

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – OCTOBER 19 EDITION

Statesboro First UMC pastor, children’s minister dance to raise money for local domestic violence shelter

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Dr. Scott Hagan is a pro at dancing through tough theological issues, but on Nov. 18 and Nov. 21 he’s going to put his actual dance moves to the test as he struts his stuff on stage in front of hundreds of Statesboro friends and family.

Dr. Hagan, senior pastor of Statesboro First United Methodist Church, and his dance partner Eastyn Durrence, a Georgia Southern University student and former competitive dancer, are one of 10 teams in this year’s [Dancing with the Statesboro Stars](#) competition.

A self-described “average dancer,” Dr. Hagan and Durrence will perform a group dance and an individual dance – a mix of hip hop, jazz, and the quickstep – during the two shows.

Before this summer, Dr. Hagan’s dance experience was negligible: a six-week introduction to ballroom dance during fifth-grade P.E. class and, 15 years later, a Latin ballroom dance class with then fiancé and now-wife, Julie.

“I’m just a really average dancer,” said Dr. Hagan, who is quick to give Durrence credit for what dance skills he does have. “It’s so unnatural for me. But Eastyn is a rock star. She’s a great teacher and she’s patient and goes over the steps again and again.”

But dancing is only part of the program.

While [Dancing with the Statesboro Stars](#) is an amateur dance competition that pairs local stars with local professionals to compete for best dancer of the night, it’s also about raising money – hopefully a lot of it. Dancing with the Statesboro Stars is the annual fundraising event for Safe Haven of Statesboro, a domestic violence shelter that offers help to victims and children in Bulloch, Effingham, Jenkins, Screven, Candler, and Washington Counties.

So far, Team Hagan and Durrence’s fundraising efforts have included a golf tournament and a dunk booth. In a few weeks they’ll host a dinner at a local restaurant to raise more money for Safe Haven.

The Statesboro First UMC congregation has long been a supporter of Safe Haven, Dr. Hagan said.

“Like every Methodist church in South Georgia, Statesboro First UMC is known in this community for its commitment to serving others in practical ways,” he said. “This is an opportunity for our church to keep doing that.”

The congregation and community have been incredibly generous, Dr. Hagan said. Fourteen members of Statesboro First UMC have danced in the previous 10 seasons of [Dancing with the Statesboro Stars](#). They've supported and encouraged Dr. Hagan and Durrence and have helped guide them through the process.

And even though dancing and fundraising is a lot of work – Dr. Hagan and Durrence estimate they spend between six and eight hours a week practicing and working on projects – the blessings exceed their effort.

“God’s economy is upside down,” Dr. Hagan said. “You think you’re going to give, but you end up getting instead.”

Strong friendships have formed between the 20 dancers and the choreographer, Dr. Hagan and Durrence said. They pray together at the end of every group practice and check in with each other throughout the week.

“These are deep relationships that this opportunity to serve affords us,” Dr. Hagan said. “It’s a great cause, and we come away with a deep sense of community with the folks who are serving.”

Durrence, who also serves as Statesboro First UMC’s assistant director of children’s ministries, says it’s a privilege for the two to represent the church and an opportunity to serve in a different way.

“We’re able to minister to people through this,” said Durrence, who grew up at Statesboro First UMC and has been dancing on and off for 18 years. “It’s just a reminder that what we’re doing is good and people’s lives are going to be changed.”

While dancing is fun and entertaining, it’s really just one more way to put their faith into action, Dr. Hagan said.

“Jesus tells the Church in Acts chapter 1, ‘You are to be my witnesses in your hometown, in your home region, and around the world.’ And I’m convinced that our witness is much more about what we do and where we spend our time than it is what we say,” he said. “This is a fun way to stand for something that a lot of people don’t want to talk about and a lot of people underestimate how many are impacted by it.”

South Georgia UMW gather virtually for annual meeting

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Around kitchen tables and from living room couches, South Georgia’s United Methodist Women gathered for their annual meeting Saturday, Oct. 16, 2021.

Apart but together via computer screen, they celebrated 151 years of mission and ministry during their first virtual annual meeting.

“Women, children, and youth all over the world who depend on us for many services are able to receive the help they need because you have been faithful,” said Carol Banks, South Georgia United Methodist Women president.

Bishop David Graves, episcopal leader of the South Georgia and Alabama-West Florida Conferences, greeted them from Church Street United Methodist Church in Selma, Ala.

“I’m thankful to the United Methodist Women,” said Bishop Graves, who shared that both his grandmothers; his 87-year-old mother; and his wife, Nancy, were or are very active United Methodist Women. He told a personal story about how United Methodist Women helped support him while he attended seminary, allowing him to graduate debt free.

“What blesses me the most is just the faithfulness and the commitment that you have to God, the Church, and really wanting to make people’s lives better all around the world. What you do matters. I want you to know that. What you do really matters.”

During their business session, South Georgia United Methodist Women pledged \$100,000 to missions giving in 2022 and approved a \$53,769 budget for the coming year.

During her address, Banks spoke about all that United Methodist Women were able to accomplish during the past two years, even amid a global pandemic that kept them from meeting in person.

“Working, worshipping, and learning together, we have strengthened our sisterhood,” she said. “Even though we have not been able to be together physically, we have still been knitted together by common purpose, our faith in God, and our commitment to be His hands and feet in a hurting world.”

During the installation of officers led by past president Sara Bankhead, five were installed into leadership positions: Tara Jones, president; Heather Dixon, secretary; Cheryl King, chairperson, committee on nominations; Sylvia Copp, mission coordinator for social action; and Barbara Morris, secretary of program resources.

Bankhead shared with each new and continuing officer a red, hand-knitted prayer patch, explaining that she had woven each one specifically for the individual and with a colored ribbon signifying the person’s role and calling.

Lynn Harper, communications coordinator, expressed love and appreciation to outgoing officers leaving their current positions: Carol Banks, Elaine Shierling, Paula Newman, Barbara Morris, and Sylvia Copp.

“I am excited to serve in the organization that has meant so much to me, beginning with mentors who encouraged me as a youth and young woman, and continuing with friendships I have enjoyed for more than 30 years,” said Jones, who attended her first School of Christian Missions at age 14. “I look forward to 2022 bringing opportunities to connect in person.”

Susan O’Neal, Development Director at The Vashti Center, shared a message about the importance of connection and how Vashti has brought hope, healing, and support to children and youth in southwest Georgia.

“We, as Christians, as human beings, are wired for connection and togetherness,” she said.

She thanked the South Georgia United Methodist Women for their generosity and support during these challenging times.

“The Kingdom of God is within us. You take that wherever we go,” she said. “He’s calling you. Thank you for all you are and do for Vashti.”

While it was not their usual, in-person gathering, the annual meeting was an important day to come together as United Methodist Women, said Banks, who, after serving four years as president, passed the gavel to Jones.

“I appreciate all of you who are committed to serving God,” she said. “You make UMW a strong organization with a heart for mission.

“I am leaving the South Georgia UMW in good hands,” said Banks, who followed in her mother, Eugenia Yawn’s, footsteps, as president of South Georgia United Methodist Women. “And I will pray for you all to continue to be strong in faith, generous in giving, and dedicated servants of God.”

2021 KidzQuest “a gift from God”

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

After pressing pause in 2020, Connectional Ministries put on an epic beach bash this year to welcome back KidzQuest.

More than 200 children and adult leaders from across the South Georgia Conference gathered on Jekyll Island to learn more deeply how to worship, study God's Word, and understand what a relationship with Jesus really means.

“Seeing all the church vans and buses arrive at Camp Jekyll gave me goosebumps,” said Associate Director of Connectional Ministries Suzanne Akins. “We’ve had to hold plans loosely for so long that to be a part of it actually happening again was a gift from God.”

For nearly 20 years, Lynn Yost, Park Avenue United Methodist Church’s children’s director, has taken groups to KidzQuest. Missing last year’s event was difficult, she said, and her group was excited the event was back on.

“It was awesome; it was wonderful. We were all so happy,” said Yost, who took 26 children to the [2021 KidzQuest Children’s Retreat](#), which was held on Jekyll Island this year. “I think we appreciate everything we do now so much more.”

Derek Harrison, Tifton First United Methodist Church’s director of youth ministries, took a group of nine students to KidzQuest.

“What really draws me into KidzQuest is having the capability for our students to see the United Methodist Church together, seeing all these kids from all over the state come together in worship and experience that with others. We wouldn’t do that otherwise,” he said. “It’s been really fruitful and rewarding for our students.”

The retreat speaker, worship leader, and emcee all helped the children experience their faith and the love of God in new ways, he said.

“They came back (home) wanting to share with everybody,” Harrison said. “I think it was the first time they were really able to experience genuine worship with others. Our students really connected and wanted to dive into all that was being done.”

Yost said she continues to return to KidzQuest year after year for the experience the children have.

“It’s so well run. It’s put together with every detail thought of. The quality is top notch and what our children experience when they’re there and what they take with them from there is incredible. I’m so grateful and thankful that we have this resource.”

A message from President Fowler, president of Wesleyan College

On Thursday, October 7, Dr. Vivia L. Fowler, President of Wesleyan College, released this statement:

At the end of this academic year I will mark fifteen years at Wesleyan—ten as your provost and five as your president—and I will be forever grateful for the students, faculty, staff, alumnae, trustees, and friends of the College who support this institution and each other every day. Together we have accomplished great things at Wesleyan, and I know that her greatest days can lie ahead. As Wesleyan looks forward to her third Century, this seems to be an opportune time for a new leader to envision that future; therefore, I will continue my service to the College as president through June and then will step aside to allow for new leadership.

When I became president, many people asked: “Are you enjoying being president?” My answer was: “I may not enjoy every day, but I find joy every day in leading Wesleyan College.” That was true then, and it is true now. What we are doing here is good, noble, and so very important—educating, empowering, and inspiring women for lives of purpose, justice, and leadership. It has been my honor and privilege to contribute to a small part of who Wesleyan is, and it will be my great joy to work with all of you for the remainder of the academic year.

During Dr. Fowler’s tenure at Wesleyan as president and as provost, the College made significant progress in numerous areas including the expansion of academic programs, enrollment growth, and facility improvements. In her first year as president, the College developed a strategic three-year plan that was fully implemented through June 2021. Under her leadership, the College experienced four years of the highest institutional enrollment in the last twenty years. Academic offerings grew substantially due to Dr. Fowler’s guidance and support. In the past four years, undergraduate and graduate programs expanded to include the addition of the bachelor of fine arts, applied data analysis and public health majors, and three new master’s programs.

She led efforts to complete the funding for the renovation of Willet Memorial Library, which will be finished in January 2022. The Panoz Soccer Complex was refurbished and dedicated in 2020. Numerous improvements were made to the Nancy Ellis Knox Equestrian Center and the residence halls were enhanced with new furniture and flooring.

While serving as provost, Dr. Fowler was instrumental in initiating and developing Wesleyan’s bachelor of science in nursing program, which is now the College’s largest major. She also created the Wesleyan Academy for Lifelong Learning (WALL) as an outreach program for the community. Additionally, she implemented and supervised the College’s Confucius Institute and developed a dual-degree program with Guangzhou University. Due to her extensive travel to China, Dr. Fowler strengthened Wesleyan’s historic relationship with China and forged new potential partnerships throughout the country.

Most recently, Dr. Fowler formed the Lane Center for Social and Racial Equity by partnering with the Council on Independent Colleges through a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The Center will be located in the historic Porter House and will provide equity programming and initiatives for the campus and community.

Board Chairwoman Amy Rauls said, “Wesleyan College’s Board of Trustees joins me in thanking Vivia for her leadership, guidance, and dedication to Wesleyan during the past four years. While much has been accomplished under her presidency, her management during the challenges of COVID-19 is unparalleled and the Wesleyan community remains safe and well. The Trustees will begin a presidential search beginning this fall and appoint a search committee in the near future. In the meantime, we look forward to honoring Vivia for her faithful service during the remainder of this academic year.”

Encounter Youth Retreat moved to Jekyll Island, set for Nov. 19-21

[Encounter](#), the annual youth retreat sponsored by South Georgia's Connectional Ministries, is set for November 19-21 at Camp Jekyll 4-H Center on Jekyll Island. Designed for 6th - 12th grade students, [Encounter](#) will offer passionate worship, relevant Bible study, and a hope-filled time away in community with other teens.

[Online registration](#) is available through November 10. Churches will register as a group. The cost for this event is \$150 per person which includes programming, insurance, food, lodging, and a t-shirt.

Adult chaperones with Safe Sanctuary certification must be provided by each church group. For more information, contact Event Coordinator Suzanne Akins at suzanne@sgaumc.com or (912) 638-8626 ext 107.

More information can also be found on the [Encounter website](#). [Register](#)

Our Connection Matters: Advent Resources

'Tis the season...almost! Sunday, November 28th marks the beginning of Advent - just 7 weeks away! As we prepare to journey through the season, we hope the resources provided in this edition will help jumpstart your planning and give you fresh ideas. As you begin preparations for the Advent season, consider the following resources for new ideas.

Nurture:

- [Come Home for Christmas](#) - 2021 worship series from Discipleship Ministries
- [Podcast: Worship Matters Episode 51](#) – Join the worship team from Discipleship Ministries Dr. Cynthia Wilson, Dr. Diana Sanchez-Bushong, and Dr. Derek Weber as they talk worship planning, lectionary series, music, and liturgy for the rest of Year B and the beginning of Year C.
- [Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy](#)
- [Cokesbury Advent Studies/Resources](#)
- [Advent study comparison chart](#) from Cokesbury to help you decide what Advent study to use with your church or small group this year.
- [New Ways to Celebrate Advent with Kids](#)

- [Youth Lessons “Come Home for Christmas”](#)
- [Planning Ahead to Preach During Advent: Offering Hope](#) Webinar on October 19th, 2021 at 2:00 pm. During this session, Olu Brown, pastor of Impact Church, one of the fastest-growing churches in the country, will share his advice on preparing to preach during Advent.
- [Planning Activities for Advent & Christmas](#) Webinar on October 20, 2021 at 2:00 pm. During this session, Anne Bosarge will offer advice and ideas about plans your congregation can begin making to make Advent and Christmas more meaningful. Anne will discuss lots of ideas for Bible studies, adult & children’s activities, and more.
- [Advent Prayer Stations](#)
- [Sharing the Christmas Story, Sharing Our Faith](#) Webinar Three authors: Adam Hamilton, Matt Rawle and Lacey Warner, discuss with host Rachel Billups about their new studies and what inspires them at Christmas.
- [“Both/And: To Be Continued”](#) Webinar on October 12th, 2021 at 10:00 am. This brand new 90-minute training focused on the why, how and what we can do to continue in hybrid worship, including 13 reasons why BOTH/AND must continue, the answer to the “what if they don’t come back to the building” question, how to create a BOTH/AND Think Tank at your church, as well as BOTH/AND pro tips for those considering a hybrid approach to the Advent season and beyond.

Outreach:

- [4 Great Advent Outreach Ideas](#)
- [Christmas is not your Birthday](#) - Pastor Mike Slaughter inspires readers to approach Christmas differently, and be transformed in the process.
- [Creative Christmas Outreach](#) - ways to engage your congregation in fun, meaningful efforts that will extend a personal word of welcome to people in your community who are searching for connection.
- [Giving Tuesday](#) - November 30 - a global generosity movement unleashing the power of radical generosity. GivingTuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Since then, it has grown into a year-round global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity.

Witness:

- [Advent Communication graphics](#) from United Methodist Communications

- [Seeker-Friendly Christmas events](#) - great tips to make your event a success from Resource UMC.
- [Roll out the welcome mat](#) - For some people, Christmas and Easter are the only times they go to church. Visitors seeking a church to call home—even a temporary home—want to feel welcomed. That is why it is critical for congregations to have a strategic plan for welcoming visitors, especially during holiday services.
- [Invite Christmas Eve guests to return](#) - tips for inviting Christmas Eve visitors to return the next Sunday or in January.

Advocacy:

- [Reimagine Advent: Discover the Liberating Christ](#) worship resources from the General Commission on Religion and Race. Are we willing to rethink Advent and reach out to the Jesus of the refugees, the poor, and the marginalized, so that we may finally walk in the Light of Christ?
- [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#) (Dec 3)
 - Resource for [Disability Sunday Order of Worship](#) (date can be flexible)
- [Engaging Advent](#) - How do we see past the tinsel, the shiny wrapping, the Christmas songs that have been playing since October and the Black Friday specials that were announced well before Thanksgiving, to see where Light is already breaking through?
- [All Earth is Waiting](#) - An advent devotional written through the lens of Creation and Creation Care. (Climate Justice)

TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW

Our Connection really does matter! We would love to hear about resources you are finding helpful in your ministry setting that we can share with other local churches. Please take a moment to email us your ideas: Kelly Roberson (kelly@sgaumc.com) or Suzanne Akins (suzanne@sgaumc.com).

And don't miss our [Advent Resources Webinar](#), this Wednesday, October 20 from 2-3 pm. Anne Bosarge will offer advice and ideas about plans your congregation can begin making to make Advent and Christmas more meaningful. Anne will discuss lots of ideas for Bible studies, adult & children's activities, and more. [Join us for this Zoom webinar!](#)

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Let justice roll down like waters

To the South Georgia Conference,

As jury selection and the trial for those accused of killing Ahmaud Arbery begins today, it brings up different emotions and feelings in all of us. The video and story surrounding Ahmaud's murder captured the nation's attention. During the trial, the nation and the world will be tuning in. Brunswick, Georgia will be the stage as the trial progresses and an eventual verdict is reached. So many lives have been affected. More will be as the trial unfolds, concludes, and a verdict is reached.

As your Bishop, I would like to call all of us - the body of Christ - to a deep place of prayer. The scripture the Holy Spirit keeps moving me to pray comes from the prophet Amos. The vision that came to Amos, used by many leaders past and present, would be fulfilled, "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." (Amos 5:24 NRSV)

Everyone wants justice. Yet we are reminded in times like these that we live in an unjust world. As followers of Jesus, we are reminded that mercy, grace, forgiveness, and love must abound amid the injustices of this world. However, we must strive to eliminate the injustices that continue to happen to people, especially people of color.

During my time with you as your Bishop, I want to lead in a way that continues the work of the South Georgia Conference as we strive to do our part to change systems of injustice and help see the vision of the prophet Amos fulfilled. You'll hear more details soon, but our next step in this process is forming a Coalition for Disrupting and Dismantling Racism.

In the meantime, I call upon all of us to pray, reflecting on the words of the prophet Amos, "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

It is an honor to serve with you.

In Christ,

David Graves

Praise God for His Presence

Fall Quarter: Celebrating God

Unit 2: Called to Praise God

Sunday school lesson for the week of October 24, 2021

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Background Scripture: Psalm 84

Key Scripture (NIV): “Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.”
Psalm 84:4

Lesson Aims

1. To understand *the importance of our places of worship.*
2. To understand *our individual and corporate spiritual journey.*
3. To understand the blessing in experiencing God’s presence.

Preparation for Lesson

Who wrote the Psalm?

Psalm 84 stands in the third section of Psalms. It was written for the Sons of Korah, which implies they did not write this psalm. However, there is a connection with the psalm. The Sons of Korah wrote or are intimately related to Psalms 84, 85, 87, 88. Korah was a descendant of Kohath, a son of Levi. Korah was put to death for a rebellion against Moses and Aaron during the Exodus. However, the descendants rose to prominent place in temple worship. They were also gatekeepers. The psalm most likely was written in the era of Solomon’s Temple. Most believe it was written prior to David’s death, around 970 B.C.

For what purpose was it written?

Regular pilgrimages to Jerusalem were a vital facet of the Israelite’s faith. One of the most important pilgrimages occurred during Passover. Many of the psalms were hymns to sing during the journey. Many are characterized as the “psalms of ascent.” These psalms reveal an important truth concerning worship. Many, if not most, of the Israelites were “prepared” to worship. Their thoughts were focused upon the goodness of God and the meaningful experience ahead. Each of us can learn from this revelation. How often do we arrive at worship empty, tired, or preoccupied? When we do so we expect the worship experience to raise us from our state. However, worship is enriched when we are prayerfully prepared. We can add to and participate in worship.

How do we prepare for worship? If you do not prepare, what hinders the preparation? What could you do to prepare and enhance your worship experience?

“Journey” is a consistent, constant thread throughout scripture. Each of us is on a journey of faith. There are touches, revelations, illuminations of God during our walk. One of the most important realities to understand is that we never complete this journey. There is always more ahead. Each step moves the us closer to the Kingdom of God and anchors us more deeply in God. This journey is far from just our personal walk. It is also “our” walk. We are on the journey together. When we are weak, another is strong for us. When we are strong, we are there for them. Imagine all of the experiences and learnings present in the Body of Christ! We are the recipients

of thousands of years of history. We are surrounded by a “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb.12:10). We are a cumulative source of wisdom regarding what it means to walk with God. Furthermore, Psalm 84 wasn’t a psalm just for the Israelites during the biblical era, it is our song as well! We are also a community of those who long to worship God.

Are you aware of your personal journey? Do you find it tempting to slow your walk or neglect it? What are the hurdles that hinder your walk? Are you aware you are joined on your journey in the Body of Christ? Are you aware you have been given the privilege of joining the personal walks of others? What do you think is the importance of walking together?

What type of literature is Psalm 84?

Naturally, the psalm is a poem/hymn. Like most psalms of Hebrew poetry, it uses rich imagery. The psalm uses images to which we can relate and understand. It is also written using couplets and parallelism. However, parallelism is not always used in the same manner. It isn’t always only two lines tied together. Often there is third line that enriches the meaning.

Theological realities that need to be understood prior to reading the psalm

We live on this side of the resurrection. Jesus taught us that God is infinite, loving, personal spirit. However, in the Old Testament many viewed God anthropomorphically. That is, God was imagined as a man. Let it be noted that at least the monotheism of the Israelites saw a special intimacy with God. Instead of gods of wood and stone or gods of the elements such as the sun or stars, they often envisioned God as the highest expression of us. Though it is understandable how they made this jump, God’s revelation consistently reveals the Lord cannot be defined or contained by the human body or any created entity. God stands beyond and above all! What we know of God has been revealed. Before we cast criticism upon the Old Testament people we need to remember they have struggled against polytheism from their inception. God is revealing the divine nature to them “in a manner they can understand.” Our understanding of God today is a result of “stepping-stones.” God has continually revealed himself through the years, and our understanding of God has grown. Notice my use of the pronoun “himself” for God. I have no other means of speaking of God. Any pronoun used is as lacking as the one I employ. I use it because it is tradition. Still, God isn’t he, she, or it. The progressive revelation of God was embodied perfectly in Jesus. We are reading the inspired writing of people who cannot yet fully grasp the reality of God as spirit. The only way they could relate to God was through what they did know at the time. Thus, they gave us images of God as having a right arm, of sitting on a throne, and of inhabiting a house. Today, we are aware God cannot be contained in any human structure. It was rather natural for them to believe God inhabited their place of worship. It did not mean they didn’t believe God could be elsewhere. However, God was “connected” to the temple.

Still, we can relate to Scripture written during this period. Though God does not just dwell in our church building, we still understand the Lord is spiritually and intimately present there. When two or more are gathered in his name, Christ is there.

Do we think of God as greater than any reality in the universe? Do we understand the process of progressive revelation, that is, God revealing himself at the perfect time in ways we can understand? Do we realize there is always more of God to know? Why do you think it is important to realize God's existing above, over, and beyond? What role do you believe mystery plays in faith?

The Text

Our destiny

This remarkable psalm opens, "How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord Almighty." Notice the psalmist believes God dwells in the temple. Again, this does not negate the author's belief that God is great and omnipresent. Again, it is the way he is able to relate to God in his life and the life of Israel. For the psalmist, those who enter Jerusalem are headed toward "God's house." God's house is holy. It is sacred. For those who enter, make certain they know it is holy ground. Where God is present there is redemption. A person can find their way in life and be restored, even after failing. Therefore, it is place for the birth and renewal of hope. Hope is the belief that God is with us every moment, wasting no experience in moving us toward the Kingdom of God. As the people leave the temple they must understand the God they encounter in the temple is "their God," the only God, and they are God's people.

The aesthetics of the temple proclaim the beauty, wonder and greatness of God. The very stones and timbers, curtains, and golden utensils all point to a life that is high and noble. It is God's life and they were invited to experience that life. There was also power in the gathering of God's people. It is quite obvious that a crowd can take on a personality and mind of itself. However, in the temple, the crowd experiences the mind and heart of God. This grand truth unifies and enlivens them. Indeed, it is lovely place!

We are called toward the "lovely place." Our destiny is to dwell with God in his holy habitation. Rev. 21 reads "The tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them and they shall be his people."

Our worship buildings are to call us toward God. Over my 40+ years, many have entered my church because they saw its steeple or building. They knew from the architecture that the people there believed in Christ, and therefore, the hope of redemption could be found within. When I enter a sanctuary, the first thing I do is look at its windows, the worship articles on the altar table, and anything that speaks of God. During communion I intently look at the cross on the altar. When I kneel at the altar I remember I am kneeling before God in all of his greatness and beauty. The colors, the images, the sounds all remind me God is present and we are eternally connected. As the pilgrims sang in preparation for worship, I intentionally look at everything that points to God. I am certainly not alone in such preparation. Many question the importance of church buildings and the ornate décor of a sanctuary. Certainly, we can always overdo anything. However, let us remember everything is to point to God.

While building a church on the Yucatan, I took a day off to visit the city market. Standing near the market was a magnificent cathedral. What a contrast! The poor and disabled lined the sidewalks selling fruit and any item that might help them eat. The front door of the cathedral was cracked. Looking inward I witnessed an ongoing service. I noticed the most incredible sanctuary of brass and gold-plated ornaments. My first reaction was to ask, "How dare they spend such money on the sanctuary with so many poor?" Later, however, I understood the cathedral was one of few beautiful places in their life. It reminded them that there is something and someone greater in life. There is a healthy balance between missional outreach and providing a beautiful sanctuary. People need to sometimes "see something" that calls them higher.

Have you recently studied your sanctuary? Have you intentionally considered the meaning of every image, ornament, and structure? How could these enrich your worship experience? Have we realized how the beauty of the church structure reminds us of where we are going in life?

Our internal motivation

The psalmist passionately claims his body, soul, and spirit cry out for the living God. He claims he yearns and faints for the courts of the Lord. This is perhaps the best he can do in describing what worship in the temple means for him. Sometimes we have no adequate words to fully express our relationship with the Lord. The Spirit inspires him to express his passion in the psalm. However, he still must use human words. The inspired psalmist wants us to understand every facet of his being longs to be in the presence of the Lord.

I experienced the great privilege of worshipping at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem just as the Sabbath began. Men and women, with covered heads, quietly walked to their place of prayer. As I prayed I heard the cries of the men on each side of me. I saw from the corner of my eye those who were physically rocking to and fro while praying aloud. I learned many Jewish men believed in praying with one's whole being: body, soul and spirit. When words were inadequate, they wailed.

The writer notes that all creation longs to be near God. In Romans 8, Paul reminds us that all of creation groans to be redeemed by God. What a touching imagery is used to describe this longing. A sparrow so longs to be near God she builds her nest near the altar where she will birth her young. From the sparrow to men and women, those who encounter God's presence in the temple are blessed!

For a person who longs to worship Christ and prepares for worship, the house of God provides a most blessed experience! The Hymns and songs call us to lift our eyes toward our great Redeemer. The creeds and prayers allow us to join the voices of our descendants in the faith in declaring the wonder and glory of our faith. The prayers allow us to still and quieten ourselves that we might listen to the inner voice of God. The bread of life is read and shared. This list could continue. We are indeed blessed when we give everything we are in worship. We are blessed as the body sits, stands and kneels in worship. We are blessed as our voices raise in

adoration and praise. Our hearts fill with hope as we listen to the Word. Our eyes are filled with beautiful images representing our faith. When we worship the Lord in the house of God, our longing meets that for which it longs.

Can you articulate an experience in which you believe your entire being sought the Lord? Can you recall a moment when you could not wait to worship? What preceded such moments?

Did you feel called to worship? What experiences called you? Do you recognize this call as from God? Can you recall a moment when you felt so blessed you lacked the words to describe it? Have you ever been speechless before God?

The blessing of pilgrimages

Preparing to worship the Lord in the sanctuary is a blessing itself. I love the wording of the psalmists: “whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.” This phrase implies intentional focus. Sadly, we often wait to be moved or prompted. The heart is most blessed when the person intentionally determines to encounter God’s presence in worship. Intentionality does not imply a lack of emotional content. Intentionally committing ourselves to worship involves an act of the will. However, our intentionality opens to the door to our spiritual, and at times emotional experience of God. The Lord blesses eager eyes, open ears and longing heart.

The act of preparing also blesses. When one chooses to prepare for worship they look for God in life. They remember their past days of blessing. They are thankful for the privilege of living, loving, and celebrating God’s gift of life.

The prose of Israel walking through Baka is meaningful. Baka literally meant “weeping.” Baca is thus a valley of weeping. Though it most likely was a real place (the psalmist treats it as such), in the psalm it is also used as a metaphor for the blessing that emerges from the pilgrimage toward God’s house. Baka represents a dry, lifeless valley. However, when God’s people walk through such a Baka, the valley bursts forth with life. Springs of water burst forth, creating beauty and life. Most of us understand the metaphor of Baka. Circumstances in life can leave us feeling isolated, alone and lifeless. However, when we determine to seek the Lord, everything changes! We find the presence of God in places others never look. We see light in the darkness and we are filled with hope. God and death do not coexist. God is life and creates life. God took the horror and darkness of Golgotha and revealed the depth and breadth of his love. In our preparation we intentionally see God and note the workings of God in life. Thus, we can enter worship with full hearts.

The psalmist shares that even on the pilgrimage we move from “strength to strength.” One experience stands atop another. Illumination is increased as we travel on our journey. Understanding increases with every step. Rather than understanding the worship of God as an independent event, the author understands the connection and interconnection of preparation and worship.

Can you recall a moment when you walked through Baka? Did you seek God? How did knowing God was present with you alter your perception? Have you recognized the connection and interconnection of worship preparation and worship itself? Can you share a moment in which you believed God changed your outlook in a trying moment? Have you been blessed in preparing your heart for worship? Can you share it?

The blessing of being present in the house of God

After the pilgrimage, the psalmist describes the remarkable moment of worshipping in the temple. His preparation and pilgrimage have led him to the moment of encountering God in the place of worship. The author uses two special images in sharing how he feels. “Better is one day in your house than a thousand elsewhere.” No moment in life can equal the experience of knowing God and realizing God first loved us. There is no greater king before whom he can stand. There is no one who loves us more deeply. There is no greater fulfillment than to breathe and live in the presence of the Lord. We can experience great moments when we marry our beloved or hold our new babies. These moments, like all moments, are enriched when we understand these are gifts of God. The psalmist is not setting the experience of worship against the experiences of life. The psalmist understands that when God is perceived and experienced in worship he is perceived and experienced in life. This imagery, again, is the best he can do in sharing what it means to stand in God’s house and to experience the presence of the Lord. That experience will enrich all experiences. He could not wait to get there, and he is in no hurry to leave.

His second use of imagery involves standing at the gate into the temple in contrast to a sinful existence. Serving as the gatekeeper was far from the best position in the temple. The gatekeepers are from the House of Levi. They open the gates into the temple and shut them at the end of worship. They received tithes from the people and watched over the storerooms. Though necessary and sacred, these positions were a far cry from the ministry of the priests. However, the psalmist lets the reader know he would rather occupy the lowest position of service in God’s house than dwell in the tents of the wicked. The tents of the wicked do not just serve as an expression of the wrongdoers in life, they represent hedonistic pleasure. The psalm proclaims that no physical hedonistic pleasure comes close to serving the Lord in the temple. Attending worship reminds us of a higher, more noble life in Christ. Our bodies will fail us with age and pleasure is fleeting. However, our life in God is eternal. When everything passes, the child of God lives. In worshipping God, we recognize what really matters and understand our priorities.

Contemplate how precious worship is to you. If worshipping God is not a meaningful experience, contemplate why not. What can you do to better embrace the worship of the Lord? What can your church do to help you?

Closing

As I read the psalm I imagined the absence of our places of worship. How stark the landscape would appear. I would see billboards and neon signs convincing me I need something in life. There would be businesses and areas of housing where people live as busy bees, often not knowing why. I thank God for every church I see. From the simplest architecture to the grandest, I cherish each of them. They remind us we are not to be a people running in circles. We have a journey and we have a destiny! I need to know that I need something and someone greater than the world can offer. I need to be reminded that one day with God and his people is greater than a thousand elsewhere.

Prayer

Almighty God, you call us to yourself. Set our feet upon the path of pilgrimage, enlivening each step. Teach us to see you in life. Reveal to us your gifts and blessing that we might worship you with full, grateful hearts. Bless those who join us on our journey and enrich our fellowship. Place us in the lives of others who seek you, that we might be salt and light to one another. We thank you for our place of meeting and worship. We are grateful for all who sacrificed to make such a place possible. Teach us to be good stewards with all we have received at the hands of our ancestors. Bless those who lead us in worship. May your Spirit allow us to worship without restraint. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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

Praise God for His Greatness

Fall Quarter: Celebrating God

Unit 2: Called to Praise God

Sunday school lesson for the week of October 31, 2021

By Dr. D. Craig Rikard

Background Scripture: Psalms 147-150

Key Scripture (NIV): "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." Psalm 150:6

Lesson Aims

1. To help us comprehend that all things will end in praise unto God.
2. To help us comprehend our individual redemption and collective redemption.
3. To help us comprehend God's nearness and greatness.
4. To help us appreciate all instruments of praise.
5. To help us realize the meaning of a "new song" in our faith journey.

Introduction

These psalms stand in the last section of the book of Psalms. They are collectively known as the “praise conclusion.” There is no greater thought to close the Psalter than to praise God for his goodness. The psalms have addressed Israel’s exodus from Egypt, wandering in the wilderness, their period of judges and kings, and their exile. Most believe these psalms were written as praise to God for the rebuilding of the temple.

The temple had been David’s dream, and his son Solomon made it a reality. Constructed of the best cedars and stone, draped in magnificent colors, and decorated with costly metals such as gold, the temple represented a reality more stately and beautiful than anything else in Jewish life. Surrounding nations erected lush palaces for their kings; Israel built a magnificent temple for their God, who was worshipped as “King of Kings.”

It can prove difficult for us to emotionally, and even spiritually, identify with Israel’s love and need for their temple. God could be encountered in the temple through rituals, rites, prayers, the singing of psalms, and scripture. The temple unified the people around their faith. Israel had a historical faith, a redemptive history. In the temple they remembered, praised, prayed, and sang together. The greatness of the temple reminded them from where they had come and gave them confidence in their future. Most of all, it reminded them that the God of their yesterday was the God of their future.

Solomon spent great funds, sparing little expense to build his temple. I cannot even imagine the spirit and feeling Israel expressed at its opening. Likewise, I cannot fathom the emotions of Israel when the temple was razed to the ground by the Babylonians. The destruction of the temple left them to wonder, “Are we still a nation and a people under God?” “Has our sin brought about the destruction?” “Does God still care for us?” Those were indeed dark days for Israel. Then, the temple was rebuilt. Read Ezra and Nehemiah to sense the hope birthed in Israel through the restoration of the walls and temple.

The reconstruction of the temple represented the resurrection of the old and the blessed future to come. The people were overjoyed. Their hearts longed to worship the Lord in his holy temple. The temple reminded them they remained the people of God. God had not forsaken them! The psalms in our lesson are expressions of a renewed Israel. A light has dawned in their darkness, and hope is dispelling doubt.

One of the beautiful, inferred messages from these last psalms is: When all is said and done, after all the struggles, adversities, and triumphs, God reigns! God is lord over all, and we are the Lord’s redeemed people! There is always light to come in the darkness. There is always something to be learned in struggle. There is always a reminder we belong to someone bigger and greater than ourselves.

Can you recall the time of praise after struggle? Can you share a time when you thought, “No matter what comes, I am God’s and all is in the hands of God? What reminds you of the sacred

in life? How do you believe you would feel should you lose these reminders? In what ways would your life change? What symbols help remind you that all will be well in the end?

Messages from Psalm 149-150

Praise the Lord Together!

“Praise the Lord” is a *plural command*. It is a call for all of Israel to praise God. Psalm 149 opens with this call to praise, and the end of Psalm 150 ends with the beautiful proclamation, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” All of creation is called to praise the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer! Once again, we are reminded that God has not only saved the individual, the Lord has saved the nation! Such texts are not intended to diminish the beauty and importance of one’s individual relationship with the Lord. However, they do remind us that as the redeemed, we are grafted into a family. Each of us is unique, and our gifts and graces are employed by God in his redemption of the world. However, together we are more powerful. We reflect not only God’s power to save us from our sin, we express God’s power to remove the obstacles that divide and destroy. Our togetherness proclaims to the world that the divisions that divide others cannot divide us. Today, as the Church, we are the redeemed community. Our unity is a great witness to the world that living in harmony is possible and fulfilling through Christ. Thus, let *US* praise the Lord!

Do you think the Church today emphasizes individual redemption, the redeemed community, or both? How do you believe the Church can best do both? Do we believe in the connection and interconnection of all living beings? How do you think understanding this interconnection improves life? Embracing God’s desire to redeem all, what responsibility do we have toward one another and toward all living things?

Praise the Lord in His sanctuary!

As we have addressed in other Sunday school lessons, Israel’s identification of the temple as the place God’s dwells is important when reading the psalms. The temple provided a means for them to understand God’s presence, nearness and greatness. Though we seek to “believe without seeing,” possessing tangible expressions of God can enrich our faith. Our church sanctuaries are helpful and inspiring. We would all feel diminished without such expression. However, we must always remember that God is above, over and beyond any human construct. God cannot be bound in wood and stone. Psalm 150 opens with the call for us to worship God in his sanctuary. However, it is the next line that enriches the first: “Praise him in his mighty heavens.” The second line in this couplet perceives God, not just in the sanctuary, but in his mighty heavens.

We can infer from the wording that Israel still understands God in a more “confined” manner. God is in his mighty heavens, thus, God lives “within” the heavens. However, they are “God’s heavens.” As stated earlier, God transcends all, and thus exists “beyond” the heavens. What we understand from this wording is that Israel’s collective thought cannot yet grasp God’s full

transcendence. Still, the important message within the couplet is that God is near, and God is over all. The imagery of the psalmist reveals the worldview of Israel. The world was yet flat, covered by a dome. The surface of the dome was the heavens, and God dwelled there. Still, in their thinking, God is great and over all. There existed no known reality beyond the dome. For the psalmist, God is up in the heavens and in his sanctuary. God is above us, and with us. Science today has enlightened us to the magnitude of the cosmos. Thus, our understanding of God's presence and greatness is far greater. Had the psalmist been inspired to write today, the imagery would prove different, yet the message would be the same.

As Christians today, our redemption means that God has redeemed us in Christ, and indwells us through the Holy Spirit. God is near to us, and God is in us. And yet, God exist in majesty and greatness above all human constructs.

How great is God in our thinking? Is it possible to so personalize God that we neglect the Lord's majesty and greatness? Can the inverse be true? Can you offer suggestions as to how we might be reminded of God's greatness? Is your understanding of grace enriched upon considering the Lord who is over and beyond all has chosen to love you?

Let us praise God with music and dance!

The prior Sunday school lessons address the wonder of music and dance in the worship of God. Again, in Judaism, one worshipped God with their entire being. Our stillness, quietness, and reverence are employed in the worship of the Lord. The act of kneeling is used in the worship of God. Still, the human heart longs to express its joy and gratitude to God in unrestrained worship. There are few vehicles better in expressing one's heart than music and dance. Note the many instruments mentioned in both psalms. These do not comprise an exhaustive list. These were the instruments known to Israel. Every musical instrument can be employed for the worship of God! For many years the keyboard and organ served as our major instruments of praise. Through the years the Church has added a multitude of instruments to this list. Any instrument played unto the Lord can send our spirits soaring into the transcendent.

Likewise, dance was a vital vehicle for the expression of Israel's praise. If one's heart could soar to the heavens, the feet could certainly dance here. Though no longer a major expression of praise in the western church, we can understand the need to express our faith and joy without restraint.

In the first lesson of the Fall quarter, I cited the great Sydney Lanier. Lanier wrote, "Music is love in search of a word." In our faith, that love has found its word in the Logos, the Word made flesh! This remarkable gift is worthy of all praise!

What instrument(s) in worship most deeply move(s) you? Can you recall your introduction to a new instrument in worship? How did it affect you? What is your reaction to dance as a means to worship? If you are uncomfortable, can you identify the cause of the discomfort? Is there

anything that restrains you in the worship of God? Do you think it is possible to worship in "order," and yet without restraint? How can both occur?

Let us sing a new song!

The psalms in our text point to the arrival of a new day. Many believe these psalms relate to the reconstruction of Solomon's temple after the exile. If so, then the idea of a new day is certainly applicable. Israel not only witnessed their temple's destruction in 586/87 B.C., they were taken into exile into Babylon. The exile involved a painful separation within Israel. Some were left behind and others were taken into Babylon, a nation of radically different values and cultural expectations. Most upsetting was Babylon's worship of pagan gods.

Cyrus the Great, king of the Achaemenid Empire, ended Israel's exile, allowing them to return home and rebuild their temple. Consequently, many believed Cyrus just might be the Messiah. It has been years since Israel had experienced such kindness. We can only imagine the joy of Israel upon hearing the decree of Cyrus. Indeed, it was a new day, a new day that placed a new song in the heart of Israel.

It was also a new day in God's revelation of his goodness and love toward Israel. In Psalm 149:2, the psalmist calls for Israel to delight in God their creator. Then, in verse 4, the writer informs us that "God delights in his people." Naturally, most psalms call us to delight in God for redeeming us. Yet, now we hear an amazing expression of grace. The God in whom we delight, delights in us!

The Hebrew word for "delight" means "to take pleasure in." The word also offers a picture of a plant being bent toward the sun. In Christian theology, we understand that we are constantly being drawn toward God, even as the world draws us in the opposite direction. However, the draw of God is stronger for the humble. Now, the inspired psalmist leaves the reader in awe, for it is God who is bending. God is bending toward us. I once heard someone describe the crucifixion of Jesus as "stooping grace." That is, God has stooped to touch humanity. The eternal is touching the finite. Of course, these are word pictures, but they do reveal the wonder of what God has done in Christ. God had long been understood as the one who desired that we delight in him; now Israel is beginning to understand that God has delighted in them.

The phrase "crowns the humble" in Hebrew means that God has "beautified" the humble. God is so delighted in his humble people that he beautifies them!

In Jesus Christ, God has revealed his great delight in us. Through the love and grace of Jesus he has "beautified us." This is indeed a new song!

There is always a new song. God is not finished revealing to us how deeply we are loved. Life will continue to reveal Jesus to us and through us. Each step of our journey leads us into greater understanding of God's delight in us through Christ. Thus, we will always sing a new song.

When you hear that God delights in you, what is your initial feeling? What is your understanding of God's delight in you? How has God revealed his delight for you in your life? Does God's delight change your perspective of yourself? Does it change your perception of others? Do you understand God's delight for you through Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection? What is, or should be your response to God?

Prayer

Almighty God, we bow in wonder and awe before your great presence. We so often feel unworthy to praise you, yet you delight in us through Jesus. We pray for the ability to see ourselves and others through your delight. Help us to recognize every new expression of your love in life, that we always have a new song in our heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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

The railroad ties that bind

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN

ANNE PACKARD

In 1834, a survey was made between Savannah and Macon for the purpose of establishing a rail route between the two Georgia cities. In 1836, the Central Railroad was granted a charter and the building of the railroad, starting at Savannah, began at once. It took several years to build, and in 1843, the first passenger car arrived at the temporary depot set up outside of Macon. The original road was 190 miles long and, at the time it was completed, was the longest railroad in the world built and owned by one company. (source: georgiahistory.com/education-outreach)

Savannah's first recorded history began in 1733 when General James Oglethorpe and 120 passengers of the ship "Anne" landed on a bluff high above the Savannah River to create the 13th and final colony, Georgia, named after England's King George II. On General Oglethorpe's second voyage, Methodism, in its earliest form, also arrived when Reverends John and Charles Wesley landed to minister to the good people in this coastal colony.

The city of Macon started when Fort Hawkins was built on the banks of the Ocmulgee River in 1806 in an area then known as the Western frontier. By 1823, the city was growing with people moving south from the mountains of north Georgia and west from the coast of South Carolina to gain land and independence. A need soon arose to connect the older, coastal city with the newly formed, frontier town for the purpose of trade and travel. Thus, the Central Georgia Railroad came into being.

This new and impressive rail system didn't just connect these two cities, though. It connected many cities. Stops along this route included Pooler, Marlow, and Guyton, along with Millen,

Midville, and Wadley. It connected Louisville to Davisboro, Sandersville to Toombsboro, and Irwinton to Gordon. And with the cities being connected, so to was the Methodist movement. The movement was literally on the move.

In Louisville, Georgia, Methodism arrived in 1801 with a visit from Francis Asbury and, after this visit, a full-time preacher was appointed and church membership grew. Around the same time, Methodist circuit riders found their way to Sandersville, with a church building soon following. Salem Church in Toombsboro was organized in 1818 by B. Winn with four acres being deeded to the trustees as the population demanded. Irwinton and Wadley started as camp ground meetings with Irwinton coming from Big Sandy Creek and Wadley coming from Bethany Camp Ground. What became known as Guyton UMC was listed as Andrew's Chapel and placed on the Springhead Circuit for 40 years before Thomas Elkins granted a tract of land in 1844. Gordon UMC started in the mid-1850s with Rev. W.S. Johnson being listed as the first pastor and Millen UMC was created by Bishop George F. Pierce at the first annual meeting of the newly formed South Georgia Conference. Midville UMC was created less than 10 years later and Marlowe UMC began when Mr. Edward J. Purse deeded one acre of land to the Methodists. The sanctuary in Marlowe, however, was built with timber given by the Presbyterians. Davisboro started as a Sunday school class with the church being chartered two years later and Trinity in Pooler started in the home of one of the original trustees.

As people moved, so too did this radical idea of personalized relationships with the Creator and Christian strength through study, support, and accountability. Small groups were formed in homes, under brush arbors, around itinerant circuit riders, and everywhere else that could be found. Small groups became less small and more space was needed. Land was deeded, simple timber structures built and then enlarged, and, when disaster struck, rebuilt. Times weren't easy and change was abundant but, with the change came an opportunity to tell more people about this methodical way of serving Christ and supporting each other.

As uncomfortable as change can be, whether from a new railroad or any other bit of modern technology, maybe we shouldn't view it as negative or inherently dangerous to our way of worship and community. Maybe we should see this change as an opportunity to meet new people and connect new places with our methodical way of living. Maybe we should see it as a way to put the move back into the movement.

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.

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Retired Clergy Birthdays – October 2021

10/01 – David Haygood, Sr.: 100 Lindsey Barron Dr., Apt. 215; Newnan, GA 30263

10/01 – E. Warren Williams: 761 Myna Dr., Unit 7084; Ellijay, GA 30540
10/01 – Edwin Willis: 4847 NE Rocky Ford Rd.; Madison, FL 32340
10/02 – Ross Tracy: 3800 Shamrock Dr.; Charlotte, NC 28215
10/04 – Riley Middleton, Jr.: 5002 St. Francis Ave.; Columbus, GA 31904
10/05 – Earl Seckinger: PO Box 766; Springfield, GA 31329
10/05 – J.W. Womble: 2935 Cherokee St.; Waycross, GA 31503
10/06 – Donald Combs: 5572 New Jesup Hwy.; Brunswick, GA 31523
10/08 – Bill Dupree: PO Box 169; Americus, GA 31709
10/09 – Karen Kilhefner: 7 Mistletoe Court; Savannah, GA 31419
10/10 – Hugh Baxter: 1272 Smith Bedgood Rd.; Harrison, GA 31035
10/11 – Bob Shell: 210 Castlegate Rd.; Macon, GA 31210
10/13 – Bill Neely: 1780 Snug Harbor Dr.; Greensboro, GA 30642
10/14 – Jairo Franco: Calle 1a Sur #42a 18 Barrio la Ponderosa; Bogota, Colombia
10/16 – John Bacher: 400 South Main Ave. 106; Pine Mountain, GA 31822
10/18 – Madison Morgan: 599 Clys-Kildare Rd.; Clys, GA 31303
10/19 – Billy Oliver: 135 Hines Terrace, Macon, GA 31204
10/21 – Stanley Harrell: 319 Crescent Road; Griffin, GA 30224
10/23 – John Brodess: 803 Moore Drive; Americus, GA 31709
10/23 – Frank Danner: 1415 Sunrise Ave.; Moultrie, GA 31768
10/24 – James Duke, Jr.: 102 Clarksville Ct.; Macon, GA 31210
10/24 – Evelyn Duvall: 10502 Regal View Loop; Clermont, FL 34711
10/24 – Carl Howard: 154 Ridgeland Dr.; Valdosta, GA 31602
10/24 – Willis Moore: 2378 Caladium Dr. NE; Atlanta, GA 30345
10/25 – Jimmy Cason: 1321 Kermit Dr.; Statesboro, GA 30458
10/25 – Gene Cochran: 4707 120th Blvd.; Lubbock, TX 79424
10/25 – Martin Loyley: 1544 Harris Ridge Rd.; Young Harris, GA 30582
10/25 – Craig Rikard: 3428 Brandon Dr.; Valdosta, GA 31605
10/25 – Gil Tripp: 1203 Rose Ave.; Americus, GA 31709
10/27 – Bill Jackson-Adams: 17 Lands End Dr.; Greensboro, NC 27408
10/28 – Bob Hannah: 20 Putters Place; Savannah, GA 31419
10/31 – Bob Moon: 4760 Oxford Rd.; Macon, GA 31210

Scripture Readings – Oct. 19 edition

October 24

Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost

Job 42:1-6, 10-17

Psalm 34:1-8, 19-22

Hebrews 7:23-28

Mark 10:46-52

October 31

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost

Ruth 1:1-18

Psalm 146
Hebrews 9:11-14
Mark 12:28-34

November 7

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost

Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17
Psalm 127
Hebrews 9:24-28
Mark 12:38-44

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 10/19/2021 edition

Advent Resources Webinar – Oct. 20

During this one-hour live Zoom webinar session, Anne Bosarge will offer advice and ideas about plans your congregation can begin making to make Advent and Christmas more meaningful. Anne will discuss lots of ideas for Bible studies, adult and children's activities, and more.

[Register](#)

Advanced Lay Servant Ministries Training, Vidalia – Oct. 22-23

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. Registration fee for the class is \$40. (Note: Basic Lay Servant class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) The class will meet at Vidalia First United Methodist Church, Friday, Oct. 22 from 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m., and Saturday, Oct. 23 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. For more information, contact Anne Bosarge at

anne@thechapelministries.com. [Register](#)

Early Response Team training, Dublin – Oct. 23

An Early Response Team training is set for October 23 at Dublin First UMC. [Click here for details](#). To schedule and host an ERT training/chainsaw training, please contact Luis Morales at morhill@gmail.com.

Basic Lay Servant Ministries Training, Richmond Hill – Nov. 5-6

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. Basic LSM Training includes a basic foundation of the faith and an introduction to leadership. The class is a Friday night AND Saturday session. The Friday evening session is from 6:30-9 p.m. and the Saturday session is from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at Richmond Hill 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, anne@thechapelministries.com. [Register](#)

Wesleyan College Sunday – Nov. 14

Each local United Methodist Church in South Georgia is encouraged to take up a special offering to support the ministry of Wesleyan College in Macon. To learn more about Wesleyan College, visit www.wesleyancollege.edu.

Advanced Lay Servant Ministries Training, Richmond Hill – Nov. 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 us about how we are called to use our spiritual gifts. Advanced LSM Training includes learning how to put your spiritual gifts into service. Registration fee for the class is \$40. (Note: Basic Lay Servant class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) The class will meet at Richmond Hill UMC, Friday, Nov. 19 from 6:30 p.m. – 9 p.m., and Saturday, Nov. 20 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. For more information, contact Anne Bosarge at anne@thechapelministries.com. [Register](#)

Encounter Youth Retreat – Nov. 19-21

Encounter Youth Retreat, for 6th-12th grade students, will take place November 19-21, 2021, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. [Information](#) / [Register](#)