626 ext. 107 or by email at suzanne@sgaumc.com.

Follow Camp Connect on Facebook: www.facebook.com/CampConnectUMC

Called to Explain

Winter Quarter: Call in the New Testament

Unit 3: The Call of Women

Sunday school lesson for the week of Feb. 21, 2021

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Background Scripture: Acts 18:1-26, Romans 16:3-4, 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Timothy 4:19

Key Verse: “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.” Romans 16:3-4

Lesson Aim:

Our texts invite us one again to appreciate the role of women in our faith. Hopefully, this appreciation will deepen as we study the material. We also will learn the importance of sharing and defending the Gospel. The women in Scripture serve as great examples of both. We will also recognize the importance of supporting ministry, as is evident in those women who followed Jesus.

Important places in our texts

Athens

This lesson begins in Athens. Paul was brought to Athens for the purpose of his safety. Athens was a very corrupt and sinful city to Paul. He journeys to the local synagogue and began to teach and preach the resurrection of Jesus. It was most likely against the law to preach on a foreign god, and they arrested Paul for preaching Jesus. He was taken to the high court. Paul gave a defense of himself and his preaching. Paul’s sermon of defense is known as the Areopagus Sermon. It is a dramatic, full account of Paul’s mission. This sermon is known as one of the early steps in the theological development of Christology. Christology is the study of the nature, substance, and life of Christ. Paul reminds them they worship empty, false idols. He uses their altar with the inscription: “To An Unknown God” to challenge their religious life. They do not really know who their god is! Several people followed Christ through Paul’s message. Over time, tensions grew within the Jewish community and Paul left for Corinth.

Corinth

Fifty miles west of Athens was Corinth. Gallio was deputy here, as Corinth was the seat of Roman government. This area was a major center for commerce. It was a mecca for trade as roads of commerce led into and out of Corinth. It was an isthmus with three sides bounded by the sea. When ships entered a port on either side they stopped. They dared not try to navigate around the isthmus, for the currents were far too dangerous. Quite incredibly ships were carried, over land, from one side to the other. It might have been less than four miles to transport the ships, but

imagine what a major task this was in the first century! It reveals the ingenuity that blessed humankind.

Corinth was a religious city. It allowed Judaism, and synagogues had been founded there. However, there were many pagan deities that were worshiped. Therefore, the fields were ripe for the harvest. Paul, the other apostles and followers of Jesus, would take the Gentile world by storm.

It is here that we look into Paul's *methodology* for winning people to Christ:

First, Paul entered the synagogue. Paul always worshiped in the synagogue and used the synagogue as a way to meet people seriously seeking God. Paul usually met very devout Jews. As a Pharisee, he was invited to teach. As people listened, Paul created some controversy but also discovered those with hungry hearts. Usually, someone invited him home to dwell.

Secondly, Paul used his trade as a tent maker. Paul was schooled by a major Pharisee who taught his students to learn a trade. Paul worked in making tents. The marketplace gave Paul another wide-open opportunity to meet future converts and even some new Christians traveling through. Paul worked in a bi-vocational manner. After winning some to Christ he would be invited to dwell.

Thirdly, Paul created a home church. Here, each week, Paul taught the teachings of Jesus. At the core of his teaching was the resurrected Christ, thus proclaiming Jesus was Messiah.

Fourthly, Paul would see that the church became rooted in Christ. Leaders emerged to share the Gospel and keep the church going. Only then would Paul leave for a new area. He never took in converts only to immediately leave them.

Lessons to take from Corinth

Paul used face to face, personal evangelism. He met people! We are not given the conversations in which Paul participated in the market. However, Paul had in mind to live the Gospel and share the Gospel. Paul networked. He met people in the synagogue, market-place, and in homes. Every aspect of Paul's life was for Christ.

Ephesus

After a year and a half, Paul left for Ephesus on the southwest coast of today's Turkey. This was the major capital of Rome in the Province of Asia Minor. It was the third largest city in the Roman Empire. A large Jewish population existed within Ephesus, and they had established a strong synagogue. Paul's teaching and preaching riled many in the Jewish community. A strong church now existed in Ephesus and controversy was ever-present. A riot finally erupted. Still,

Paul had established and rooted a church which would become a major church in Christianity. It must be remembered that the early church did not experience ease when establishing Christianity. There were many battles and struggles, yet here we are in 2021!

Important people in the text

Apostle Paul

Paul's ministry spanned approximately from 35 A.D. to 55 A.D. Paul was a Pharisee, schooled under Gamaliel. The length of Gamaliel's bio and teachings would be too great in this typed lesson. Therefore, I encourage each student to scroll Gamaliel and read the information. He was a great influence upon Paul. Paul persecuted the early Christians in an attempt to defend Judaism against the new sect. Paul could be ruthless (read the stoning of Stephen). Paul was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians when he encountered the Christ. In that moment and moments to come, Paul was radically transformed. Paul the persecutor would now hunt down lost souls to bring them to Christ. From the conversion of Paul forward, the Book of Acts mostly follows the ministry of Paul. Acts is set up according to the description in Acts 1. The disciples were to carry the Gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world. Paul is taking the Gospel into the uttermost part of the world. He is a mighty witness to the power of Jesus to renew a heart and transform one's total life. Paul did not preach what he had not experienced. His passion emerged from a real, lasting experience with Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament. He is considered to be the theologian in the New Testament. Paul is aware of the "oral Gospel." Prior to the writing of Mark, the Gospel was taught and proclaimed. It spread by word of mouth. The stories that later appeared in the Gospels were told and repeated with great care. Eventually, the Gospels were written. The people to whom he preached and taught depended totally upon what they saw and heard. Paul took the truth of his conversion, the truth he learned in the days following his conversion, the oral tradition and "fleshed them out" with theological thought and understanding. We often underestimate the gifts and graces God had bestowed upon Paul. He changed the world with his preaching, teaching, and love of the Church. He would make missionary journeys into Mesopotamia and Syria. At the time of Paul's death, the Church existed in Rome and was making its way into Europe.

Aquila and Priscilla

This married couple had come from Italy to Corinth. The Jews from Rome were expelled by the Emperor Claudius, both Christian and non-Christian Jews. Aquila and Priscilla had come from Italy to Rome at this time. They had become faithful, devoted followers of Jesus and were well respected. They were the kind of couple that today we would address them by both names. We all know couples we refer to by both names. They were so bound together in marriage and faith we rarely could say Aquila without saying Priscilla.

Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers, and so was Paul. They entered into a meaningful, special relationship. They became Paul's right hand in ministry at Corinth. Every pastor knows the value of those who desire more than anything to serve Jesus. Their integrity even led to a sense of moral leadership among the Christian community. If we study the ministry of Paul, we quickly learn that Paul was rarely, if ever, alone. God had raised up men and women who supported him in ministry whether in achievement or struggle. They followed Paul to Ephesus, and Paul left them after some time to care for the church. This was an enormous responsibility, and Paul chose two in whom he utterly trusted. No one would leave their children with someone unless they trusted them. The churches were Paul's children, and he loved them like a father and mother. He knew he had to establish order, and he knew how to nurture.

Apollos

Apollos had arrived at Ephesus from Alexandria in Egypt. Alexandria was the largest Greek cultural center in the world. Apollos was well educated in Alexandria. He would have studied Scripture in a systematic manner, as the philosophies of the Greeks flavored his understanding. He spoke with clarity and power. He was to be a preacher with great gifts and graces. He would later relocate to Corinth.

Apollos' Greek background would have greatly supplemented Paul's more Jewish background. The book of Hebrews sounds like it was written by Apollos. However, the Church and tradition assign it to Paul. However, through the Book of Hebrews we see the melding of Judaism, Christianity and Greek thought. The Church was becoming just that. We are rooted in our Jewish roots established in the Old Testament, and that has been enlightened by great Christian thinkers in the first and second centuries. His teaching and preaching were accurate and passionate.

The mention of Apollos receiving only John the Baptist's baptism is important. Aquila and Priscilla both noted that the Holy Spirit was absent in Apollos preaching. Privately, they instructed Apollos. This could not have been an easy meeting. Apollos had already received great respect. It isn't easy to be corrected when everyone is praising you. However, we know something of Apollos' spirit when he receives their message and is baptized with the Holy Spirit. Until that time, Apollos was God's child and used by God. However, so much of his teaching and preaching were from the head. However, the spiritual dimension seemed to be missing. The reception of the Spirit's baptism enlivened a facet of Apollos that made him one of the greatest of leaders in the Early Church.

Summation

God's sovereignty

From the beginning of this lesson, we can sense the importance of realizing God's sovereignty in life. God has chosen Paul; though not a perfect man, a perfect choice. Paul was steeped in Jewish law and the reality of life after death. He was a Pharisee. He had also been trained to be a

tentmaker. He had everything he needed to become the Apostle of apostles. Paul needed people like Aquila and Priscilla. This was a devoted, passionate couple with gifts and graces that complemented Paul's ministry. They believed in Christ and each other. Their gifts and graces contributed to the Kingdom of God. They contributed in every way, and I believe especially regarding the area of nurture. Their taking Apollos aside, with great sensitivity, and sharing with the need of the Holy Spirit, certainly reveals that tender heart both possessed.

Apollos was also a great example of God's sovereign will. Paul also needed someone with a clear message and the ability to proclaim that message in the growing Gentile church.

The Church's Refinement

It is important to realize Paul was a man in process. We often forget his walk with Christ refined his own life. He grew in understanding and wisdom, and he deepened in trust. Near the end of Paul's life, we can hear the utter serenity and contentment of Paul. He knew from where he had come, and where he was going.

The Church likewise has been in process. We have come through prosecution, turmoil, heresy, and numerous other obstacles. But she is still here! Time changes her shape and methodology, but she stands on the same Gospel that gave her life. God has reared leaders for his Church to sustain her, enrich her, and lead her into the day of God's Kingdom.

Questions

When you hear of "the sovereignty of God," of what do you think? How do you relate your life to being part of God's sovereign will? Do you believe that we today know the powerful refinement through which our Church has passed? Do we see ourselves and the Body of Christ still being refined? How? Can you name the people God raised up in your life that greatly contributed to your faith? What made them different? Can you recognize those God has entrusted to your care? Can you understand how God is using you for that purpose? Leaders come and go; what and who remain the same through the ages? Does the Church engage in ministries that proclaim what is eternal in life?

Prayer

Almighty God, we have heard the Gospel, we have believed, and we trust. Use our gifts and graces, received through the Spirit, to contribute to the reality of your Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Thank you for bringing us into your holy Church. We stand in that great line of witnesses and pray that we might be used to draw others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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



Called to Serve

Winter Quarter: Call in the New Testament

Unit 3: The Call of Women

Sunday school lesson for the week of Feb. 28, 2021

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Background Scripture: Acts 16:11-15, 40; I Corinthians 1:26-30

Key Verse: “When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us into her home. ‘If you consider me as a believer in the Lord,’ she said, ‘come and stay at my house.’ And she persuaded us.” Acts 16:15

Introduction

Acts is the second volume of Luke’s contribution to the New Testament. This book records the ascension of Jesus, the birth of his Church, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the spreading of the Gospel. It is structured according to Acts 1:1 in which Luke claims that in his Gospel he had recorded all that Jesus “began” to do and teach, rather than all Jesus “did.” Jesus was still alive in the world, ministering through his Church and the believers. Secondly, in Acts 1:8 Luke records how and where the Gospel will travel. The proclamation begins in Jerusalem then moves to Judea; from there, it moves into Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. Judea was the remnant of Israel that exists in the southern part of the once united nation. Samaria is the area just north of Judea. It represents the northern remnant of Israelites. The remainder of Acts is structured exactly in this order. In our lesson, the Gospel has moved beyond both Judea and Samaria. It is now being shared in Mesopotamia. Acts records that this movement of the Gospel occurred through the life of Paul and his followers. Paul was great at recognizing and training leaders in the Church. He left them to care and nurture for the new congregations as he moved from place to place preaching and teaching Christ.

Our lesson is concerned with Paul encountering Lydia.

Acts is the one historical book of the New Testament. Why aren’t the Gospels historical? Does the fact that they are not historical mean they are not sacred and true?

(It will help to understand the difference between a historical document and a proclamation, experience, or both)

Notable places

Troas

Troas stood at the north of Turkey’s western coast. Paul had established a church at Troas through God’s Spirit. In Troas, an event occurred that would set the course for Paul’s ensuing

ministry. At Troas, Paul had a vision of a man pleading with him to come to them in Macedonia. They needed his help. Paul immediately traveled toward Macedonia. It appears Paul had a rather loose understanding as to where he would travel. Often, he tried to visit an area of Asia only to experience obstacles. He would interpret the obstacles as guidance from the Lord. Paul yielded every aspect of his life to Christ and trained himself to truly hear the Spirit in his life. Consequently, we read of his trusting God for direction in his ministry. Paul planned to visit the churches he helped establish while trusting God to make the next place known. Paul's vision was his guidance for his next place.

According to Paul's experience, should we plan for the future or simply wait for an answer? What do you think it means to "walk through the doors that open for us?" Could we say that Paul's missionary activity was a blend of human and divine experience? In what way?

Philippi

This city stood in eastern Macedonia. The city had greatly prospered since its founding. It stood as a commercial crossroad for connecting Europe and Asia. It was a Greek city of the Roman Empire. There was no synagogue. Founding a synagogue required 10 Jewish men. Thus, there was only a very small population of Jews. A church founded in Philippi would become instrumental in spreading the Gospel throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Philippi was the city where the first church would be founded in Europe.

The city was rich in gold and silver. Thus, it was an area very attractive to the ever-expanding Roman Empire. As the Golden Rule of the World claims, "He who has the gold makes the rules." Alexander the Great used the wealth of Philippi to help finance his army.

How and where does one start in establishing a church in a place like Philippi? There were few Jews, no synagogue, and therefore little knowledge of the Old Testament and Judaism. There were the common Roman and Greek gods in large cities. Consequently, there were many aching, longing hearts. Paul would speak to "blank slates." The New Testament had not yet formed and there was little knowledge of the Old Testament. Yet, Paul was well-equipped. He had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament and Mosaic Law. He had a personal testimony that gave him an aura of authenticity. And, he had been taught the Gospel. His preaching and teaching alone, anointed by God's Spirit, would transform the world!

The church in Philippi began on a Shabbat. In Acts 16:13, a group of women were praying at the riverside. Here they customarily offered their prayers to their gods. Lydia was one of the women.

Would we have chosen Philippi as a city to evangelize in light of its obstacles? Can you list those obstacles? What does the evangelism of Philippi teach us about the power of "word" and "The Word?" What do we learn about the power of testimony? What does the evangelism of Philippi teach us personally about our witness, and what does it teach the modern Church?

Notable people

Lydia

The church at Philippi was founded through the open heart of one woman. She was Lydia. She dealt in purple cloth, most likely a solid business in this city of the Empire. Purple was the color of royalty, and a new king was present in the lives of Paul and his companions! Lydia worshiped God. This statement is both enlightening and confusing. Since there were no Christians in the city, and very few Jews, how did one become a God-fearer? She might have heard a monotheistic Jewish person speak and sought their God. She might have been one that had a seeking heart. Where there is a seeking heart, there is an answering God. She was the embodiment of “*seek and ye shall find.*” Her heart responded to Paul’s message, she was baptized, and her open heart had its permanent, eternal resident. She became a loyal, devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

There are individuals all over the world who see God’s truth in life prior to knowing Christ. They see divine light and deeply feel the need to love. I have always loved C.S. Lewis’ “The Chronicles of Narnia.” In the last section, Lewis illustrates his belief that there are people who do not know the name of Christ, but they know the person of Christ. They are people of love. They value love, they teach love and they live love. God is love. Therefore, there is a connection. There exists a sense of mystery as to who knows the Lord and who doesn’t. If there is anything we can agree upon, it is the fact that this judgement belongs solely to God. Instead of judging, we are to live and share the Gospel in every moment of life. People will hear, they will see, and they will remember. Notice, Paul and his companions did not judge Lydia who was not yet a Christian. They did not enter into a discussion around the question, “How can you call yourself a worshiper of God if you are not a part of Judaism or in Christ?” The text simply reads that she was a worshiper of God and, through Paul and the others sharing the faith she became a child of God and a sister to Paul and his friends.

Lydia invited Paul and his followers to her home. One of those with Paul was Luke (read the personal tone of the text). Her invitation was passionate and genuine. From there, the Church would flourish and become a major center of Christianity and the spread of the Gospel.

We should not overlook the phrase, “*members of her household were baptized.*” (*Acts 16:15*) We should never equate Christian conversion with emotion. Emotion can be present and is a great blessing. We should never criticize it. However, some hear the truth, see the truth, and yield to the truth. The household usually followed the lead of the household head. We read a similar text regarding Cornelius. He and his entire household were baptized in the faith. I heard a dear fellow clergy in the Yucatan describe his experience in broken English. He said, “I believed in Jesus.” “Jesus called me to follow.” “I followed.” No thunder and lightning and no fanfare accompanied his experience. Yet, his experience was as real as any Christian. If the reader’s experience was a mostly unemotional choice, be not afraid! Your experience is as real as the one deeply moved.

The account of Lydia in Acts moves on with the statement, “After Paul and Silas came out of prison, they went to Lydia’s house, where they met with the brothers and sisters and encouraged them.” As in many places, Paul’s teaching and preaching created controversy. He was preaching of a King, a Messiah in a major city of the Roman Empire. He spoke of a possession far greater than silver and gold in a wealthy city. He spoke of one God, incarnate in Jesus Christ to a mostly polytheistic culture. As they leave jail, they return to the Church, which now is being filled with brothers and sisters. The Church wasn’t just about the saved, it was also about the community of faith. We are saved by Jesus and brought into personal relationships.

What do you think Luke meant when he wrote that Lydia was a woman who worshiped God prior to becoming a Christian? Are there people who seek God everywhere prior to becoming Christian? What are the dangers when we make the judgment as to whether a person is in Christ? The evangelism of Philippi involved both proclamation and networking. What do we mean by networking? Do we network? Does our church? What is the value of networking?

Can you name the people in your life who are directly related to your being brought into the body of Jesus, the community of faith?

Brothers and Sisters

As cited above, brothers and sisters were coming to Christ, becoming the Body of Christ. The above lesson allows us to ask, “Who did God call to establish his Church?” We learned that he used Paul and those who accompanied him. He used Lydia, a business-woman in Philippi. Now in I Cor. 1:26-30, we hear Paul teach that God chooses those we might otherwise ignore. Often God chooses the weak over the strong, the poorly educated over the learned, and the common person over nobility. In fact, God chooses whom he will! This includes us! In essence, every Christian is called. Some are called to lead, others to follow. Some teach, or preach, or care for orphans and widows, etc. (Read I Cor.12-14). The gifts and graces we possess are gifts, we did not earn them. Therefore, they are enacted most powerfully when done for the Kingdom of God. No one can boast! What we know, what we feel, and what we believe is a gift from Jesus Christ and his Holy Spirit.

The value of Christian community is beyond expression. It is difficult to fathom where we might be if not for our church. The community of faith has touched our lives from birth to the grave and beyond. No other institution on earth can make such a claim.

What moment or experience is most vividly remembered related to your being strengthened and nurtured by the Body of Christ? Have we in turn given such strength and nurture to another? When have you considered where you began in faith and where the journey has taken you? Why do you think it is important for us to assemble together? What are the blessings of belonging to the family of Jesus? Have you ever turned down a position or ministry in the church because you felt yourself unqualified? Whose qualifications did you believe you must meet? How have others helped you in finding your call in Christ, and how are you engaged in that call presently?

Prayer

All loving God, your mercy humbles us. Your grace in Jesus saves us. Your gifts and graces through your Spirit empower us. We are indeed grateful. Continue to reveal to us our holy calling in the world, that the world may know Christ, and the power of his resurrection. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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

At church but not in church

PATHWAY TO HIS PRESENCE

B.J. FUNK

A couple of years ago, our church completed a wonderful study using Rob Renfroe's book, "A Way Through the Wilderness. Growing in Faith When Life is Hard." As we watched his videos and met for discussions, the participants agreed that their wilderness periods have often been so painful they thought they would never get through them in one piece. It never felt good. It always hurt. They cried. They felt broken. Often, their lives didn't make sense. Through our journey, however, we want to get to the place where we can say, "I believe God will get me through. I don't understand, but I know He is working." It's important that we trust God, not our feelings.

Above the horizon of their pain, they eventually saw the sun filtering through their worst days, offering them a trickle of hope that better days were up ahead. Through the guidance of this book, they learned that God has a purpose for their wildernesses and that all of God's purposes are for our good and His glory. If our goal is to be like Him, to be intimately acquainted with Him, then our wildernesses, though unwelcome, are always necessary.

Those times in the wilderness have the potential of bringing forth a richer walk with our Lord. Indeed, it is often through our wildernesses that our journey with God is strengthened. We learned that our personal wilderness can come to us as a result of our own decisions, because of some decision or action by another, allowed by God to form our character, or just because of the natural flow of life. As explained in the book, God's purpose in our lives is not to make us happy but to make us more like Jesus.

Rob writes, "Expect life to be hard. Expect that you will go through a wilderness – probably several before your life is over."

Growth is hard. Growth is painful. Transforming into the image of Jesus calls for sacrifice and self-denial. Rob writes that there are no shortcuts to holiness. Your challenges will seem like giants if you focus on your limitations or think about how far you have to go to get out of your

wilderness. Instead, turn your eyes toward Jesus and discover that when you have nothing left, you have everything left. Jesus becomes your everything. Our wilderness can become a blessing as we submit in obedience and continue trusting God.

I asked if anyone would like to share a testimony about one of their own wildernesses. A member of our church stood, walked to the microphone and said, “I was in a wilderness for 52 years, from age 16 to age 68. During that time, I did not feel that God loved me. I went to church. I was at church but not in church.”

His words sank down into my soul, into the part of me that grabs a thought and can't let it go, into that part that sits down and cries over another's wounds. I felt profoundly sad that this fine man had suffered for so many years. He is now an active member of our church, a lover of Jesus. I wondered how many others could relate to his insightful statement...*at church, but not in church.*

I believe those words could identify many of our church-goers. How sad it is to think that our pews are filled with those who are sitting around us but not with us, never having opened their hearts to the dynamic change that could be theirs. They are sitting on the peripheral of a beautiful life that they will never know unless they make that choice. That would be like going to a lake, sweating and wanting to jump in, but not knowing how. You would miss out on the joy of the water because you only tiptoed around the shallow edge. Or, when our children run through a sprinkler on a hot day but only stand on the farthest spot that the water touches. Afraid to jump in and over the sprinkler, they never enjoy the full experience that could bring relief on a warm day. *At the lake but not in the lake. At the sprinkler but not in the sprinkler. At church, but not in the church.*

When our six-week study was completed, I was pleased to hear that several commented that they wanted to loan their book and notes to a friend who needed this teaching.

Opening our hearts to this message, our group could not only be *at the book*. We were definitely *in the book*. Maybe you've recently been in a wilderness. Hold on. God will meet you at your wilderness and bring you through to victory.

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



True Love

**WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN
ANNE PACKARD**

Recently, the South Georgia Conference Archives was given an unexpected gift filled with faith, hope, and love. During the month where hearts and cupids abound, it reminds me again what true love looks like and sounds like and how it is the most powerful force in the world. It reminds me again how our Lord and Savior and our very own Methodist movement is filled with this true love and shares it abundantly with all. True love, as with so many other things, is old but new again.

The gift is a series of letters written by Cassie Thompson Gardner to her youngest child, a son, who was studying at Young Harris College. Cassie was the third of seven children born to a farming family in Pinehurst. She married Emmitt Gardner on December 13, 1899, when she was 20 years old. Emmitt had studied for two years at Emory College and had just entered his ministry with the South Georgia Conference, being sent to Shiloh MECS near the mountains of Warm Springs.

Rev. Emmett Gardner was appointed to Shiloh, Cusseta, Hamilton, Reynolds, Elko, Rochelle, Perry, Leslie, East Highlands in Columbus, Ingleside in Macon, Lumber City, Reidsville, and Fort Gaines. Emmett and Cassie were known as “angels of mercy” due to their care of the unfortunate including cooking a whole dinner and taking it to the families. Emmett was also known for his building skills; he remodeled the church at Reynolds, doing much of the work himself, and built a brick church at Elko and a parsonage at Perry. While at Fort Gaines, Emmett created a Boy Scout troop, cutting down the trees and scraping the logs to build a Boy Scout hut.

But this story doesn't belong to Emmitt. It belongs to Cassie. At a time before phone calls and texts, she wrote her son often to ask if he was eating enough and to tell him her news. As I have had the privilege of reading these intimate letters, I have grown quite fond of Cassie and all she faced.

June 20, 1927

My Precious Boy,

I made pineapple and nut and raisin sandwiches and have four here now. I told your papa tonight that I wished you had them. I served tea with them.

June 27, 1927

My Precious Boy,

I have a busy week. Wednesday they are to have an all-day missionary meeting here at the church. We will have to fix 150 plates or more. I am going to fry a chicken and boil a ham. They bought the ham, though.

November 7, 1927

My Precious Boy,

Looking around the yard etc. (of a former parsonage) brought memories of the past back to me when you were all small and how I enjoyed you all. To think so quickly you all have grown up and are all away. I could hardly help but wish I had you all and you were small now. Am proud of you all though and am proud of all the privileges and opportunities you all have had and there is nothing more beautiful than a fine, Christian, young man growing and developing into noble manhood making read to fulfil his mission in life.

I had your old light suit dyed dark blue for your papa. It looks real nice. Don't know how the trousers will look on him. Imagine I will have to let them out in the waist. They are way behind with his salary. Am afraid they are not going to pay out. Your papa is behind with his conference collections, too. Don't think he will get them.

November 23, 1927

My Precious Boy,

Guess you have learned by now that we are to stay here another year. I am glad I don't have to move this fall. I don't think I could stand it. Think I would fall by the wayside. I suspect we will go next fall, though, as 2 years is about as long as a preacher stays here.

Samuel's girls' father has to move to Uvalda, a small town over near Reidsville. I know they are sick over their move. Wrightsville is a station and Uvalda is a circuit with five churches. I feel sorry for them. Don't suppose they'll have any lights, water, nor any conveniences.

I had a letter from Samuel (another son) tonight telling me not to send his (care package) until the last of the week as he had a chance to go see Mary without it costing him anything and he thought he would go so if he doesn't get it tonight, I am afraid the boys will open it and eat all he has up. I don't see any need of his going to see Mary so often. He had better stay at school and rest and take care of himself. Besides, when he goes off, it takes him 2 days or more to settle down at work. I do hope you won't fall in love while you are up there. A boy has plenty time for that by the time he is 21 or over and no boy nor girl can do their best with their school work when they are so much in love. So I want you to leave it off and apply your time and thoughts in the developing of a man. Then you can find the girl.

December 7, 1927

My Precious Boy

I will close and write more next time. Am sending you check for \$6.00 to buy books, etc. Study hard and be a good boy. Mama loves her dear sweet boys. Yes, mama knows Samuel is going to see Mary too often and I wrote him last week and told him a few things.

Your devoted,

Mother

Cassie's devotion and service to her husband, her children and her Methodist community is evident throughout her writings. At a time when families moved every year or two and there may or may not have been a salary, lights, or water, her words and actions show her profound belief in God's love and redemption. Cassie is one of thousands of clergy spouses who have worked and continue to work for the advancement of God's kingdom through the Methodist movement. This is true love, and for it we are profoundly grateful.

These letters are being made into an exhibit which will be on display in the Strickland Wing of the Moore Methodist Museum with the other stories of the South Georgia Conference Archives. The new exhibit will be dedicated to all of the clergy spouses who have faced hardships with grace and faith to fulfill the ministry of the Methodist movement, remembering most especially Emmie Johnson, a dear friend to the Ministry of Memory and a true angel of mercy. The Museum staff is grateful to Lane Gardner Camp, *Memphis Conference Director of Communications and clergy spouse*, for sharing Cassie's story with us.

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 - February 2021

- 2/01 – Rodney Body: 1205 North Palm Dr.; Plant City, FL 33563
- 2/02 – Paul Buckhiester: 3832 Chris Dr.; Columbus, GA 31909
- 2/03 – Eugene Barlow: 605 Victoria Circle; Warner Robins, GA 31088
- 2/03 – David Barton: PO Box 497; Talbotton, GA 31827
- 2/04 – John Bagwell: 5300 Zebulon Rd., Apt. 2226; Macon, GA 31210
- 2/04 – Bob Dixon: 1808 E. Washington St.; Thomasville, GA 31792
- 2/06 – Robert Buckles: 5429 Sirius Dr.; Wilmington, NC 28405
- 2/06 – Robert McDaniel: 1065 Dr. Deryl Hart Rd.; Buena Vista, GA 31803
- 2/07 – Bill Brown: 109 Woodlawn Dr.; Statesboro, GA 30458
- 2/09 – John O'Connor: 247 Jim Nash Ct. NW; Lilburn, GA 30047
- 2/10 – Paul Best: PO Box 747; Social Circle, GA 30025
- 2/10 – Bill Reinheld: 102 Arthur J. Moore Dr.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
- 2/10 – Tommy Veal: 340 Pine Hill Rd.; Dublin, GA 31021
- 2/11 – Robert Poston: 105 Hawk Hammock Dr.; Springfield, GA 31329
- 2/14 – Jim Jensen: 4323 15th St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522

2/15 – Mark Carter: 1741 Stevens Rd.; Ellaville, GA 31806
2/16 – Bill Lee: 480 Bostwick Circle; Vidalia, GA 30474
2/16 – David Griffin: 1561 Griffin Rd.; Baxley, GA 31513
2/18 – Don Black: 13553 Highway 171 N; Avera, GA 30803-5234
2/19 – Dennis Lanning: PO Box 328; Unadilla, GA 31091
2/19 – Don Proctor: 106 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
2/20 – C.G. Haugabook, Jr.: 215 Walters St.; Plains, GA 31780
2/20 – Lee Pulliam: 16702 Ollifftown; Metter, GA 30439
2/21 – Jim Duvall: 10502 Regal View Loop; Clermont, FL 34711
2/22 – Wayne DeFore: 107 Chestnut St.; Bloomingdale, GA 31302
2/25 – Wesley Jones: 1509 Johnson Rd.; Macon, GA 31220-5218
2/27 – Jim Osborn: 310 Slash Pine Dr.; Broxton, GA 31519
2/27 – Donald Sparks: PO Box 407; Portal, GA 30450

OBITUARIES

Rev. Matthew “Matt” J. Hearn

The Reverend Matthew “Matt” Jerry Hearn, 47, of Pooler, Georgia and husband of Lori Ann Rawling Hearn, died Saturday morning, January 30, 2021, at his home with his wife of almost 23 years at his side.

Born in Lexington, Kentucky, he was a son of Stephen Mark Hearn and Gail Cosby Westberg. Matt earned his undergraduate degree from Asbury University and his Master of Divinity degree from Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky. He was a former Youth Director at Wauchula United Methodist Church in Wauchula, Florida and later served as the Bible teacher at Calvary Christian School and as Youth Director at Pierce Chapel United Methodist Church in Columbus, Georgia. Matt was a former Associate Pastor at White Bluff United Methodist Church in Savannah and was the Founding and Senior Pastor at Gateway Church. He was known for his quick wit, for always being direct, and his ability to make people smile. Matt will be remembered most for his love of telling people about Jesus and his love for his family and his friends. He enjoyed traveling, being competitive in sports, and the UGA Bulldogs.

He was preceded in death by his grandmothers, Joan Cosby and Marie Hearn, and his father-in-law, James Harvey Rawling.

Survivors include his wife, Lori Ann Rawling Hearn; one daughter, Emma Caroline Hearn; one son, Jackson "Jack" Price Hearn; his mother, Gail Cosby Westberg; his father, Stephen Mark Hearn and his wife, Ginger; two sisters, Heather Kirkbride and her husband, Scott, and Courtney Hearn; three brothers, Rich Hearn and his wife, Melissa, Steve Hearn and his wife, Taryn, and J. D. Hearn; his mother-in-law, Janet Rawling; his sister-in-law, Tracey Kennedy and her husband, Mike, and nieces and nephews.

A memorial service at Indian Springs Holiness Camp will be held in the spring at a time and date to be announced.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorials to Gateway Church – 1702 Pine Barren Road, Bloomingdale, Georgia 31302-9318 or Indian Springs Holiness Camp – c/o Post Office Box 1742, Mableton, Georgia 30126-1012.

Please share your thoughts about Matt and his life at www.gamblefuneralservice.com.

Scripture Readings – Feb. 16

February 17

Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Psalms 51:1-17 (UMH 785)

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

February 21

First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 9:8-17

Psalms 25:1-10 (UMH 756)

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:9-15

February 28

Second Sunday in Lent

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

Psalms 22:23-31 (UMH 752)

Romans 4:13-25

Mark 8:31-38

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 2/16/2021 edition

Alive Together at the Table with Bishop Bryan, Zoom – Feb. 16

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 conversations will begin at noon and 5:30 p.m. and each will last approximately one hour. 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, Perry - Feb. 19-20

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 \$40. (Note: Basic Lay Speaking class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) The class will be held Friday, Feb. 19 from 6:30 until 9 p.m. and Saturday, Feb. 20 from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. at Crossroads UMC in Perry. Contact Anne Bosarge for more information.

anne@thechapelministries.com.

Volunteers In Mission Awareness Sunday – Feb. 21

United Methodist Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM) exists to promote, encourage, and enable Christians to exemplify "Christian Love In Action" through short-term mission service in the United States and abroad. UMVIM provides opportunities for service by developing and nurturing relationships with domestic and international leaders. They continually nurture their contacts with these leaders to respond to the needs of local communities and to provide comprehensive project information. You can help support the work of UMVIM in the South Georgia Conference by giving an offering to support this vital ministry on this special Sunday.

Alive Together at the Table with Bishop Bryan, Zoom – Feb. 23

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 conversations will begin at noon and will last approximately one hour. 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](#)

Basic Lay Servant Ministries Training, Douglas – Feb. 26-27

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 Douglas First UMC. 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.

Kingdom Builders Promotion Sunday – Feb. 28

You are blessed to be a blessing. We have been blessed to travel roads that were paved by those that went before us. Our lives have been changed by the investments they made. Now the torch has been passed to us to make the investments that will pave the road for the generation that will follow us. In 1962 the Kingdom Builders Club was started to change lives by funding new

ministries and new congregations. Several of the largest congregations in South Georgia were started with funds from Kingdom Builders. In fact, the #1 and the #2 fastest growing United Methodist Congregations in the U.S. over the past 10 years are both in our conference and you started them. Way to go South Georgia! **PRAYER IS ESSENTIAL!** The Kingdom Builders Club is about far more than starting churches. It is about CHANGING LIVES! We have published a new daily devotional book entitled “Pray for 5.” This 40-day devotional is a tangible tool to help you and your friends change the lives of your family and friends. To obtain copies for all the people in your congregation simply ask your District Superintendent. Our hope is that this daily devotional book will ignite a movement of prayer that unlocks a wave of relational evangelism that helps new people come to know Jesus like we have. **Funding is important.** God sends people to congregations who are ready to minister to them. We need to be starting new ministries to connect with these new people. To reach people no one is reaching, we must start doing things no one is doing, which requires funding. Pray for your friends AND become a Kingdom Builder by making a financial investment today to the Kingdom Builders Advanced Special. [Click here to download a Kingdom Builder support form.](#)