

## **SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – NOVEMBER 16 EDITION**

### **Teaching is Colquitt UMC member's "God-given gift"**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Jessica Lawhorn's paternal grandfather was a Methodist pastor. He used his booming voice to preach the Good News from behind pulpits in Alabama and Florida. Lawhorn, a teacher, proclaims the gospel in a different way – by teaching children their letters, how to read, and by loving them unconditionally.

Lawhorn, a special education teacher at Seminole County Elementary School in Donalsonville, has been teaching since 2002. She was recently voted the 2021-2022 Seminole County Elementary School Teacher of the Year and the Seminole County School System Teacher of the Year. She's now in the running for the Georgia Teacher of the Year award.

She believes teaching is her God-given gift, and she uses it to share Christ with others. In addition to teaching in a classroom, she also serves at church by teaching Bible school, Sunday school, and children's lessons at Colquitt United Methodist Church.

"This is a gift God gave me," she said. "Some are great athletes, some are great preachers, some are great leaders. I'm a great teacher."

A veteran educator, Lawhorn is in her second year teaching at Seminole County Elementary School. For 10 years, she was a math inclusion teacher at Seminole County High School, giving instruction in algebra, pre-calculus, and geometry.

Surprised by her move to the elementary school, Lawhorn was at first apprehensive about the transition.

"I went from teaching pre-calculus to high school students to teaching children how to read and sound out the alphabet," she laughed.

She leaned on her faith, her family, and her friends, who reminded her that God is in control.

"Some of my friends of faith, some teacher friends who know me and pray with me, said, 'God knows what He's doing. You may not know, but that's okay.' Those friends of mine, two in particular, said they were praying for me and reminded me that God has got this and it's going to be okay."

It has been more than okay. Her students – in first through fourth grade – are succeeding and making strides in and out of the classroom. They're meeting learning goals and she's teaching them routines, schedules, expectations, how to communicate, and cope.

Above all, they know she cares.

“I work first and foremost on building a relationship with my students,” she said. “They trust me, they know I care about them. Their families know I care about them. I will visit them at their house; I’m going to go to whatever lengths it takes.”

Lawhorn chokes up when talking about teaching and her students. Education is her passion and her calling.

But Lawhorn teaches more than just reading, writing, and arithmetic. Through her actions she imparts an education in Christlike character.

“I think that our ability to show Christ through our actions speaks way louder than we will ever know,” she said. “Being kind, being patient, being honest, having empathy ... our actions really are important. In my actions, I show Christ through who I am as a person and hope others acknowledge that’s who it is in me.”

The Colquitt UMC congregation is proud of Lawhorn and her commitment to excellence in education, said Rev. Scott Stanfill.

“This honor recognizes not only the passion and energy Jessica brings into the classroom but also the deep desire she holds to see transformation happen in the lives of all her students,” he said.

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## **Brunswick First UMC shares hope, comfort, peace through Angel Ministry**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

There are angels among us, as the song says, and in Glynn County, at least, it’s because Ellen and Alan Huth and Brunswick First United Methodist Church’s new Angel Ministry have gifted nearly 500 small crocheted white angels to individuals and area ministries.

Depictions of angels have long afforded Ellen Huth a sense of comfort and peace, and for the past 10 years she and her husband, Alan, have passed the symbols of peace out to others.

“It all started about 10 years ago when we were living in the Atlanta area. I came across these crocheted angels and started buying them and giving them to people who were having difficult times,” Ellen said. “The reaction we got was such that we wanted to give out more angels.”

When the Huths moved to Brunswick in September 2017, they wanted to continue handing out the handcrafted heavenly hosts. They found a home at Brunswick First UMC and, between the church’s prayer list and area ministries, also found plenty of need.

Then the global coronavirus pandemic hit.

After speaking with senior pastor Dr. Wright Culpepper – who also serves as a chaplain at the local hospital – Ellen and Alan gave the 84 angels they had on hand to employees and nurses on the hospital’s COVID floor.

“They were having a very difficult time with COVID,” Ellen said. “After that, we wanted to do more, so we began giving them to COVID patients.”

Each angel, packed in a clear cellophane bag tied with a gold bow, includes a card that references Psalm 91:11. Part of the card’s inside message reads, “Here is a very special guardian angel to watch over you and offer you hope, comfort, and peace. The thoughts and prayers of many are with you.”

The angels let people know they’re cared about, the Huths said.

“We’ve gotten letters that thank us,” Alan said. “They seem to give people hope and inner peace. We’ve noticed, and Wright has, too, that people will put the angel in a prominent place and refer back to it when they’re having a difficult time. It helps them get through those times.”

Angels have also been given to FaithWorks’ Sparrow’s Nest, Magnolia Manor, Southeast Georgia Health System’s Ribbon of Hope breast cancer program, individuals on the church’s concern list, and additional hospital employees.

Wanting to expand the ministry, the Huths looked into starting a nonprofit but found it can be a difficult and cumbersome process. Instead, they spoke with Dr. Culpepper and asked if it could become one of the church’s ministries. Liking the idea, he presented it to the congregation, and since June, the Angel Ministry has been a ministry of Brunswick First UMC.

“Alan and Ellen are joyously sharing the reminder to all that we are not alone,” Dr. Culpepper said. “Their angels have comforted the sick, encouraged the weary, and blessed those who serve with a simple reminder of God’s presence. They love what they do and are a blessing to me and countless others.”

Each angel package costs about \$3, and the ministry is currently funded by individual donations. The Huths and the Angel Ministry’s team of volunteers have applied for a grant and are researching additional grant and fundraising opportunities.

Through the angels, they want to continue to share the love, care, and peace of God with the community.

“This was born out of empathy and compassion for those who are ill or suffering or for those are experiencing hardships and for those who are nearing the end of life,” Ellen said. “God is very much a part of our Angel Ministry. He is the driving force behind all of this. It’s something very dear to my heart. Angels are, too. It’s important to reach out to individuals who are having difficult times with an angel and a card to let them know somebody cares about them.”

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## Practice radical generosity on #GivingTuesday, Nov. 30

#GivingTuesday harnesses the generosity of millions of people around the world to support the causes they believe in and the communities in which they live. We invite you to select a ministry affiliated with the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church. This year, Giving Tuesday is Nov. 30. Click on a link below to give directly to an organization.

[Andrew College](#)

[Epworth By The Sea](#)

[Georgia Southern Wesley Foundation](#)

[Good News Television Ministry](#)

[Magnolia Manor](#)

[Open Door Community House](#)

[The Methodist Home for Children and Youth](#)

[United Methodist Volunteers in mission, Southeast Jurisdiction](#)

[Valdosta State University Wesley Foundation](#)

[Vashti Center](#)

[Wesleyan College](#)

[Wesley Community Centers](#)

[Wesley Glen](#)

If we've inadvertently missed a link, please let us know and we'll add it to this list. Email [kara@sgaumc.com](mailto:kara@sgaumc.com) to have your ministry added.

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## Our Connection Matters: Advent Resources

'Tis the season...almost! Sunday, November 28 marks the beginning of Advent, and we prepare to journey through the season, we hope the resources provided here will help your planning and give you fresh ideas. As you begin preparations for the Advent season, consider the following resources for new ideas. [Read more](#)

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## **A call to prayer**

**FROM THE BISHOP**

**DAVID GRAVES**

As the trial for the three men charged with murder in the February 23, 2020, shooting death of Ahmaud Arbery unfolds in Brunswick, there is concern and a lot of emotion regarding what will take place when a verdict is rendered. So many lives are and will be impacted by the events of the trial and an impending verdict. I am thankful for the pastoral and lay leadership of our Brunswick-area churches who are seeking to help people express themselves in a spirit of peace.

I am reminded of Psalm 23 which begins, “The Lord is my shepherd, I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows, he leads me beside peaceful streams, He renews my strength.” (Psalm 23:1-2, NLT)

My heart goes out to the family of Ahmaud Arbery, the defendants and their families, the jurors and their families, the judge and his family, and the lawyers and their families. While the list of those impacted is endless, each is a person and a child of God. Whatever the verdict, people will view it as a win or a loss. May God’s grace reign as we all seek to move forward from this tragedy.

Let us join together in praying that justice will reign and people will have a spirit of peace. God leads us to peaceful streams. Help us, Lord, and may your peace begin in each of us.

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## **Marriage of the Lamb**

**Fall Quarter: Celebrating God**

**Unit 3: Visions of Praise**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of November 21, 2021**

**By Dr. D. Craig Rikard**

**Background Scripture: Revelation 19:1-8**

**Key Scripture (NIV):** “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” Revelation 19:7

### **Lesson Aims**

1. To better understand the “transcendence” of heaven.
2. To better understand the nature of evil in the world and its destruction.

3. To better understand the vision of marriage as it pertains to God and his Church.

## **Introduction**

Our lesson precedes the powerful visions of the Kingdom in Rev. 20-21. Satan and evil are once and for all defeated as a “new heaven” and “new earth” appear. Each vision and image have been moving toward this final end. The preceding visions and images consisted of tribulation, interspersed with visions of hope. Now, in Revelation, that hope is fully realized. The good news for the Christian community is that though life is filled with adversity, our hope in God is real. We have blessed hope now, and it will be fully realized in the end. This hope empowers us to face and overcome adversity and suffering. This is one of the great purposes in giving the Church the book of Revelation. The Church has been experiencing horrendous persecution. Most Christians most likely were asking, “Where is God?” Revelation declares God is here, moving in the earth among all humankind, moving everything toward an ultimate righteous and loving end. John reminds the ready that we are blessed just by reading this book (Revelation 1:3). We cannot yet understand all of its visions and mysteries, but we can understand God’s power to conquer evil and establish righteousness and goodness in spite of evil.

In order to better understand the visions of John in our text, we will study the text by breaking it down into three sections: 1. The great multitude, 2. The great prostitute, 3. The wedding.

## **The great multitude**

When many consider heaven, they imagine John’s vision of the holy city. We must remember that the vision of the city is just that: a vision. The image of the city allows us to see the redeemed community living *together* in utter beauty and serenity with God. However, heaven is greater. In our text, John now speaks of heaven not as city, but as an eternal reality, beyond a city. The great multitude in this vision are not described as being in the city, they are “in heaven.” These are not two separate pictures of heaven. As a city, John was allowed to see heaven as a large city, full of life and beauty. Now, he speaks of heaven is an eternal state of existence, beyond our imagination and ability to comprehend. If you read some of the most used quotes about heaven you will discover use of the word “place.” Heaven is a place. Yet, “place” is a human word trying to capture an eternal reality that has no limits. Without the word “place” it is difficult to imagine heaven. We are enriched by the image of the Holy City. Still, our words in describing heaven are the best we can do. It will always be greater than we can conceive. Imagine no east, west, north or south! Imagine timeless existence! It is difficult to do so. Thank God for the images we are given in Revelation, for they say all we need to know. Heaven is a beautiful, serene, reality of togetherness with no limitations. This is enough for me and I think most of us.

Many of us loved *MercyMe*’s song, “I Can Only Imagine.” In this popular song the writer confesses the truth. All we have are the descriptions in sacred scripture and our imagination. What a day it will be when the visions of Revelation and our imaginations become reality!

Though our words may fail us when we speak of heaven and the Kingdom of God, the world can witness the attributes of heaven within and through our life. We allow the world to see Jesus and the Kingdom in us!

*When you consider heaven, what images come mind? Which images bring you most comfort and strength? How has John's Revelation given hope to the Church? How does the reality of heaven remove the sting of death? How does the reality of heaven effect the here and now? What role do Jesus and the Kingdom play in your witness? If someone asks you, "What is heaven?" how would you respond in a manner they can understand?*

John's vision speaks of the "great multitude," and especially the "sounds." These sounds remind us that heaven is life! As the earth teems with life even more so does heaven. Yet, we are not speaking of just noise! The sounds are loud because the community is large. We are loud in our praise! In the vision the redeemed people live! Their sound is loud! Their praise and rejoicing are unavoidable! The loud sounds of heaven proclaim that what is happening in heaven has great effect upon the earth. John's vision calls the earth to pay attention to life, both now and to come. We often think of heaven as a "separate" reality. For us, there is earth and heaven. We think of heaven as a place we go when we "leave this life." However, in Scripture, heaven and earth are connected according to the great will and design of God. Heaven, again, is the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom has moved and continues to move in human life from the moment we fell from grace. In Jesus, the Kingdom was embodied. We witnessed the values, attributes and heart of the Kingdom in Jesus. Jesus was the embodiment of the reign of God over sin, death, humankind, and nature itself. Thus, the Kingdom was in our world, and is now moving in our world. This movement of the Kingdom is ongoing now through the Holy Spirit in us and the Church. The Church should reflect the heart of the Kingdom and proclaim its reality in and through Jesus Christ. Naturally we cannot fully understand the connection of this life and the life to come. However, it is of great comfort to know the Kingdom is here, moving in the world, in our life, and the life of the Church. Heaven will not be a strange existence. After all, we have been tasting its sweetness and experiencing its power and love throughout our life. Heaven will be an extension of all that is sacred and precious intensified. It is empowering to know all that is precious now will one day be more than realized in heaven.

*Can you cite examples of when the Kingdom was visible in and through Jesus? How do we experience the Kingdom in the here and now? Can you share when and how you witnessed heaven on earth? In what way has heaven given you hope in your life? How do you think the Church can share this blessed hope of heaven with the world? What comfort do you find in knowing that all that is precious to you will be even more so in heaven?*

Notice in verse 5 that God's servants, both "great and small," are called to praise God. The world is full of rankings. We assign people social classes and we often treat people of power with preference. Jesus never acknowledged such rankings. He cared about the woman with the issue of blood as much as he did the rich young ruler. Revelation does mention designations of people

such as the 24 elders in the vision. However, in heaven, designations have nothing to do with self-importance. We understand them as functional. Whether these are real positions or images to help us understand is beyond our knowledge. However, in Jesus we learned the truth about the great and small: all are of equal value and importance!

*In what ways are people great and small in our world? In our church? In what ways can we ensure all are important and valued by God and us? What ministries in our church address the equal value of all? Read I Corinthians 14. How do you understand each person having a spiritual gift, with all being equal in importance? What does I Cor. 13 say about chapter 14?*

### **The great prostitute**

Many make the mistake of trying to identify the great prostitute as a specific nation or even person. Many, if not most, scholars agree that John's vision of the great prostitute is related to Babylon. However, it is not the ancient city of Babylon to which the vision points. Babylon has become the descriptive word for the dark power of the world. Ancient Babylon conquered Judah, the last portion of the Israelite Kingdom standing. Babylon destroyed all that was sacred to Judah, especially the temple. The brightest and best, along with many others, were taken into exile into Babylon. They would have to learn a different language, bow to a different king, and worship a foreign god.

In John's vision, Babylon represents those dark powers in the world that attempt to force another language upon us. Any language that demeans and is destructive to the human spirit is of Babylon. When forced to bow to the powers that be, that prove hostile to God and the Kingdom of God is of Babylon. Any power that demands our allegiance over God is of Babylon.

John's vision proclaims that this dark power will be utterly overthrown! We witness God's redemptive activity in life when we witness goodness overcoming evil. When we confront all that is destructive in life with the goodness and love of God, we are participating in God's redemption. This redemption will reach its culmination in the end!

Notice the dark power of the great prostitute corrupted the earth. Scripture has always taught that sin doesn't just corrupt people, it corrupts the earth. People who have given themselves over to sin and darkness tend to abuse creation. The quest for money and power has led many to abuse natural resources. Scripture identifies individual sin and corporate sin. We are not only sinners in need of God's grace in Jesus Christ, we are also participants in an abusive, corrupting world. We need to be saved from such corruption. Our new life in Christ calls us to confront such corruption.

Our understanding of the Church is that she is God's community where one can find hope, salvation, and comfort. However, we must never forget that we are also called to action against the sin and darkness. Naturally, we do so in love and truth. However, we do not cower and wait

for “God to fix it all.” God’s redemption of the world from all that is darkness is ongoing. We are called to participate!

*What do you believe are expressions of Babylon in our world? Where do you witness obvious corruption of the earth? Where do you witness the Church fighting the darkness with the life, light, and love of Jesus? In what ways is your local church fighting the darkness in love? What do you believe to be our greatest obstacle in confronting the darkness? What can we do to become more active in God’s redemptive will?*

## **The Wedding**

God has allowed John to witness the beautiful culmination of the Lord’s redemption. John uses the beautiful institution of marriage to describe the arrival of God’s ultimate reign. Jewish marriages involved two phases: the betrothal and the consummation. The family of the groom established a future marriage for him through a contract with the bride’s family. The groom’s family pays a price for the bride. In time, the actual marriage process begins.

The bride is then betrothed to the groom and vice versa. The betrothal is a legal state that can only be broken through divorce and legal action. At the moment, the bride and groom are married. However, the consummation of the marriage occurs approximately one year later. At this time, the groom and his groomsmen travel to the bride’s home, bringing her to her new home with her husband.

The parallels between the Jewish marriage and the redemptive activity on the part of God is stunning. God is the groom, and the world is the bride. God contracted for the bride in holy covenant, especially the covenant with Abraham. God remained true to this promise for all years to come. This contract was binding, especially after the price was paid. Jesus paid the price for his bride. His life, death, and resurrection were the price paid to redeem the world. The Church has been in betrothal with Christ from that day forward. Jesus bound himself to the Church through his selfless act of redemption. Christ is with us in every circumstance in life. He seeks only to give life and love to his bride, the Church. God gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to bind us to himself. The Spirit is much like today’s wedding band. The band proclaims to the world that we have given ourselves to another in deepest affection and love. When people witness the Spirit living in and through us, they witness the truth that we have given ourselves to God and God has given himself to us! Our relationship is sealed!

Now John allows us to envision the day of consummation. Any sin or power that sought to interfere with our Christian walk now gives way. Sin is annihilated to the uttermost as we share a holy intimacy with God. The bride has now traveled to the groom’s home! That home is heaven! The journey is over! Life indescribable awaits!

*In what ways does the analogy of the marriage help you understand what God has done in your life and the life of the Church? How do you understand your present walk with Jesus in the*

*marriage analogy? How does the marriage analogy help you understand where you are headed in life? How does knowing where you are headed empower you in the here and now?*

## **Prayer**

Almighty God, we realize we are part of your great redemption story. We realize we have a story to tell and a life to be lived. We thank you for our blessed destiny in Christ. Increase our understanding of the grace that redeemed us and the love that sealed us in Christ. May our lives reflect your Kingdom in the now and our hope reflect our belief in the Kingdom still to come. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Dr. D. Craig Rikard is a South Georgia pastor. Email him at [craigrikard169@yahoo.com](mailto:craigrikard169@yahoo.com).*

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## **Good News for All**

### **Fall Quarter: Celebrating God**

#### **Unit 3: Visions of Praise**

#### **Sunday school lesson for the week of November 28, 2021**

**By Dr. D. Craig Rikard**

#### **Background Scripture: Acts 10:34-47**

**Key Scripture (NIV):** "Peter began to speak: 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.'" Acts 10:34-35

#### **Lesson Aims:**

1. To understand Simon Peter's call.
2. To understand the substance of that call.
3. To understand the obstacles to that call.

#### **Simon Peter's Call**

##### *Social Background*

It is an understatement to claim the disciples possessed feet of clay. We relate so closely to Peter for just that reason. He was a hardworking fisherman, eking out a living while being overlooked by all who society considered powerful. He was married but we have no record of children. The relationships between husbands and wives functioned far differently than those today. Marriages were more functional. There were roles to be fulfilled, tasks to be done, and expectations to be met. Today's marriages are characterized by the emotional and spiritual connection of the couple. The one thing that created the differentiation between today's marriages and those of

Jesus' day was the marital contract. Marriages were arranged, and therefore often had little to do with emotional love. Therefore, it was not uncommon for a husband to be absent from his spouse and family while engaged in work or other activity, as long as he provided. Thus, Peter's accompaniment of Jesus was most certainly accepted by his wife.

Simon Peter was a man with hopes and dreams like all of us. However, the opportunity to make his mark in the world was almost nonexistent. There was little, if any, social mobility. While working on missions to the Yucatan I met a 13-year-old boy with tremendous musical ability. Sadly, I knew the opportunities before him were few. In his culture, if one is born poor they are most likely to stay poor and live unrecognized. This was pretty much Peter's plight. Therefore, when Peter met Jesus and answered his call, his entire existence was transformed. He could envision a future! He was not perfected in that moment. His journeys with Jesus chipped away at his rough exterior, seeking to reveal the precious gem at his core that God would use to establish the early Church.

Peter's initial call was to follow Jesus. Simon Peter possessed preconceived notions as to the role of Messiah. Like his fellow Jews, he expected a military leader, much akin to the Old Testament judges, to unite Israel in overthrowing Rome. He was nowhere near to understanding the reality of a Messiah who would usher in the reign of God through peace and redemption. Note that Jesus did not confront Peter directly when first called. As Peter walked with Jesus he would encounter the reality of God's Kingdom in Jesus, and his perception would be slowly altered. God does not call us when we are perfect in life or understanding. We are called to follow Jesus as we are. The open heart and life that journeys with Jesus will begin to embrace the liberating truth of Jesus and the Kingdom. Peter would have possessed no idea in the beginning that one day he would preach to Gentiles that God loved them!

*Where were you personally and socially when you responded to Jesus' call? Did you know everything? Have you now recognized you have been called to a journey that leads to greater understanding and sacrifice? Can you articulate how you understood your call to follow Jesus in the beginning? How does that initial understanding compare to your understanding today?*

### **Substance of Peter's Call**

Peter's phrase in verse 34, "I now realize," is revealing. This phrase reveals Peter's journey in the faith. Faith is a journey of realizing. We understand today what we did not understand years ago, or even yesterday. Our life is a series of discoveries, one illuminating the next. There remained a lot Peter had not discovered. This phrase causes us to ask, "What made Peter *now realize*?" Peter was sitting atop a roof at Joppa. People often retired to the roof at the end of the day to relax and enjoy cooler temperatures. Many went to the roof to think and pray. While Peter is atop the roof, a vision appears. It is a vision of a sheet lowered from heaven. Animals appeared on the sheet. They represented every animal, reptile, or bird that was forbidden to eat. Yet, God

calls Peter to eat! Peter would have been perplexed. To eat was to violate Old Testament law. However, God declared the unclean to be clean. God's spoken word made everything clean.

We should not overlook the fact that this vision occurs in Joppa. Joppa was the site where Jonah fled from God's call to preach to Nineveh and the place where Jonah was expelled upon the beach. From Joppa, Jonah would travel to the most violent, unclean city in the known world and proclaim God's message. The same thing is happening to Peter. Gentiles from the house of Cornelius arrived to escort Peter to their home. Cornelius and his household were Gentiles. For Peter, the household would be unclean. However, now Peter has *realized* that God had declared them clean through his Word. The Word, the Logos, Jesus, had come to save everyone, including Gentiles! This experience with Cornelius fulfills the structure given us in Acts 1:8. The Gospel has been preached in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and now it is going into the uttermost parts of the earth!

*When you say Jesus has called you, can you express the nature of that call? What is the mission of that call? It's intent and purpose? Where has your call taken you spiritually as you walk with Jesus? What do you see more clearly and hear more keenly? What actions in which you engage today stand in contrast to the actions of the past? Where have you walked that you normally would never go? What has God done through you that you could not have conceived in the beginning?*

## **Obstacles to Peter's Call**

### *Prejudice*

One of the major character flaws of Peter was his prejudice against Gentiles. In Peter's understanding of God, Israel was God's favored nation. Therefore, the Israelites were the recipients of every good and perfect gift from God, especially the Messiah. Instead of ancient Israel reaching outward with loving hearts and truth that could alter the world, they turned inward. Consequently, the Gentiles stood on the outside looking in. Peter, like most, had little use for the Gentiles.

It is important to note that Peter's prejudice remained *after* his powerful experience at Pentecost! Peter descended from the upper room a new man. He understood the purpose of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. His first sermon was preached just outside the upper room. However, prejudice remained in his heart. Our Christian conversion is a beginning. We are God's child, but far from the person God desires we be. Pentecost was the third touch upon Peter's life. He had been touched by all Jesus had done and said. He was touched when Jesus reclaimed him after he denied Jesus three times. Then, he was powerfully touched at Pentecost when the events in the redemptive story all began to make sense as he was filled by the Holy Spirit. Our Christian life is a "journey of touches." We were touched prior to even becoming a Christian. John Wesley called this touch "prevenient grace" which means grace that precedes. At some time, we yielded our heart to that grace. Our lives will be touched many times over, each touch bringing

enlightenment, strength, comfort and hope. On the roof at Joppa Peter experienced another touch of the Lord.

Many of us were reared in prejudice. There is nothing godly about prejudice. It is a learned behavior that we had the choice to lay aside or continue to walk in it. At some point in our life we realized God's love for all, and thus, we should love all without restraint or conditions.

In verses 34-43 Peter lays the foundation for his preaching. It took courage for Peter to stand and preach, "I now realize God loves everyone in Christ!" Peter goes so far as to tell his listeners that God accepts everyone from every nation. In the opening of Acts the structural groundwork is laid for the geographical movement in the book.

*Can you describe the destruction that emerges from prejudice in life and in the faith? Can you share a moment when you experienced such destruction? Can you express your own experience with prejudice in your life? Can you describe your journey toward inclusiveness and acceptance of all? Is prejudice still a hinderance? How do you believe we can help one another in overcoming all prejudice and bias?*

We also read Peter's inclusion of favoritism as a sin and hinderance to the spreading of the Gospel. Humankind has found the means to divide and disrespect others since our fall from grace. Initially, the great division existed between men and women and their status in life. Eventually, a division arose relating to tribalism. Tribalism later became nationalism with nation dividing against nation. Even religion became a source of division with the declaration that one nation's gods were greater than others.

Jesus was the embodiment of the one true God. His life, death and resurrection destroyed division and called for unity in God. Favoritism can prove more personal as it relates to power and wealth. Among the masses of people in Jesus' day, people were separated by social class. Jews in the area of Jerusalem thought themselves better than the blue-collar workers of Galilee. Within such division Peter was born and reared. People with power and money were treated differently, and better, than the masses.

*Where do you encounter favoritism today? How does it normally reveal itself? Can you describe the destructive elements of favoritism? How does favoritism contradict the Gospel? What can our churches do to better overcome favoritism?*

In our text, Peter reveals his one great obstacle in moving forward in his calling to be an apostle and to be a good man: His belief that God loves the Jews more than the Gentiles. The vision of the sheet had a tremendous effect upon Peter. His message was drastically altered. His message no longer called just the Jewish people to accept Jesus as Messiah; he was calling to the world to recognize that the gift of Christ was for all. Paul's conversion occurred in the preceding chapter. Paul was persecuting Jewish Christians as Peter was beginning his ministry among the Jews.

Through God's grace and the vision at Joppa, Peter realized the Gospel was for the world; Paul begins here and actually takes it into the world.

It is interesting to again note that the early Church experienced few arguments related to baptism in relation to how, when, and where. The arguments were mostly related to who baptized whom. Peter proclaims that through Christ all believers are to be united in the "one baptism and faith." We are brought into the family of God, and the mission of God to redeem the world through Christ.

*Is there a particular experience that opened your eyes to God's acceptance and love for all? How did you respond to the experience? What can our churches do to better share the Gospel of God's inclusive love in Christ?*

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, when we recall our past and examine our today, we are humbled. We thank you for deliverance from anything that hinders our love for another. Grant us a greater vision of the community of faith in the world, and the courage necessary to make this vision a reality. In Jesus' name, Amen.

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## **Justice and Obedience**

### **Winter Quarter: God Requires Justice**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of December 5, 2021**

**By Dr. D. Craig Rikard**

**Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 5; 10; 27; 28**

**Key Scripture (NIV):** "Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the Lord's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?" Deut. 10:12-13

### **Lesson Aims**

This lesson is to help us answer the great question of Deut. 10:12, "What does the Lord your God ask of you?"

1. To understand the importance of listening in contrast to just hearing the Word.
2. To understand the importance of internalizing what we hear.

3. To understand the importance of allowing the Word to accomplish its purpose through action and obedience.
4. To understand the importance of preserving the eternal message of God in a temporal world.

### **The Invitation to hear, learn, and respond**

#### *Hear!*

The masses of people possessed no personal sacred documents. All sacred writing belonged to the priests. The people were totally dependent upon the priests to share that writing and dependent upon their own ears for listening. If you didn't listen you couldn't know. Thus, the great emphasis upon hearing in Scripture. We can assume that most people listened carefully in the biblical era. There was too much at stake in ignoring something said by God. Usually the term "listen" implied an action deeper than simply hearing. We hear when words or sounds simply strike our eardrum. Listening implies that we are "paying attention" to what we hear. When listening, we "take the words into ourselves," thus allowing them full effect upon our life. Those words will then create thought, and thought will create action. Even if the word is ignored, an action of "neglecting" is taken with particular consequences to follow.

A person must place themselves in a position to listen. Hearing doesn't require focus. We can walk a busy street and hear a myriad of sound. However, listening requires we focus on "one sound" above all others. Naturally, the quieter the world about us the easier it is to listen. However, a trained ear can listen in the midst of noise. My spouse once asked me why I listened to a musical recording over and over. I informed her I was listening for a particular instrument in the midst of the cacophony. People can learn to spiritually listen in such a manner. Most likely the Israelites had learned the practice of listening.

While visiting the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem I was led into a side corridor where fathers and grandfathers were teaching their children the Mosaic Law. One of the children turned as I walked by and immediately the grandfather stopped talking, gave the boy a penetrating stare and waited. The boy turned to face the grandfather and focused. The grandfather began anew. I was witnessing an ancient, effective tradition for teaching children to listen and learn.

*Do you consider yourself a "hearer" or "listener?" What is the difference to you? How can you train yourself and others to become listeners of spiritual truth? Can you share with others in the class the techniques or methods that have helped you most to listen?*

#### *Learn*

Following the call to hear and listen is the command to "learn them." The term "command" does not sit well with us in our modern culture. Who likes to be commanded to do anything? However, we must remember who is speaking and requesting. It is our Creator who speaks and

*commands* us to hear and learn. Naturally, this exhortation to learn follows upon the heels of listening. However, there exists the deeper implication that we employ our memory. We are not to allow what we hear to escape our attention or memory. These words and their message are to remain! Jesus used a very pointed parable to illustrate the importance of listening and learning. When one allows the word of God to fall upon the ear with little desire to retain that word, the action is akin to throwing seed upon hard ground. The seed will lay upon the ground and be swept away by the wind or eaten by birds. God does not speak to be ignored! Retention is a choice. The word from the Lord is free, an act of grace; however, what we do with that word is up to us.

Retention of what we hear and learn is easier for some than others. Yet, all of us remember what we deem as important to us. It is helpful to recall exactly what we are being asked to remember. Of course, the ancient Israelites were dependent upon words, for their faith was in its infancy. Today we receive a faith handed to us through the holy hands and hearts of those who listened and heard. It is important for us to remember words, but above all we need to remember “the message itself.” Remembering the message implies remembering the principle beneath the words. For example, in contrast to remembering the tedious dietary laws word for word, the principle beneath is that of “coming out and being separate” from the surrounding culture. This principle is important to remember. Today we are not separated from the world through what we eat or drink. Our behavior and faith are what call us apart. I always encourage people to remember the nature of the message itself, more so than the exact wording. Both are helpful, but the message is extremely important. People can become frustrated attempting to remember exact words. However, the message of God’s love and the life that it gives is far easier to retain. Therefore, let us listen closely to the *message* of our text from Deuteronomy.

*Using Jesus’ parable of the Sower and the Seed, which type of soil best describes your listening and remembering? What are the cares of the world that choke truth from taking root in your heart? What do you think the parable means when it speaks of the “shallow heart?” What makes a heart shallow? What do you believe you can do to make the soil of your hear more fertile for God’s Word?*

*Respond*

Thus far we have been called to listen and learn. Now the third leg of the stool is added. We are to “follow them.” Faith isn’t passive. The act of hearing and listening is active; it is intentional. In Scripture, words are assigned great creative power. Notice in Genesis 1 the world was created through God’s “speaking.” Words have the power to create. Any word we speak at any given time will have an effect upon the listener. A constructive word can help them engage in a healthy course of action. Sadly, the inverse is true. The New Testament book of James reminds us words have the power to create a course of destruction or wholeness. Our listening to the words and message of Scripture does create an action. They force us to deal with them. The prophet wrote, “The word of the Lord does not return void.” (Isaiah 55:11). We can choose neglect or

obedience. We will choose one or the other. Words put into action are remembered. An action becomes associated with the words and message thus creating a deeper memory. The message of Scripture is a message of order, design, hope, faith and love. How tragic when such a message is neglected! Neglect doesn't just involve giving the words little attention; it involves doing nothing with them. This introduction to chapter 5 calls us to listen and act upon the particular message that follows. The message, and every message from Scripture, should be heard, learned, and acted upon.

*What do you believe is the biggest obstacle for you in allowing the Word to become action? Is it common to leave worship, SS, and other classes filled with the message of God, only to have it lie dormant in the heart? Why is it difficult for us to put truth into action? Have we considered the fact that if we do not act, someone will not see or hear what God desires to speak through us? What can we do to help create a sense of urgency in our own heart regarding acting upon Scripture? Do we have an accountability system created that asks "What have you done with what you've heard?" If not, why not? How do you think such an accountability system can be established?*

### **The Great Question**

The creators of our lesson now ask us to visit chapter 10 of Deuteronomy. The author now asks a question that we should ask ourselves daily. "What does the Lord your God ask of you?" Notice the phrase doesn't read "What does the Lord ask of you?" The personal "your God" is included. "What does the Lord *your God* ask of you?" We have a personal relationship with God through Christ. Yes, the Lord is God over all. However, we need to remind ourselves that God is "my God." There is a call upon our life together, and there is a call upon each individual life. What God asks of our individual life is what is good for our life together in Christ.

The author emphasizes that the covenant God established with us was not just for the original recipients. It was for all hearing the message that day, and all people yet to come. In the Koine Greek language there is a verb tense that does not exist in English. It is the aorist. The aorist implies that an action is finished, yet it continues. For example, Jesus died for the sins of the world on a particular day and hour. However, the redemption given in that moment continues even now. Jesus saved, is saving, and will save. The covenant was ratified with those early Israelites, yet its message and effect continue. The aorist tense serves as a great metaphor for understanding the intent of this text. The covenant was established, is established, and will be established. Thus, Biblical history is not for the museum; it is for living! We are those that bring the sacred past into the present and future!

This text offers us an important expression of truth. We are intimately connected with the redemptive story of Scripture. From the story of Abraham and Sarah, to Moses, to David, and eventually to Jesus, these are "our stories!" The power of God's action in that moment is present

even now and will always continue. Thus, God didn't just "do something" for the people in the stories, God did something for us all and is continuing to do so.

*How do you understand the phrase "Jesus saved, is saving, and will save?" How does this phrase effect your understanding or your personal faith journey? What does this phrase have to say about those who preceded us in the faith, and those to come? Do you understand yourself as being part of a great spiritual continuity? How so?*

### **The Answer to the Question**

The answer to the question is given by the inspired author. We are to fear the Lord our God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, and to serve him. We can take each of these individually, however, they are intimately bound together. Fearing God calls for a genuine sense of humility in one's life. Godly fear involves reverence. In the Old Testament era people were terrified to see God, hear God's voice directly, or even speak the divine name. Thus, God used angels as intermediaries. Though we live in the New Testament era in which Jesus invited all into a personal relationship with God, there still must be a measure of reverential fear. We are not afraid of what God is going to do to us. Jesus has revealed God's love and care. We are afraid because we recognize we are in the presence of the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end! This thought alone should drive us to our knees. After all, the one who has called us into relationship is God! Humanity must always be aware of just how limited and finite we are. Thus, to us, a finite fragile people, God has spoken. The act of being called into relationship is an action that should humble each of us. One year I was teaching from the book of Jonah and the opening grabbed my attention. Like all prophetic books, Jonah opened with the statement that "the word of the Lord came to Jonah." Imagine, across this vast cosmos of the mysterious and incomprehensible, God chose to speak to an individual; a stubborn individual at that! I was awestruck when considering that reality. We all must live in awe that the Lord of all, the Creator, has spoken to us corporately and individually through Christ!

*Do you feel most people today possess a reverential fear of God? If not, why do you think it is absent? How would you define and express such fear? Do you think there is a danger of "making God small?" How do people today treat God? As the Creator of all or as "God of their personal world?" Can we do both? If so, how?*

Our love for God is born out of the reality that we were first loved. We were sought and called. This action on God's part is enough in and of itself to call forth love in the heart. Love isn't just an emotional feeling. It is an awakening to the reality of what has happened in life, and especially our life. Love is the realization we have been loved and called when we had little to offer. Loving God is as much choice as it is feeling. We choose to make ourselves aware of God's presence and goodness. With enlightened eyes and hearts through Jesus, we look for God and God's love in all of life. Feeling love in our faith always follows our choice to realize God has loved us first. John Wesley was told to preach faith until he had faith. Wesley wanted to feel

that internal stirring of the heart, yet he struggled. However, as Wesley preached faith and chose to live by faith, his heart was eventually stirred with the reality of what he was preaching. He felt his sins forgiven and sensed a warming in his heart.

*What does it mean for you to act loving until you feel loving? Can you recall a moment in your life when you chose to love another without any emotional attachment, only to later feel an emotional and spiritual bond to that person? Can you express what it means for you to love God?*

We choose to love God through obedience and service. Our obedience and service from a gracious heart are the dynamics that create the feeling of “loving God.” Obedience means to “do as asked.” What is it we are asked? We are asked to serve. Our fallen nature has led humanity to believe the great goal in life is to be happy and contented. These certainly are important facets of life. However, the child of God learns that true contentment and happiness are the fruit of sacrificial service. Once on a mission to a very poor area, some of our team members began to discuss “Americanizing” them. It was thought, if we can give them the things we have, like good beds, hot water, and better houses, they would in turn be happy. However, in reality they were happier than we were. The one great memory I took from that mission was their dedication and service to Christ. That dedication filled their life with meaning and purpose, as it should for all of us. Thus, their joy was genuine and contagious, and was directly related to their service. Prior to attempting to amass things to make us happy, we should first attempt to do the things that mean something to God and the world.

*What do you believe is the difference between being happy and contented? Read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Jesus began the Beatitudes with “Blessed is the man,” which is often interpreted “Happy is the man.” However, read what follows these introductory words and discover how a person becomes blessed and happy. What do the Beatitudes say about your own quest for happiness and contentment?*

Following chapter 10 we visit chapter 27. In this interesting chapter we read of the attempt to preserve the written Law of God. The Law is to be preserved in a special place in the promised land. This place is to be elevated. Elevation was equated with the idea of something being “high and noble.” The high places were associated with God.

Stones and altars were used as memorials for the sacred. Stones had permanence. The Law of the Lord was not a transient message to be observed for a few years. It was eternal! In their limited understanding, there were few objects upon which to preserve the eternal as effective as stone. The coating with plaster provided an ability to inscribe without using tools. It also provided extra protection against the wind and rain. Nothing should be able to erode these words of the Lord!

These stones and altars were not to be created by using tools upon stone. The surrounding idolatrous nations fashioned their gods from wood and stone. They chiseled and hewn them into

likenesses of their gods. However, Israel served the one true God! They served the Creator of all! Israel's message was far different from the surrounding nations and should be treated differently.

*In what ways is our precious faith and the message of the Gospel preserved in the world? How do we preserve the Gospel in our own life and in the life of the church? Read Jeremiah 31:33 and Jeremiah 32:36-41. Where does God say the sacred covenant and Word would be written and preserved? What does this mean for your faith and the life of your church? What can we do to ensure the sacred dwells within us?*

One of the more amazing things associated with this command to preserve the Word of the Lord in the promised land was the fact that they could do so on a few stones. As time moved forward from Moses into the day of Jesus, 613 laws developed; a far cry from the original 10! It is important to remember that Israel did not live lawlessly prior to the Decalogue. There were many social customs and laws from living in the culture prior to the Mosaic Law. These were not removed! The only laws removed would have been those that violated the Decalogue. Thus, the Law grew to express how the Ten Commandments were to be lived in their already existing culture. Over the years, the need to "interpret" those laws arose. If one was to keep the Sabbath Day holy, how did one do so? If one was not to work on the Sabbath, one had to define what it meant to work. Eventually, there were laws regarding how much could be lifted on the Sabbath and what acts were deemed work.

However, in the years of our text in Deuteronomy, the Law had yet to grow into the numerous laws that followed. The important message here was the desire to preserve them for all time.

Sacrifices of joy and thanksgiving were to accompany the setting up of the stones and altars. The Law was never intended to be a "heartless" reality. The Law had far more substance than words engraved on stone. The Law had heart. In Deut. 6:4 we read the clearest expression of that heart in the Shema. Jesus noted this Law as the greatest of all Laws. "Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one God! And, thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." Jesus was to add the emphatic, "And your neighbor as thyself." This wasn't so much an addition as it was a fuller expression of the law's heart.

*Jesus proclaimed the "heart of the Law" existed in the Shema, Deut. 6:4-9. How does the Shema help you in being able to grasp the purpose of all 613 Mosaic Laws? How does keeping this one Law help us obey all 613? Can you understand why Jesus said his "yoke was easy and his burden light?"*

## **Prayer**

Almighty God, we thank you for the Law of love and the life it births in our hearts and the hearts of all who desire to follow you. Help us hear the question, "What do you ask of us?" in each day of our life. Reveal to us the doorways that allow to us discover the answer to the question and empower us to walk forward into that answer as we live for Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Dr. D. Craig Rikard is a South Georgia pastor. Email him at [craigrikard169@yahoo.com](mailto:craigrikard169@yahoo.com).*

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## **Suffering and a Few Insights**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

Have you ever been watching television and the announcer suddenly interrupts and says, “We interrupt this program to bring you an important announcement.” Sure, you have. We’ve all experienced this kind of interruption. Occasionally, the interruption will be good news such as the collapse of the Berlin Wall. But most of the time when we hear that interruption we have to white-knuckle the arms of our chairs. We know it means trouble, storms, disaster, pandemics, and more trouble. For the most part, we remember exactly where we were when news of the 911 attack on the United States occurred. During that interruption, I was attending a church staff meeting in Columbus, Georgia.

So how do we handle bad news? How do we handle life-shattering tragedies? Jesus had just interrupted his disciple’s program with a very grave announcement. He had informed them that their fellowship was about to be broken. Jesus told them of his impending crucifixion and death. Oh, yes, he had also told them about his resurrection, but in their despair they missed that part of the message. They only knew that the One who had actually revealed God to them was leaving. To put it bluntly, the disciple’s world was falling apart. It was in such troubling times that Jesus spoke these comforting words, “Let not your hearts be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). Jesus is telling us to believe in God – not a generic “god,” but the “Father” to whom he leads us. Believe means “to trust. And trust is the capacity to hold on, to keep steady, to have an underlying trust in God even when the way is not clear and the issues involved are beyond our understanding and grasp.

Now, in the light of Jesus’ admonition to trust God, let me focus for a moment on the tragedies of life.

First, God does not send the tragedies of life! One thing we people of faith need to get clear is that human tragedy is not the will of God. As someone put it, “tragedy happens because life happens.” Some tragedies are caused by bad luck, some are caused by bad people, some are simply the inevitable consequences of our being mortal and living in a world of very inflexible natural laws, and some are mysteries. “Why do good people suffer?” is the age-old question. However, there is an equally age-old observation. The children of God have always been able to come through suffering triumphantly.

Second, God is with us in our tragedy! Some years ago, the popular biblical scholar, William Barclay, faced a great tragedy. His 21-year-old daughter and her husband to be were both drowned in a tragic yachting accident. Just a few weeks before they were scheduled to be

married, they were both killed. Later, in his “Spiritual Autobiography,” Barclay wrote, “God did not stop the accident at sea, but He did still the storm in my own heart, so that somehow my wife and I came through that terrible time on our two feet.” He continued, “The day my daughter was lost at sea, there was sorrow in the heart of God.” As Isaiah expressed it on behalf of God, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you” (Isaiah 43:2).

*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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## **Thankful for Philip Barrett**

### **WHAT’S OLD IS NEW AGAIN**

**ANNE PACKARD**

Barrett’s Chapel is the oldest surviving church building built by and for Methodists. It was built in 1780 on land donated by Philip Barrett, a successful politician and newly converted Methodist, and is located north of Frederica, in Kent County, Delaware. With the end of the American Revolution and peace at last in the newly formed country, John Wesley sent Thomas Coke to America in 1784 to find Francis Asbury and discuss the future of American Methodism. Coke came to Barrett’s Chapel on Sunday, November 14, to preach with the hope he’d find Asbury there. During the service, Asbury arrived and Coke left the pulpit to embrace him. A star on the floor of the chapel commemorates this historic moment. It was at this service that the sacraments of both baptism and communion were first administered by ordained Methodist clergy.

After the service, Coke and Asbury walked across the field to the home of Miriam Barrett, Philip’s widow, and with nine other Methodist preachers, Coke explained John Wesley’s plan. He explained that Wesley had ordained Coke a superintendent so that he may ordain Asbury a co-superintendent so that the movement may continue to grow and flourish. The modern church calls this position a bishop. However, Francis Asbury, who had stayed loyal to the colonies and ideals of democracy, refused to be ordained that evening. Instead, it was decided that Freeborn Garrettson would ride on horseback and call the Methodist preachers to Lovely Lane Chapel in Baltimore, Maryland, over the Christmas holiday so that they could vote on Asbury’s ordination.

While waiting for the second meeting, Coke and Asbury rode together for 900 miles around the countryside preaching to all who would listen. After six weeks of waiting, on December 24, 1784, nearly sixty of the eighty-one Methodist preachers assembled at Lovely Lane Chapel and voted unanimously to ordain Rev. Francis Asbury bishop. Asbury was ordained a deacon on Christmas Day, an elder on December 26<sup>th</sup>, and bishop on the 27<sup>th</sup>. Coke preached Asbury's

ordination service and said of Asbury, “In the presence of Mr. Asbury, I feel myself a child. He is in my estimation, the most apostolic man I ever saw, except Mr. Wesley.”

The meeting at Barrett’s Chapel on November 14, 1784 led to the creation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the ordination of Bishop Asbury, and the first celebration of baptism and communion by ordained Methodist clergy. All of this happened because Philip Barrett built a church and, for this, I am truly grateful this Thanksgiving. May you also be blessed with a place to meet and people to love this holiday season.

*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 – November 2021**

- 11/01 – Sam Collins: PO Box 191; Dexter, GA 31019
- 11/01 – Thomas Maddox: 5938 State Route 7 South; Gallipolis, OH 45631
- 11/03 – Loretta Dunbar: 7552 Edgewater Dr.; Columbus, GA 31904
- 11/03 – Edwin Smith: 305 Grindstone Creek Dr.; Clarkesville, GA 30523
- 11/04 – Russell Edwards, Jr.: 1660 Jennings Mill Rd.; Watkinsville, GA 30677
- 11/07 – Eve Tomberlin: 137 Aston Hall; Macon, GA 31078
- 11/08 – Gary Carter: 400 Hill Manning Rd.; Cochran, GA 31014
- 11/08 – Mary Ann Traver: PO Box 1934; Richmond Hill, GA 31324
- 11/09 – Douglas Force: PO Box 1938; Hinesville, GA 31313
- 11/09 – Joe Flowers, Jr.: 390 Brook Hollow Dr.; McDonough, GA 30252
- 11/10 – Kirk Loyless: 5677 Hwy. 91 S; Donalsonville, GA 39845
- 11/11 – David Johnson: 916 Watermelon Run; Charleston, SC 29412
- 11/12 – James E. Davis: 170 Caney Branch Dr.; Homerville, GA 31634
- 11/12 – John Mitchell: 123 Lundy Court; Macon, GA 31210
- 11/14 – 3915 49<sup>th</sup> Ave. Northfied U.; St. Petersburg, FL 33714
- 11/14 – Woody Roberts: 1259 Hwy. 36 E.; Barnesville, GA 30204
- 11/14 – David Tart, III: 312 Knob Hill Rd.; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 11/14 – Donald Youmans: 287 Pacolet Ridge Lane; Tryon, NC 28782
- 11/16 – Brad Brady: 602 Bridle Run; Statesboro, GA 30458
- 11/21 – Robert Hall: 4221 Stone Mill Ct.; Martinez, GA 30907
- 11/21 – Kitty Newton: 187 Newbridge Rd.; Sylvania, GA 30467
- 11/22 – John McGowan: #1 Ramblewood Circle; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 11/23 – Jack Atkinson: 2317 Bear Creek Rd.; Adel, GA 31620
- 11/25 – Carter Berkeley: 77 Bethany Way; Statesboro, GA 30458
- 11/25 – Rex Odom: 4062 Vineville Ave.; Macon, GA 31210
- 11/27 – Buddy Coss: 356 Manry St.; Edison, GA 39846
- 11/27 – Gordon Goodwill: 2911 Charlie Lane; Statesboro, GA 30461
- 11/28 – Richard Turnipseed: 12420 Clubhouse Court; Tavares, FL 32778
- 11/30 – Enoch Hendry: 306 E. 54th St.; Savannah, GA 31405

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## **OBITUARIES**

### **Rev. Rodger Randall Ray**

Rev. Rodger Randall Ray, age 81, passed away on Friday evening, November 5, 2021, at Perfect Care.

Private family graveside funeral services will be held.

Born June 19, 1940, in Fulton County, he was a son of the late William H. Ray and the late Mary Ray. He received his education from Shorter College in Rome, and Emory School of Theology, and was a veteran of the United States Army.

Rev. Ray served as a United Methodist minister for 23 years in the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church. He pastored seven churches in Georgia: Rebecca United Methodist Church in Rebecca, St. John's United Methodist Church in Blackshear, Lumpkin United Methodist Church in Lumpkin, Tennille United Methodist Church in Tennille, Guyton United Methodist Church in Guyton, Calvary United Methodist Church in Swainsboro, and Salem United Methodist Church in Americus.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife, Ophelia Wheeler Ray; his daughter, Laurie Tyler; and a brother, Herbert Ray.

Survivors include three sons: Randy Ray (Ashley) of Americus, Eddie Ray (Dean) of High Point, NC, and Barry Ray (Denise) of Sylvester; son-in-law, Paul Tyler of Americus; brother, Dr. Warner Ray (Tisha) of Charleston, SC; grandchildren: Brandon Ray, Townsend Ray, Ashton Ray, Jamie Tyler (Heather), Matthew Tyler (Jenna), Aaron Tyler (Jamie), Jeremy Ray, Allen Ray, and Brittany Ray; great-grandchildren: Eli Ray, Christopher Tyler, and Rhett Tyler; nephew, John Ray; and niece, Laura Harrell.

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

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## **Scripture Readings – Nov. 16 edition**

**November 21**

*Reign of Christ*

2 Samuel 23:1-7

Psalm 132:1-12

Revelation 1:4-8

John 18:33-37

**November 28**

***First Sunday of Advent***

Jeremiah 33:14-16

Psalm 25:1-10

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Luke 21:25-36

**December 5**

***Second Sunday of Advent***

Malachi 3:1-4

Philippians 1:3-11

Luke 1:68-79

Luke 3:1-6

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**Events in the South Georgia Conference – 11/16/2021 edition**

**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](mailto: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](#)

**United Methodist Student Day – Nov. 28**

The United Methodist Student Day Special Sunday Offering helps provide funds for scholarships and loans for United Methodist students. Student Day gifts make a real difference for those who hope to attend college. Ninety percent (90%) of the offering goes toward funding the many scholarships and loans administered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry ([www.gbhem.org](http://www.gbhem.org)) and ten percent (10%) stays within our state and goes to Georgia UM-related schools for merit scholarships. Contact the Georgia Commission on Higher Education and Collegiate Ministry (770-854-7283 or [www.umcommission.org](http://www.umcommission.org)) for more information.

### **Basic ERT Recertification (in-person), Rincon – Dec. 3**

This class is for current or expired ERTs who need to update their badge. You must have a current ERT badge or an expired badge from 2020 or 2021. If your badge expired prior to 2020, you must complete the ERT Basic course offered on Saturday, Dec. 4. The recertification class will be held at 6 p.m. Friday, Dec. 3 at Goshen UMC in Rincon. For questions, contact Kelly Crane at [kelcrane@gmail.com](mailto:kelcrane@gmail.com) or call 731-499-0491. [Register here](#)

### **Basic ERT Training, Rincon – Dec. 4**

An Early Response Team training is set for December 4 at Goshen UMC in Rincon [Click here for details](#). The ERT training begins at 9 a.m. and lunch is included. For questions, contact Kelly Crane at [kelcrane@gmail.com](mailto:kelcrane@gmail.com) or call 731-499-0491. [Register here](#)

### **Online Basic ERT Recertification – Dec. 11**

If your early response team (ERT) credentials have expired and you have not been able to renew because of COVID, UMCOR has waived all credentials from November 2019 through December 2021. In order to move forward in the credentialing process, UMCOR has now deployed an online recertification course to help you update your ERT credentials. Luis Morales, disaster response coordinator, will be hosting a four-hour online class on Saturday, Dec. 11. It will be held via Zoom from 8 am – 12 noon. [More information](#) / [Register](#)