

## **SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – JULY 20 EDITION**

### **South Georgia UMs resume mission trips**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

In March 2020, one day before 18 Valdosta State University Wesley Foundation students were to board a plane to fly to Jamaica, their Spring Break mission trip was abruptly cancelled.

More than a year later, with a lot of planning and tests and protocols in place, 15 of the 18 original team members gratefully stepped off a plane in Jamaica.

In Seville Heights in St. Ann's Bay, Jamaica May 22 to May 28, they built a home, served others, and forged lasting friendships, said Rev. CJ Harp, director of the Wesley Foundation.

And while they had to make some adjustments, the team had a wonderful time and was able to and accomplish their mission.

“We had a great experience in Jamaica,” Rev. Harp said. “We were ready to be there and the Jamaicans were delighted to see us.”

Postponed for a year or more because of the global coronavirus pandemic, mission trips seem to be back in full (or sometimes slightly altered) swing for several South Georgia United Methodist congregations.

Service is a vital part of The Porch's discipleship efforts. After cancelling last year's youth mission trip, a group of 34 high school students and eight adults recently returned from a trip to New Orleans.

“We decided it was time for us to get back to serving and doing what we love to do which is sharing the gospel and meeting needs,” said Justin Crenshaw, The Porch's student and worship pastor.

After serving in Boston in 2018 and 2019, New Orleans was chosen after a lot of research and prayer. Much of Boston is still shut down and many churches aren't meeting in person, Crenshaw said, but New Orleans' mandates seemed similar to Georgia's.

“We feel very compelled, as a youth group, to go and serve somewhere,” said Crenshaw. “Missions work is very important to us. We know what a mission trip can do in the life of a teenager; we've seen it. So whatever precautions we need to take we'll take them to be able to go and have this experience.”

Working with 12Two Missions, The Porch's mission team served at a New Orleans' food bank and clothing ministry, evangelized in the streets and the French Quarter, and hosted a couple of block parties for local children.

Necessary precautions were put in place, Crenshaw said: team members wore masks when required and distanced from non-team members. Otherwise, he said, things felt pretty normal and the inconveniences were minor compared to the benefits.

“I think they (mission trips) are critical because when you’re serving, you’re getting outside of yourself. There’s nowhere to hide. You’re confronted w/hard situations – poverty, homelessness, pain, and hard stuff,” Crenshaw said. “One week serving others is worth 1,000 sermons. You’re putting feet to the gospel. You’re teaching kids how to be the hands and feet of Christ, to be evangelists in this world, to be soul winners in this world, to be people who share and live out the gospel in this world. It doesn’t really get any better than that. It’s at the heart of who we are and what we do.”

Things were “very different” for a group of South Georgia United Methodists who recently traveled to Subirana, Honduras.

While this was their fourth trip to the area, COVID made this experience unlike previous trips.

“It was really difficult, especially when making home visits and hosting VBS, because we couldn’t hug the kids or play with them quite like we have in the past,” said Katie Cawthon, a member of the team and Perry United Methodist Church’s mission coordinator.

While traveling and serving, the team wore face masks, sanitized and washed their hands frequently, and practiced social distancing from those not on the team. Negative COVID tests were required before traveling, and most of the team had been vaccinated.

The team hosted a medical clinic with a Honduran doctor and pharmacist. In four and a half days, they saw more than 400 patients. They also did some construction work, hosted a VBS, and delivered blessing bags to families in the community.

Even though last year’s trip was cancelled and this year’s experience was impacted by COVID restrictions, the team was still able to accomplish their purpose. They saw God at work as they shared the love of Jesus, continued to build relationships, and worshiped with friends in Subirana.

“God’s presence was felt strongly, and He moved through prayers,” Cawthon said.

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## **Focus on friendship, outreach help Brunswick’s Emanuel UMC grow**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

A couple of weeks ago, Rev. Ken Sharpe stopped in Winn-Dixie to buy cheese straws. As he searched the aisles, a woman helped him look for the elusive snack. They struck up a conversation and the two ended up chatting for an hour. He never found the cheese straws, but he did invite his helpful new friend to church. She showed up the next Sunday, homemade cheese straws in hand.

This isn’t an unusual story for Rev. Sharpe, pastor of Brunswick’s Emanuel United Methodist Church. A proponent of friendship evangelism, Rev. Sharpe has a habit of starting conversations and making friends wherever he goes.

“I’m what I call ‘old school.’ I get out and visit all the time,” he said. “I talk to anybody and everybody, even if I’m at the grocery store. I just go up to people and start conversations. At restaurants, at grocery stores, wherever I am, anywhere in the community.”

And the Emanuel UMC congregation has started to follow his lead. When Rev. Sharpe moved to the church in June 2020, worship services were averaging about 30 people. A few weeks ago, 60 people gathered for Sunday’s worship service.

[Discipleship Ministries](#) recently recognized the congregation for their discipleship efforts by awarding them with the [2021 One Matters Award](#). It recognizes churches with a renewed focus on discipleship through professions of faith, baptisms, and growth.

“Rev Ken Sharpe leads by example in that evangelism and inviting others to Emanuel is a part of his everyday interactions,” said Director of Connectional Ministries Allison Lindsey, who submitted the One Matters Award nomination. “It has been contagious within his congregation, and this church is accomplishing amazing things. God is blessing their efforts and multiplying their impact. I had the pleasure of [interviewing Rev Sharpe](#) and was truly inspired by his passion.”

Nine adults have joined the church in the past year; new visitors show up nearly every Sunday morning; the congregation has paid off debt; increased its savings; and paid cash for a new zero-turn riding lawn mower, a new piano, and a couple of remodeling projects.

“This church really has a heart to want to reach out to people and minister to people,” Rev. Sharpe said. “I like people, they like people, and they’re open to anyone who wants to visit ... it’s just a great church.”

Situated not far from bustling Interstate 95 and scores of subdivisions, Rev. Sharpe said the congregation is open to doing whatever is needed to reach more people for Christ.

A Sunday afternoon Spanish ministry has been added and plans for an English as a Second Language (ESL) class are being considered. Eddie Tanon, who moved to the area last October from Kansas City, Mo., leads the Spanish ministry.

“This church is moving, it’s going forward,” said Tanon, who is bilingual.

The focus on discipleship comes from the church’s leadership and has spread like wildfire among the congregation, he said.

“The whole entire church is strengthened by following the Spirit where it leads.”

Tanon is one of four lay members who helps Rev. Sharpe lead and teach the congregation. Lay Leader Randy Watson teaches, preaches, visits congregants, and is studying to become a pastor. Chip Woodruff, a retired Southern Baptist pastor, preaches and teaches Sunday school. Eric Pittman teaches Sunday school and preaches the Sunday night service.

“God is sending a lot of people here to help build this little church up,” Rev. Sharpe said.

Rev. Sharpe says what Emanuel UMC is doing isn’t difficult. It’s simply the way he’s lived for some 40 years.

“I’ve tried all kinds of programs and visitations nights, but it just seems like making it a natural thing is best. We’re not out knocking on doors. We’re just making it a lifestyle of getting to know people and investing our lives in theirs,” he said.

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### **SEJ Called Session set for Wednesday; live stream link now available**

The College of Bishops of the Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church, in accordance with ¶521 of the 2016 Book of Discipline, will meet for a special session of the jurisdictional conference on July 21, 2021. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m. EST and will be held virtually.

Delegates have been sent a link and a voter ID to participate in the Conference. Others who want to watch the special session can do so by going to [www.sejumc.org](http://www.sejumc.org) and clicking the link on the home page. The Conference is expected to last about two hours.

The purpose of the special session is to vote on a proposed resolution to unite the Memphis Annual Conference and the Tennessee Annual Conference into the Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference.

Delegates will also receive a report from the Southeastern Jurisdiction on the pandemic response in the jurisdiction, the work of anti-racism across the jurisdiction, and the work of the jurisdiction moving forward into the next 18 months.

The 2020 SEJ Conference, originally scheduled for July 15-17, 2020, at Lake Junaluska, NC, has been postponed due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

The College of Bishops encourages all churches of the Southeastern Jurisdiction to be in prayer for the Church and the world during these challenging times.

15 Annual Conferences comprise the Southeastern Jurisdiction: Alabama-West Florida, Florida, Holston, Kentucky, Memphis, Mississippi, North Alabama, North Carolina, North Georgia, Red Bird Missionary, South Carolina, South Georgia, Tennessee, Virginia, and Western North Carolina.

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### **Epworth By The Sea will reopen to the public this fall**

Epworth By The Sea, which has been closed to the public since Sept. 22, 2020, plans to reopen to the public in late fall 2021.

When Epworth By The Sea reopens, guests are invited to experience Epworth’s peace, connection, and beauty, said Executive Vice President Rev. Wayne Racz. The campus has undergone significant improvements including: cabins enlarged and upgraded with central heat and air, larger bathrooms, and tankless gas water heaters; lodge room interiors remodeled and updated; and construction of a picnic pavilion and amphitheater under the oaks will begin this fall. Food service has also expanded and improved.

“Epworth is eager to resume normal activities and welcome guests back,” Rev. Racz said. “You have been missed along with the ministry that happens. We have missed our churches, children and youth groups, camps, law enforcement, military, families and individual guests. We yearn to see our campus full of guests and activities once again.”

[Video about Epworth reopening](#) | [Flyer about Epworth reopening](#)

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## Apply today for Renfro Trust Grant

Connectional Ministries is accepting applications for the Southeastern Jurisdiction Renfro Trust Grant. This grant is a brick and mortar grant specifically for small, rural churches. Guidelines, requirements and applications can be found [here](#). Completed applications must be submitted to Outreach Chair Susan Hughes at [susanjhughes17@gmail.com](mailto:susanjhughes17@gmail.com). The deadline for completed applications to be submitted is Sunday, August 22, 2021.

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## The BEST Yes

### OUR CONNECTION MATTERS ALLISON LINDSEY

*“A man’s heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps” Proverbs 16:9*

Did you know that research estimates the average adult makes 35,000 choices each day? When we are faced with two choices in which one is good and the other bad, the decision can be easy or clear cut. But it’s never easy to decide between things that are all good choices; to discern what is good, what is better, and then to choose the “best yes.”

As I reflect on my ministry journey and the doors God has opened for me to serve, I have seen him directing my steps - many times when I had no plan as Proverbs 16:9 describes - and can think of several “best yes-es:”

- Saying yes to Rev. Sam Rogers to be the Pastoral Assistant for Evangelism at Tifton FUMC in 2000 (a.k.a. “The Welcome Wagon”), which led to
- Saying yes to Rev. Jim McIlrath to build a children’s ministry program at Douglas FUMC after moving there in 2002, which led to

- Saying yes to Suzanne Akins to emcee a Conference Confirmation Retreat, which led to
- Saying yes to Rev. Adam Ricker when asked to join the Conference Nurture Team in 2005 and be involved in the Conference’s programming and resourcing, which led to
- Saying yes in 2012 to Dr. Brad Brady when asked to join the Connectional Ministries staff as an Associate Director, which led to
- Saying yes to serve as a Director for the General Board of Global Ministries in 2012 and the way in which the global denomination and the impact of The UMC connection became even more real to me, which led to
- Saying yes in 2020 to Bishop Bryan when asked to serve as the Director of Connectional Ministries and being the first lay person to fill this role.

All of these “yes-es” led me to the many invitations to be in the local churches of all shapes and sizes here in South Georgia and to so many amazing friendships built throughout the years with clergy and laity in South Georgia and beyond.

This week, I shared with our conference leadership that I will be transitioning out of my role as Director of Connectional Ministries to stay home and keep our first grandson, Mac, as our daughter returns to teaching. This decision between two incredible choices - to continue to serve in a ministry role I love or stay home to be a full-time “Sunny” - came about rather quickly and was packed with prayer, discernment, excitement and sacrifice, but is one my husband, Griff, and I strongly feel at this time to be our “best yes.” What a gift this next chapter will be for our family!

However, in the midst of the excitement comes mixed emotions. I will miss being a part of such an awesome conference staff that serves with passion, excellence, and love for Jesus as well as a love for our churches, clergy, and laity. It has been an honor and joy to serve our Annual Conference and to have been given so many opportunities over the past nine years. Thank you, South Georgia, for proving to me over and over again that “Our Connection Matters!”

*Allison Lindsey is the director of Connectional Ministries. She has a passion for the local church and its people. Contact her at [allison@sgaumc.com](mailto:allison@sgaumc.com).*

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## **Peace with God**

### **Summer Quarter: Confident Hope**

#### **Unit 2: Faith and Salvation**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of July 25, 2021**

**By Dr. Jay Harris**

## **Lesson Scripture: Romans 5:1-11**

### **The Peace for Which Our Hearts Long**

One of the most apt metaphors for the human condition, in my opinion, is the metaphor of the God-shaped hole. Once I heard of this metaphor, it made so much sense to me. I did a quick online search recently and discovered it is attributed to Blaise Pascal. He wrote, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing, but only by God the Creator, made known through Jesus Christ.” Since the hole in our heart is God-shaped, only God can completely fill this hole. We may, and often do, try to fill this vacuum with something else, but nothing will fill this aching or longing except for God’s own self. When this hole in our hearts is truly filled, it means that we have found peace with God. Finding peace with God satisfies the desperate longing in our hearts. Notice that with this peace two actions are happening at the same time: one is relational (our relationship with God) and one is internal (a change in our heart).

You will notice that today’s lesson builds on the two Sunday School lessons that have preceded it. You will build on what we learned about the power of the gospel: the amazing power unleashed when Jesus Christ became a willing sacrifice of atonement for the sins of humankind on the cross, and his victory over sin and death when he was raised from the dead. You will build on what we learned about the righteousness that comes by faith, not by works, resulting in God’s own righteousness being credited to us, not because of what we have done, but because of what Jesus Christ has done for us. So, in today’s lesson, look for these building blocks to be put together to help us learn how we find peace with God and how it results in our transformation.

The structure of our scripture passage seems to follow a progression: 1) it tells us what we have, 2) it tells what it does, and 3) it tells how we got it and what this all means.

### **What We Have – Peace with God**

***“Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand;”***

The fifth chapter of Romans begins with a big “therefore – since.” This “therefore – since” carries a heavy load, because it reveals the implications of all that has been said in the first four chapters of Romans. Since we are *justified*, made right with God, and since this has come about through *faith* and not by our works, we are able to obtain that for which our hearts have always longed – *peace with God*. We have gained this peace through the loving, sacrificial mission of our *Lord Jesus Christ*. Jesus is the one through whom we have obtained *grace* – the unearned, undeserved favor of God.

The grace that we have obtained through Jesus is a gift upon which we stand. You could say that grace is our new foundation, or starting point, from which we live life. When we talk about

standing on something, it is an expression of confidence. Standing upon this grace, we have peace in our hearts *and* peace between ourselves and God. There is no longer this conflict that has existed with our Maker that we have felt in our hearts, long before we even knew what it was we were feeling, or why we felt it. Now that we have obtained this peace with God, a big question we can ask is, “What does this peace do?”

### **What This Peace Does**

***“And we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.”***

The short answer is that peace with God gives us a confident hope. Peace with God opens the door to imagine a future in which we share the glory of God. We want to boast about it and shout it from the rooftop, but not because it came from us. It came from God. Romans 3:23 describes our human condition before Christ: “For all have sinned and *fallen short of the glory of God.*” Yet, through our faith in Christ, we have the hope of *sharing the glory of God.*

**“And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.”**

Once we have discovered peace with God, it does not mean that all of our troubles have gone away. We still have challenges, struggles, habits, hang-ups, hurts, and sufferings. However, because of the peace that we have through Christ, these sufferings do not have the last word. They become the starting point for our own redemptive story. The peace we have with God means that when we suffer trials, our faith does not have to suffer, and our peace does not have to suffer. It is natural to feel that our faith is being tested, but we have the opportunity to show that our faith can withstand the testing. We can prove our ability to endure. And with this endurance, we know that we are building spiritual muscles. We are developing virtues. We are building character. We are learning more about ourselves and becoming more in the process. As we emerge from suffering, feeling stronger than we were before, we can also feel ourselves growing more confident and more hopeful. This hope is not going to eventually disappoint us, because it is altogether different than wishful thinking. This hope is built upon Jesus Christ and the peace we have with God through Christ.

Upon the foundation of our peace with God, not only are we building endurance, character, and hope through suffering, we are experiencing the greatest gift of all: God’s love is being poured into our hearts. We do not feel alone in the universe while we suffer. We feel the opposite of alone. Through the Holy Spirit given to us, we know God to be our companion in our circumstances. Through the Holy Spirit living in us and communing with our spirit, God manifests his presence in our suffering. God’s love becomes less and less of an abstract concept. We experience God’s love being manifested in specific ways as God works in and through our difficulties. For some, God’s love is encouraging. For others, God’s love is healing, or restoring,

or strengthening. For some, God's love fills what has been left unfulfilled by a less than loving parent or spouse. For some, God's love fills the lack of love individuals have had for themselves all of their lives. You get the picture: God's love being poured into our hearts takes many forms not only from individual to individual, but also at different stages in our own lives.

### **How Peace Is Made with God**

Now that we understand more about the peace we have with God and what it does in our lives, it's as if Paul feels the need to say even more about *how* we got this peace and *what it means*. You could say that Paul has already spent the first four chapters of his letter to the Romans telling us about how we get this peace, but he wants to put a finer point on something to make sure we get something crystal clear.

**“For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person – though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.”**

The key thought here is that “God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us.” Christ died for the whole human race, not when it was at its best, but when it was at its worst. Jesus on the cross showed the inhumanity of the human race against one of its own: whether it was the jealousy of the religious leaders, the callousness of the Romans, the mob mentality of the crowd, or the betrayal of those who had claimed to be his followers. Not only was Jesus innocent of the charges made against him, he was also sinless in all respects, selfless, and all about doing good and caring for the least, last, and lost.

When Jesus said from the cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” Jesus not only had in mind everyone who had a role in his death, but the whole human race. No matter how many years out from his crucifixion we happened to have been born, Jesus had us in mind. Christ died for us not when we were good enough, or when we measured up, or when we earned it, or when we deserved it. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That proves God love for us. It proves and it demonstrates that God's love is unconditional.

Think about the messages we have heard in life telling us to measure up. Think about people who have withheld their approval – people whose opinion mattered to us. Think about people who seemed to dole out their affection only for times when it was deemed we deserved it. Think about people who reserved a mood for us designed to let us know we had disappointed them, and they punished us with that mood for an extended time. Some have had parents who showed too little affection or who were not generous with words of affirmation. Why do parents, other authority figures, teachers, and friends withhold love, affirmation or approval, or kindness from us? They do so, thinking we will eventually get the message and measure up or learn our lesson. Of course, I have been focusing on being on the receiving end. What about our participation in

this method of shaping other humans? Does using this kind of leverage work? We often think it does, but a lifetime of not being enough leaves us wired to fail.

This is the point: if we see God as one who withholds his love until we are good enough, we find ourselves walking away from God, not toward God. God, however, is revealed as one who loves us unconditionally, into whose loving presence we are drawn. The closer our conscious contact is with God, the more God's love is able to heal us and transform us.

**“Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God.”**

Christ's death on the cross was the perfect sacrifice for sin and therefore satisfied the wrath of God that sin warrants because of sin's death-dealing nature. Think about this: God would be less than loving toward us if God swept sin under the rug. God would be less than caring if the destructive effect of sin on humans did not rouse his wrath. When we, by faith, have been justified by his blood, Christ's sacrifice, we are saved from the wrath of God. We have peace with God. God is One into whose loving presence we are drawn.

**“For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.”**

The words “peace” and “reconciliation” go hand in hand. Through Christ, conflict and wrath have been replaced by reconciliation, resulting in peace with God and peace in our hearts. From this peace flows the healing needed to make our wounded heart whole. We can pray, “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,” because a heart that has received unconditional love is full enough to offer forgiveness to others. When we forgive others, we know that we are setting that person free, and we are setting ourselves free. Every time we forgive others, we comprehend that much more the unconditional love that God has for us.

Notice in Paul's words, that when we are reconciled with God through Christ, we are in a very real sense able to appropriate the power of the cross and the power of the empty tomb. We're reconciled to God through the death of his Son, so how much more will we be saved through Christ's life – his resurrection life. As the unconditional love of God makes its way into our lives, we are given the confidence to die daily with Christ, die to self, and die to sin so that we can be raised to new life by the power of the risen Christ.

There is so much in our scripture lesson to incorporate into our lives: finding peace with God, the role suffering plays in the development of character, the love of God being poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, the nature of God's unconditional love, reconciliation with God, and the need to receive God's unconditional love into places where we have been wounded.

Which of these themes are calling out to you to embrace? What would embracing them look like in your life? What testimony can you imagine sharing if you embraced one or more of these themes?

### **Prayer**

God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, You proved your love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Through Your unconditional and reconciling love, grant us the peace for which our heart longs, that we may have the confident hope to persevere and grow through suffering, to receive the healing you offer, and to embrace the power to love as You love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever, Amen.

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## **Salvation Available For All**

**Summer Quarter: Confident Hope**

**Unit 2: Faith and Salvation**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of August 1, 2021**

**By Dr. Jay Harris**

**Lesson Scripture: Romans 10:5-17**

### **Propagating the Faith**

The second unit this quarter, which culminates with this lesson, has been devoted to Faith and Salvation. One of the most wonderful events to witness is the Christian faith taking root in a person's life – saving faith that results in the transformation of that person's life. This lesson talks about how the faith takes root in a person's life and also how faith is transmitted from person to person. Paul had the matchless joy of seeing the faith being propagated among whole communities of people. "Propagating" is a term used in farming or gardening, but it can also be applied to the Christian faith. Pay attention to Paul's intense focus on the propagation or transmission of the faith in our scripture.

### **The Word of Faith Is Nearer Than You Think**

Would you agree that generally we can and often do make things harder than they need to be? There are many areas where this can be true. It is also true that we can make things harder than they need to be when it comes to God saving us. Paul addresses this in our scripture.

**“Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that ‘the person who does these things will live by them.’”**

We have learned already from Paul that trying to obtain God’s righteousness through living the law of Moses is futile, because we will fail. To say that a righteousness that comes from the law is a distant prospect is an understatement, because it is impossible – out of reach – anything but near.

Do you remember Jesus’ frustration with many of the religious leaders of his day? Jesus said about them, “They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them.” (Matthew 23:4) Jesus chastised the religious leaders for attempting to put a relationship with God out of reach for the masses of common people. In contrast, Jesus said, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-29) Jesus was saying to ordinary people that a vital relationship with God was within reach. I think Jesus would affirm the direction Paul is going in our scripture lesson.

**“But the righteousness that comes from faith says, ‘Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).”**

When it comes to the righteousness that comes from *faith*, a relationship with God moves within reach. You don’t have to say in your heart that I have to work my way to heaven to bring Christ down or dig my way down to the abyss to bring Christ up from the dead. The righteousness that comes from faith, the journey of faith, is not an impossibly long journey. It has been said that the journey of faith is 18 inches – the distance from your head to your heart.

**“But what does it say?**

**“The word is near you,  
on your lips and in your heart”**

**(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim);”**

The word of faith is near you. The word of faith is on your lips and in your heart. Is the planting of the word of faith that accessible? Is it much more within reach than we may make it out to be? Paul was not being random in his choice of words. The words “lips” and “heart” were deliberately chosen.

**“because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.”**

“Confessing with your lips” is a reference to a public profession of the Christian faith. Making your profession of faith public is vitally important and necessary. You dare not, however, give mere lip service to this public profession of faith. You must also believe what you say in your heart. Notice how lips and heart are both needed and interrelated.

When you announce with your lips what you believe in your heart, you are becoming accountable to others for what you believe. When something is kept to yourself, it remains tentative in your spirit. Once you are ready to say it out loud, that which was tentative rises to a new level of confidence. You are willing and ready to go on the record with your faith. Moreover, you are stating what you believe before the body of believers. You are thereby joining the fellowship that will nurture you in the faith, hold you accountable, and give you a venue to serve.

If you are confessing with your lips that which you don’t really believe in your heart, you must ask yourself why. Were you pressured? Did you do it to conform? Did you do it to gain respectability? Did you do it to advance your standing in the community or please your boss? Did you do it to please your mother or your spouse? Did you do it because it seemed like the thing to do, but you were going through the motions?

We should consider what it is that we are confessing. We are confessing that Jesus is Lord. What is it we believe in our heart? We believe that God raised Jesus from the dead. To believe this, it follows that we also believe in the message of Christmas – that in Jesus, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. It follows that we believe the message of Good Friday – that Jesus died on the cross for our sins – sins we acknowledge in our confession and repentance. It follows that we believe in Easter – that Jesus rose on the third day.

When we put what we believe together with our confession that Jesus is Lord, we believe that Jesus ascended into heaven, and that from there he reigns as our Lord. For him to be our Lord, we believe he is also present with us through the Holy Spirit, which means we believe the message of Pentecost – that when Jesus ascended into heaven, the Holy Spirit was given to believers to form them into Christ’s Body on earth.

To confess that Jesus is Lord, you are confessing that Jesus is *your* Lord. You are confessing that you are his subject. You are accepting his reign and rule over your life. With lips and heart, you open the door to be justified, to be made right with God, and to be saved *from* your sins and saved *for* the life that the Lord Jesus Christ has for you.

**“The scripture says, ‘No one who believes in him will be put to shame.’ For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’”**

No one who believes in him will be put to shame by being refused. We have noted in previous Sunday School lessons how Jews and Greeks came to Christ in the New Testament Church from

different starting points and how they may have had different issues to work through, but those distinctions pale against the desire of the Lord to be the Lord of all, and to be generous to all who call on him.

Paul quotes Joel 2:32, when he says, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Calling on the name of the Lord is a beautiful way to characterize a person’s first turn toward the Lord. Have you ever called out for help? Have you ever called out in desperation? Have you ever called to be attended to? Have you ever called for recognition? Have you ever called out in the silence just to see if someone was there to answer you back? Do you happen to remember the very first time you prayed to God when you were by yourself, and although it felt new, it felt so natural? Do you remember calling on the name of the Lord one day, and you were ushered into an intimate experience? Because of the generosity of the Lord, saving faith is within reach.

### **Messengers of Good News**

Nevertheless, there is a great need for people to be involved in the transmission or propagation of the faith.

**“But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?”**

In order to believe, we need to hear, and to hear we need someone to share the message of Christ with us. Someone needs to proclaim, to give witness, to teach us about God revealed through Jesus Christ. We need to hear about God. We need to hear the Christian Story. We need to hear that we need a Savior, who must become our Lord. We need witnesses to tell us about the word of faith.

**“And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”**

How do people become witnesses? They are sent. Do you remember when Jesus sent witnesses into the towns and villages two by two? They were sent. Do you remember the ending of the Gospel of Matthew that we call the Great Commission? Jesus gave this commission to all his followers to go make disciples of Jesus Christ so the good news would spread to the ends of the earth. When Paul said, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” he was quoting Isaiah 52:7, which recalls the messengers of Isaiah’s day who were prized for their ability to run great distances to bring messages.

God calls all believers to give witness to their faith by sharing their faith and by sharing their church. If you feel, in the beginning, that sharing your faith is too daunting a task, then share your church. Share your church by inviting your friends to church to see what it’s all about and

to hear the gospel preached in your church. The first message they hear doesn't have to be a message about salvation. Sometimes just hearing the Bible applied to daily life is enough to make the God of salvation come alive. Be ready to answer their questions, and before you know it, you will be sharing your faith.

I can't talk about proclaimers being sent without also talking about the men and women God calls into part-time or full-time ministry. They have a special place in my heart, because I help shepherd people in the process of becoming licensed for ministry and ordained in The United Methodist Church in South Georgia. In Ephesians 4:11-12, Paul writes, "The gifts God gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the Body of Christ." In Ephesians 4:1, Paul is begging his readers "to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called." Whether you are called and sent to be an equipper of the saints for the work of ministry or you are called to be one of those saints being equipped and doing the ministry, listen for your calling and go where you are being sent.

### **What About When People Refuse to Hear?**

*"But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ."*

Some people refuse to receive the good news. God does not coerce our response. God desires that we respond freely to God's offer of salvation. God patiently waits for us to say "yes" to his offer. As we share our faith with people, it is important that we do not burn our bridges if they refuse the first time. I know of many people whose journey of faith took detours. They did not say "yes" the first time, or the next time, or the next time, but finally they said, "yes."

The Wesleyan tradition is fond of talking about "prevenient grace." This is the grace that comes before our salvation. We use this term to remember that God chose us before we choose God. (John 15:16) No one comes to the Father unless the Father draws him. (John 6:44) No one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except through the Holy Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:3)

Although God does not coerce us into the faith and we have the freedom to say "no," God does not leave us alone to come to Him on our own. God is wooing us to Himself behind the scenes. How does this happen? Prevenient grace is also called "convincing grace" or "convicting grace." God wants to be found. God desires to bring us into an awareness of Himself. The Holy Spirit working through our conscience gives us those first feelings of right and wrong and our need for God. The God-shaped hole is that realization that there will be an emptiness in our hearts without God. God also works through our families, our churches, special individuals in our lives, or special events or circumstances to bring us to God.

We believe that God extends prevenient grace to everyone, but everyone’s prevenient grace story is unique. When we say, “yes” to God’s offer of salvation, it is the culmination of a journey uniquely our own, and the start of an even more wonderful journey.

Indeed, the word of faith is nearer to people than you think. Remember that as you share the faith with others. There is nothing more exciting than to be part of a person’s journey of faith.

**Prayer**

God of the Church, You sent leaders, You sent your prophets, You sent Jesus, You sent the Holy Spirit, and You sent the apostles. Send us now to work with You in transmitting the faith to others, so that we may discover all the ways You have been cultivating the hearts of people for the seed of your word. Through Your Son, Jesus Christ, who reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, One God, now and forever, Amen.

*Dr. Jay Harris serves as the Assistant to the Bishop for Ministerial Services for the South Georgia Conference. Email him at [jharris@sgaumc.com](mailto:jharris@sgaumc.com).*

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**Get a Grip on Life**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

Get a grip! Get a life!

On just about everything it is crucial to get a proper grip. This is true whether we are climbing rocks, gripping a golf club, throwing a football or baseball, or simply shaking hands. I reiterate, on just about everything, it is crucial to get a proper grip, and this especially applies to life.

Get a grip on life! Be content – that’s where Paul offers us great wisdom. He states, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (Philippians 4:11). If anyone had reason to be angry, frustrated, and discontent it is Paul. Yet from a prison cell in Rome, Paul writes of being content. So, what does Paul say about living a contented life – getting a grip on life?

First, to be content, focus on the inner circumstances! For the most part, this goes against the grain of popular thought. Popular thought says that staying young and acquiring more and more things brings contentment. But note these things have to do with outward circumstances. In the cartoon, “Hagar the Horrible” by Chris Brown, Hagar says to his slaving wife, “I sail for England. Is there anything you want?” His anguished wife replies, “Yes...bring me back a new life!” It would seem that Mrs. Hagar is looking for new life in outward circumstances. And according to Paul, that’s the wrong tract. The real problem, however, of our discontentment, yours and mine, is not so much the strain of outward pressure as it is a spiritual inadequacy within. In reality, our problems are not too great; rather, our inner reserves of power are too low.

E. Stanley Jones was correct when he said, “Most people do not break down from overwork but from under-being.

Second, to be content, keep on actively learning! Paul says, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” Note that contentment doesn’t necessarily come freely or easily to us, it requires that we go after it, to seek it. It has to be learned. It is a process. At the outset, we need to learn where contentment is not to be found. Contentment is not to be found in complaining or comparing oneself with another or in brooding over the past or in solely focusing on tomorrow.

Then where is contentment to be found? These could also be called “Indications of Life.”

1) Contentment can be found in growth! If a plant puts forth new leaves in the spring, it’s alive, and if it doesn’t, it’s dead. Life means growth.

2) Contentment can be found in gratitude! Someone has said that God has two dwelling places. One is in heaven, and the other is in a thankful heart.

3) Contentment can be found in a conscious relationship with God! Paul can be content because he knows the “ups and downs” of life are not permanent. Consequently, he does not confer permanence on either the ups or the downs. He knows that these things, whatever they are, do not have the last word. However, Paul does confer permanence on the companionship of Jesus. He admits that he needs the strengthening presence of Jesus in order to handle both the ups and the downs of life. That’s his real secret. He states, “I can do all things in him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). Isaiah the prophet put it like this: “They who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings, like eagles, they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 43:31). Sounds like contentment to me. Contentment is learned.

*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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## **In the future**

### **WHAT’S OLD IS NEW AGAIN**

**ANNE PACKARD**

*“One of the seemingly indestructible human delusions is that of supposing that back somewhere in the past there was a time when there were large numbers of men and women who were good and true and pious and loyal to God in a sense in which only an exceptional few are good and true and pious and loyal today.” Sunday School Magazine, January 1910*

Many of the articles I write harken back to an easier time when camp meetings were the only form of social media and summer camp included tents, but not air conditioning or indoor plumbing. If only we could get back to these times when life was easier and we agreed on how to move forward. Well, it appears by this quote that I am not the only one, except this was written in 1910 and they, too, want to harken back to an easier time. What's Old Is New Again.

It is no wonder that people living in 2021 might have had enough of the present times and be a bit nervous in regard to the future. The world has experienced too much in the last few years: too much illness, too much change, too much uncertainty. The 24-hour news cycle reinforces all our doubts and fears, and carrying this news with us in our pockets wherever we go isn't helping.

We longingly remember the days of the rotary kitchen phone with only one line and an extra-long cord to get as far into the dining room as possible for privacy. The days when televisions had only five channels and no remote control but loads of cartoons on a Saturday morning make us smile with nostalgia. We wish our kids spent as much time catching lightning bugs on a summer evening as they do playing Xbox or checking Instagram. If only we could get back there, then we would feel safe.

Sadly, though, there doesn't really exist. It never did. During all of those previous times which we remember so fondly, fear and doubt, change and disagreement lived with us, too. When we look past the nostalgia and really examine the past, we find health concerns, job concerns, and societal changes. Quoting Ecclesiastes 1:9, "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun."

*"The New Testament looks forward to a time when the sovereignty of this world shall become the sovereignty of our Lord and of his Christ."* This is the end of the paragraph quoted in the beginning of this article. The New Testament looks forward and so should we. We should look forward to the time when God's love through Christ's life reigns over this world and, despite setbacks that happen occasionally, we are getting closer to this every day. The human race may be moving slowly, but we are moving closer to God. Therefore, as we were challenged in 1910, I challenge us all to look forward with the faith, hope, and love that only God can provide.

*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](mailto:director@mooremuseum.org).*

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## **Retired Clergy Birthdays – July 2021**

**7/01 – Donald Wood:** 157 Arlington Row; Macon, GA 31210

**7/01 – Kenneth West:** 4183 GA Hwy 93; Pelham, GA 31779

**7/02 – Hugh Davis:** 102 Mossland Dr.; Perry, GA 31069-9213

**7/04 – Glenn Martin:** 4418 Saddle Ridge Dr.; Columbus, GA 31907

- 7/08 – **Earl Bishop:** 143 Beale Court Dr.; Blairsville, GA 30512  
 7/08 – **Larry Rader:** 971 Willian Henry Cowart Rd.; Cobbtown, GA 30420  
 7/09 – **Marshall Singletary:** 200 White Blossom Trail; Thomasville, GA 31757  
 7/10 – **Betty Lou Miller:** 485 Tylerstone Dr.; Fuquay-Varina, NC 27526  
 7/11 – **Thom Davies:** 1 Seventh Street #1004; Augusta, GA 30901  
 7/12 – **Eric Sizemore:** PO Box 472; Rochelle, GA 31079  
 7/13 – **Randy Carnley:** PO Box 345; Midville, GA 30441  
 7/14 – **Loran Smith:** 5290 Arkwright Road; Macon, GA 31210  
 7/14 – **Ronnie Wills:** 81 Gatlin Bluff; Thomasville, GA 31757  
 7/16 – **Roland Fall:** 321 Lake Joy Rd.; Perry, GA 31069  
 7/18 – **Ray Bittner:** 130 Ford St.; Poulan, GA 31781  
 7/18 – **Sonny Mason:** 2218 Glendale Rd.; Augusta, GA 30904  
 7/19 – **Sam Rogers, III:** 5300 Zebulon Road, #15; Macon, GA 31210  
 7/20 – **Man Lee:** 18 Mannering Dr.; Dover, DE 19901  
 7/20 – **Isaac Moon:** 100 Riverside; Griffin, GA 30224  
 7/21 – **Richard Lanning:** 104 Macintosh Lane; Centerville, GA 31028  
 7/22 – **Wayne MacDonald:** 203 Laurel Dr.; Sylvania, GA 30467  
 7/22 – **H.L. Pharr:** 1205 Bluebird Ave.; Thomasville, GA 31792  
 7/23 – **Norman Dunlap:** 708 Robins Nest Ct.; Columbus, GA 31909  
 7/24 – **Donald Woeltjen:** PO Box 1322; Fitzgerald, GA 31750  
 7/25 – **Elvin East:** 80 Cypress Trail; Lakeland, GA 31635  
 7/27 – **Charles Ricks:** 4191 Mt. Union Rd.; Huntington, WV 25701  
 7/27 – **Mark Zeitlin:** 203 Victorian Lake Dr.; Brunswick, GA 31525  
 7/28 – **Ron Dixon:** 1194 Country Club Dr.; Wrens, GA 30833  
 7/28 – **Donna Sue Roberts:** 1209 Loblolly Lane; Bainbridge, GA 39817  
 7/29 – **Jim Kenney, Sr.:** 139 Altama Connector; Brunswick, GA 31525  
 7/29 – **Sylvia Kersey:** 861 Pine Hill Rd.; Dublin, GA 31021  
 7/29 – **Al Lewis, Jr.:** 915 E. 42<sup>nd</sup> St. E; Tifton, GA 31794  
 7/31 – **Lowery Brantley:** PO Box 125; Pineview, GA 31071

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## **OBITUARIES**

### **Mrs. Sue Dupree**

Mrs. Sue Johnson Dupree, age 85, passed away on Sunday, May 2, 2021, at Phoebe Sumter Medical Center.

Funeral services were held Saturday, May 8, at First United Methodist Church. Interment followed in Oak Grove Cemetery.

Sue was born on May 31, 1935, in Saline County, Illinois, to the late Wood and Ruth Duckworth Johnson. She grew up in Christopher, a small town in southern Illinois near the Kentucky border.

She met her husband, Rev. Bill Dupree, when he conducted a Sub-District Youth Revival in southern Illinois to a group over whom Sue served as president. Later, when both were students at Asbury in Wilmore, Kentucky, they began dating. It is the providence of God that a boy from a small farm in South Georgia would marry a girl from Illinois.

They were married for 65 years, and she served with him as a pastor's wife in South Georgia Methodist churches for 44 years. From 1980-1985 they served First United Methodist Church of Americus. Sue and Bill lived at Magnolia Manor since their retirement in 1998.

Survivors include her husband, Rev. Bill Dupree of Americus; two daughters: Susan Nichols (Mike) of Brentwood, Tennessee, and Mary Lynn Matthews (Jeff) of St. George, Utah; and one granddaughter, Kathryn Nichols Kresse of Antioch, Tennessee.

Sue received her Bachelor's degree in Geology and her Master's degree in Education at Georgia Southwestern College when she was in her fifties.

She was employed at the library at South Georgia Technical College in Americus for many years. She loved to travel, visiting all 50 states and over 60 foreign countries. Many times, she was the leader of the travel group. She was an avid bird watcher and enjoyed singing and playing the piano.

Sue had a great sense of humor and love for people which helped her immensely as a pastor's wife. She was the author of many "Sueisms." For example, when as a girl from Illinois marrying a guy from Georgia, she had never seen a boiled peanut. She commented, "Eating a boiled peanut is like eating wet popcorn!" Another noted "Sueism" was when she remarked, "All men are the same. The Lord made them to look different so you would know which one was yours."

Sue had a perpetual positive attitude and a strong belief in God. She believed that we are in God's hands and that He will take care of us.

For those wishing to do so, memorial contributions are suggested to The League of the Good Samaritan, c/o Magnolia Manor, 2001 S. Lee St., Americus, GA 31709; or to First United Methodist Church, 200 S. Lee St., Americus, GA 31709.

To sign the online guestbook and express your condolences to the family, please visit [www.hancockfuneralhomeinc.com](http://www.hancockfuneralhomeinc.com).

Hancock Funeral Home, 427 S. Lee St., is honored to be entrusted with these arrangements for Mrs. Sue Dupree.

### **Rev. Steve Peavy**

Herbert Stephen Peavy, 63, passed away Sunday, July 4, 2021, at his residence.

The Ocala, Fla. native was a United Methodist pastor currently serving at Bethel Brick United Methodist Church in Sylvania. He was preceded in death by his parents, Herbert and Corene Peavy; his brother, John Peavy; and his wife, Wendy Peavy.

He is survived by his children, Rennata Wilson (Jeremy), Michael Peavy (Ashlyn), Daniel Peavy (Courtney), Timothy Peavy (Danielle), and Jessica Haney (Phillip); 14 grandchildren; sister, Barbara Bengtson (Dave); and several nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Visitation was held Thursday, July 8, 2021, at the funeral home followed by funeral services in the chapel. Interment followed in Springfield Cemetery Annex.

Remembrances may be given to Bethel Brick United Methodist Church, 1259 Oglethorpe Trail, Sylvania, GA 30467.

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**Scripture Readings – July 20 edition**

**July 25**

*Ninth Sunday after Pentecost*

2 Samuel 11:1-15

Psalm 14 (UMH 746)

Ephesians 3:14-21

John 6:1-21

**August 1**

*Tenth Sunday after Pentecost*

2 Samuel 11:26-12:13a

Psalm 51:1-12 (UMH 785)

Ephesians 4:1-16

John 6:24-35

**August 8**

*Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost*

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33

Psalm 130 (UMH 848)

Ephesians 4:25-5:2

John 6:35, 41-51

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**Events in the South Georgia Conference – 7/20/2021 edition**

**Golden Cross Sunday – Aug. 15**

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

**Online Basic Lay Servant Ministries Training – Aug. 17, 19, 24, 26**

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. You must complete all of the scheduled dates to complete your training. To participate you will need either a cell phone that will allow you to download the Zoom app (please do so ahead of time) or a laptop, a steady wi-fi connection, and a willingness to learn in a modern way. Registration fee for the class is \$25. For more information, contact Anne Bosarge at [anne@thechapelministries.com](mailto:anne@thechapelministries.com). [Register](#)

**Fall 2021 Certified Lay Ministry Training, Leesburg – Sept. 11, Sept. 25, Oct. 2, Oct. 23, Nov. 6, Nov. 20**

In this six-session course, held at The Pointe in Leesburg, participants will develop a team of leaders and supporters within their current congregation who will encourage them throughout the course and beyond. Through the classes, they'll build relationships with other South Georgia lay leaders and learn, practice, implement, share, and be inspired to take what they've learned and put it into action. The coursework includes holistic ministry training covering the following topics: worship, discipleship, preaching and teaching, congregational care, communication, organizational and personal leadership, and the United Methodist connection. The cost for the class is \$300 per person, which includes lunch, snacks, and curriculum materials for the entire course. If you have questions or need more information, please contact Anne Bosarge at [anne@thechapelministries.com](mailto:anne@thechapelministries.com). [Register](#)

**Online Advanced Lay Servant Ministries Training – Sept. 14, 16, 21, 23**

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 us about how we are called to use our spiritual gifts. Advanced LSM Training includes learning how to put your spiritual gifts into service. This training will be offered via Zoom. You must complete all of the scheduled dates to complete your training. To participate, you will need either a cell phone that will allow you to download the Zoom app (please do so ahead of time) or a laptop, a steady wi-fi connection, and a willingness to learn in a modern way. Registration fee for the class is \$25. (Note: Basic Lay Servant class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) For more information contact Anne Bosarge at [anne@thechapelministries.com](mailto:anne@thechapelministries.com). [Register](#)

**Methodist Children's Home Work Day Offering – Sept. 19**

Every local church in South Georgia is encouraged to receive a special Work Day Offering to support the ministry of The Methodist Home for Children and Youth. To learn more about this incredible ministry of our conference visit [www.themethodisthome.org](http://www.themethodisthome.org).