

## **SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – JANUARY 18 EDITION**

### **Celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Yesterday we celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Every day, though, is an opportunity to love our neighbor and help bring light to the darkness. "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" How are you helping drive out injustice? How are you helping sow love? How are you being a light in the darkness?

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### **Thomasville First UMC members give time, serve others during Advent**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

For the past 14 years, Thomasville First United Methodist Church's congregation has celebrated Christmas differently.

Since 2007, church leaders have challenged members to spend less during the Christmas season and put the money saved towards a mission project. Called Advent Revolution, the mission project focuses on remembering why Christmas is celebrated and on making an eternal difference in the world. Over the years, the congregation has built homes for orphaned children, dug water wells, built churches, provided scholarships, started a feeding program, repaired and outfitted a maternity clinic, and more.

The past two years have proven challenging, however. The majority of Advent Revolution's international mission focus is on projects and ministries in Rwanda, but because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, serving overseas isn't currently possible.

"Advent Revolution has been a part of our church for so long; people and families are really invested in it," said Stephanie Nicholson, head of Thomasville First UMC's international missions team. "We wanted to figure out how we could do the basic premise of it – spend less, give more, worship fully, love all – in a different way."

In past years, the congregation has been asked to spend less money. But as the team planned and prayed about 2021's Advent Revolution, it became clear that God was leading them in a new direction.

"When you're spending less and giving more it's not always about money," Nicholson said.

They decided to ask people to give and invest their time in relationships with others and in meaningful projects that have lasting, eternal significance.

As in past Advent Revolutions when they tackled the commercialism of Christmas, the team wanted to combat the busyness of the season.

“Everyone complains about how busy they are, but we wanted people to be aware of how they were spending their time,” Nicholson said “Is it really how they’re supposed to be spending their time?”

A goal of serving 500 hours was set. The congregation was asked to consider the word JOY when planning their time: to put Jesus first, Others second, and Yourself last. They were given slips of paper and asked to log and track their time and how they served. The information was turned into the church and then tallied on a large clock-like scoreboard.

When all the service hours were tallied, more than 1,000 had been logged. Volunteers packed care packages and served a chili dinner to college students at nearby Thomas University, packed food for the church’s Backpack Buddies ministry, delivered dinners to local families, sang Christmas carols at area nursing homes, and much more.

“People got creative and had fun and served at ministries they hadn’t served before,” Nicholson said. “It’s another way to be involved and serve other than just writing a check and giving money.”

Kelly Thompson said this past year’s Advent Revolution changed her life and renewed her spirit.

“Christmas was meant to change the world. I really believe that,” she said. “This Advent Revolution has made me feel more like myself than I have in a long time. It’s freed my heart.”

Thompson gave her time to several worthwhile projects, but three she came up with on her own stood out as most meaningful: giving homegrown pecans away to neighbors and strangers; donating dog food, dog toys, and other pet items to those who could use them; and helping people at the grocery store.

“It would sometimes take me three or four hours to shop at Publix because I’d help all kinds of people find things they were looking for or help people get an item off the top shelf,” she laughed.

The relationships she formed and friendships she made will last beyond the season, Thompson said.

“I want to carry this through the year. It felt wonderful to get out and talk to people and serve others. I’ve prayed for two years to be useful. This gave me something to focus on and has reaffirmed the goodness and greatness of God again and again.”

Thomasville First UMC’s partnership with their friends in Rwanda is alive and strong and Nicholson expects to return there soon. But she’s also grateful for the opportunity to serve their local community in a new way.

“Even though we’ve been thrown a curveball we wanted to continue doing what we do,” she said. “It was kind of a blessing that it made us look at things differently.”

Thompson said the experience has humbled and changed her and made her realize the importance of time.

“I can’t do Advent Revolution just in December. It’s got to be all year for me.”

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## **Cordele Ukulele Band spreads joy, happiness with music**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Churches tend to be known for their spectacular pipe organs, beautiful pianos, or accomplished hand bell choirs. It’s rare, outside of Hawaii, perhaps, to hear a ukulele band. But a group in Cordele is doing its best to change that.

Known as the CUBs – the Cordele Ukulele Band – the group of about 10 musicians has been strumming and singing together for nearly a decade.

The group was formed after Phil Davison and his wife, Cathy, returned from visiting Phil’s native England. While there, his sister and brother-in-law took them to see a local ukulele group play. Inspired by the music and the fun, social atmosphere, the Davisons, who both play the guitar, took the idea of a ukulele group home to Cordele and tossed it around to a few musically inclined friends who agreed to give the instrument a try.

Similar to a guitar but smaller, with four strings instead of six, the ukulele is considered an accessible and easy-to-learn instrument.

“With just two or three chords, you can really start playing and get going quite easily and quickly on a ukulele,” said Davison, a member of Cordele First United Methodist Church. “I think that’s encouraging to people. We have people in our group who are piano players and people who have never touched a stringed instrument.”

Rev. Ed Eschmann, pastor of Midway United Methodist Church in Cordele, joined CUBs two years ago.

A guitarist, Rev. Eschmann was introduced to the group and invited to a practice by a friend and fellow guitarist.

Knowing how to play the guitar made it easy to pick up a ukulele and learn to play, he said. The uniqueness and versatility of the instrument also made it attractive.

“I used to think of the ukulele as a toy you give your children because they are too little to handle a guitar,” he said. “I didn’t really think of it as a musical instrument, but they are. You can really do all kinds of things with them.”

The CUBs, who meet every couple of weeks to practice and play, perform songs from all genres of music, from traditional hymns like “’Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus” and “Will the Circle Be Unbroken” to oldies like “Love Me Do” by the Beatles and “I’m a Believer” by the Monkees to more modern songs like “Should I Stay or Should I Go” by the Clash.

Music is transcendent, brings people together, and taps into emotions, Davison said.

“It’s hard to put it into words,” he said. “It’s not a rational thing; music is such a feelings thing and ... just makes you feel good.”

The group’s purpose is just that – to make people feel good.

Each CUBs member loves music, enjoys playing, has fun together, and wants to share the joy of music with others.

“It’s been a natural progression from something that was initially just a social thing for us to now being something to spread joy around.” Davison said.

Makinsey Rosser, who serves as Cordele First UMC’s music minister, joined the musical group last summer. The youngest in the group at 24, she enjoys being part of CUBs so much that she is tattooed with the CUBs logo.

A shared faith, a love of music, and a desire to spread joy with music binds the group, which includes members of several local churches, including those from an Episcopal church and a Baptist church.

“All we want to do is make people happy with our music,” Rosser said. “We just want to spread joy.”

The CUBs play their toe-tapping, head-bobbing music for civic clubs like the Kiwanas and Lions Club, at nursing homes, at festivals, and at several local churches.

And while he may not preach a sermon during their gigs, Rev. Eschmann says the music helps them share the joy they find in Christ, their fellowship, and music.

“You’ve got to be able to find God wherever you are. We have joy in our hearts all the time, and music is one of the things that brings joy to us,” he said. “Why would we leave God out of anything we’re doing? Especially if we’re doing something musical we need to share it and take it with us wherever we go. The ukulele band is a great, fun way to do that.”



**Save the Date: Virtual Clergy Time Apart set for Feb. 15**

Bishop Graves invites all South Georgia clergy to a special virtual Clergy Time Apart that will help pastors learn how to more fully care for themselves in order to more effectively serve.

Set for Tuesday, February 15 from 10 a.m. until noon EST via Zoom, the virtual conference will focus on “Empathy as Pastoral Leadership: Continuing to Care while Maintaining Spiritual Wellness.”

Joining Bishop Graves will be Rev. April Casperson, Director of Diversity and Inclusion for the West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church. During the session, Rev. Casperson, an ordained deacon, will share practical exercises for increasing empathy.

Co-hosted by the South Georgia Conference Office of Connectional Ministries and the Alabama-West Florida Conference Office of Connectional Ministries, the Clergy Time Apart is designed to help clergy consider their current struggles with empathy, learn how to better care for themselves, and learn practical ways to increase empathy.

[Click here for additional information and registration.](#)



**Registration for summer camps now open**

Camp Connect, the camping ministry of the South Georgia Conference, is coming back home to Epworth By The Sea for the 2022 summer camping season! Weekly camp dates for high school, middle school and elementary students, along with registration information, can be found at [www.campconnectumc.org](http://www.campconnectumc.org).



**Leadership Team applications now available**

Applications are now being accepted for the 2022 Camp Connect Summer Leadership Team at Epworth By The Sea. Applications are open to college students who have completed at least one year of college. The Leadership Team will commit to 9 weeks of camping ministry which will include serving hundreds of youth and children while making Christian friendships with other staff members that last a lifetime. For more information, visit [www.campconnectumc.org/applytobeonstaff](http://www.campconnectumc.org/applytobeonstaff).



**21<sup>st</sup> annual Join the Journey Confirmation Retreat set for March 4-6**

“Join the Journey” Confirmation Retreat is back! The South Georgia Conference’s 21<sup>st</sup> annual retreat will be held at Epworth By The Sea March 4-6. Online registration is now open for all churches, both in and out of conference. The deadline is Feb. 18 or until the event reaches maximum capacity. [Click here](#) for more information about registration.

Tailored to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students and above, confirmands will enjoy learning about their United Methodist heritage in a high-energy, exciting atmosphere. Participants will also be exposed to the diverse leadership that makes up the South Georgia Conference as pastors, youth directors, children’s directors, and lay members share during the general sessions and workshops. Throughout the weekend, confirmands will journey through the church seasons, gaining a better understanding of their role as a United Methodist and a member of the body of Christ.

For more information, contact Suzanne Akins, Director of Camping and Retreats, at (912) 638-8626, ext.107 or [suzanne@sgaumc.com](mailto:suzanne@sgaumc.com).

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## **Justice, Judges, and Priests**

**Winter Quarter: Justice, Law, History**

**Unit 2: God: The Source of Justice**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of January 23, 2022**

**By Dr. D. Craig Rikard**

**Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 16:18-20; 17:8-13; 19:15-21**

**Key Scripture (NIV):** “Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the Lord your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly.” Deuteronomy 16:18

### **Lesson Aims**

1. To understand conflict as a natural occurrence in community.
2. To understand the need for organization and order in addressing conflict.
3. To understand the importance of wisdom and clarity in developing a response to conflict.
4. To recognize the importance of humbly accepting the wisdom of others as we live in community.

Living in community is far from easy! Ancient Israel lived under a strong mandate to conform. That is, dissent was most often unwelcome. Remember, their world was violent. Surviving as a people was paramount. Naturally, survival depended upon military might. However, spiritual life and unity were equally important for Israel. Divisiveness could spell disaster for God’s people.

Though the need to conform was urgent and strong, the uniqueness of human personality and individuality still existed. In the United States, we have lived for more than 200 years beneath a

fairly well-defined umbrella of moral and societal expectation. Still, new laws are always being written for two major reasons. First, people always seem to find a way to circumvent existing laws. Secondly, life is always in flux. The world is constantly changing as are groups and individuals. New circumstances arise. New discoveries call us to consider the ethical responsibilities that accompany that discovery. Consequently, we are continually writing new laws and creating new expectations.

In contrast to our modern community life, Israel was in its infancy. Prior to the Mosaic Law they were not a lawless people. Every tribe developed a moral code and a societal means of functioning. The Law of Moses was a gift to the world. The moral code of the Mosaic Law stood head and shoulders above all other systems of law and morality. However, learning to live within this remarkable gift was far from easy. New situations did arise, though not as rapidly as today. Still, new situations required a new moral and ethical response. Furthermore, many of the Mosaic laws needed interpretation. For example, they were to keep the Sabbath holy, which involved rest. Rest implied not working. However, how was one to define work? Was it work to rescue your donkey from a ditch? Was it work to cook? Etc.

Consequently, disagreements and misunderstandings arose. They will always arise when people live together in community! Even though Israel valued conformity, total conformity is impossible due to human individuality, frailty, and sin.

*Can you think of a few major moral questions that have arisen just in the last 75 years? What laws now exist that were not needed in the past? Can you list a few moral expectations that are still being interpreted? What moral attributes do you believe are most necessary in creating new laws and interpreting current laws?*

Certain necessities were needed for Israel to live as God's people. Their life together needed the means to address new situations and settle disagreements and conflicts. Our lesson this week offers a glimpse into exactly what were these necessities and why they were needed. There are three of them: 1. Order and Organization. 2. Wisdom and Clarity. 3. Humility and Acceptance.

## **The Text**

### *Necessity One: Order and Organization*

There must exist some hierarchy to articulate, dispense, and ensure social morality and expectation. A judge was appointed from each tribe. Israel rapidly grew in number. No single person could convey the moral and ethical expectations to the new nation. Thus, a representational system was created to ensure the people understood and obeyed what was expected. These judges were to be appointed by Moses. Without question, these judges were men. It was a patriarchal society and women were not yet perceived as equal. Again, biblical revelation is progressive. God speaks to people at a particular time in history as they are able to understand. Thus, the first judges were men. These men would have also been individuals known

for their upright moral character. In the beginning, the appointed system for justice and righteousness was not yet corrupted through money or political power. Therefore, the moral character of the person was vital for serving.

The task of conveying and dispensing justice under the Mosaic Law was a major task. Helpers were needed. Consequently, “officials” were also appointed to serve under the judge. The same moral and character requirements for the judges would have applied to these officials. The expectation upon the judges and their helpers did not mean there were no mistakes. Sadly, corruption and selfishness would quickly begin to make inroads into Israel’s just system. Certainly, in their humanity, personal wants and wishes might have bled into their judgements. However, the initial appointment of 12 judges and officials provided a good system of checks and balances.

*Can you identify parallels between ancient Israel’s judicial system and our (and your if living in another country) current system? Are there moral and ethical expectations upon those in our society that dispense justice? Are there checks and balances? Can you recognize the moral law of the Mosaic Law still alive and present in our judicial system? Do you think we pray enough for those in our judicial system? As Christians, what attributes do we seek in those elected and appointed to articulate, dispense and enforce?*

In Deut. 17:8-13 we learn that even in the beginning of Israel’s community life, difficulties were expected. Our individual perception of events is not always accurate. Our interpretation of events can be faulty. Furthermore, not every situation is clearly visible or easy to comprehend. Attempting to clearly identify all of the issues and motivations involved when a law is broken can befuddle the greatest of minds. Israel was to be prepared for dealing with the “gray” when all situations were far from “black and white”. Truth always exists. There are always true facts involved in any case. Our fallen and frail humanity on occasion is not enough to perceive this perfect truth.

However, a society cannot simply walk away from laws and expectations that have been violated. We cannot simply throw up our hands in surrender when truth is elusive. The truth must always be sought, no matter how difficult or long the process. Consequently, a process is created to pursue elusive justice.

Implied in our text is an important process for resolving difficult conflicts. First, it is understood that the individuals involved in the conflict should attempt to rectify a wrong or seek agreement between themselves. One should not immediately take another into the judicial system. Many conflicts can be solved through compassionate dialogue. As a clergyperson for more than 40 years, I can attest that many painful situations could have been resolved with a single conversation. People on occasion would articulate to me a problem they had with another church member or staff member. My first question should always be, “Have you spoken personally with them?” Many would prove surprised that the vast majority of the time there had been no attempt

to personally rectify the dilemma. Instead of individuals seeking peace between themselves, they would often share with uninvolved others their anger and accusation. This action brought innocent people into a conflict of which they initially had no part. Israel was to settle disagreements, if at all possible, on a personal, loving, and respectful level. In I Corinthians 6, Paul sternly warns Christians against taking each other to court. He expected them to deal with the issue themselves. Granted, there are moments when entrance into the judicial system is necessary for justice. However, prior to such action all attempts should be made to reconcile personally and privately. We should still recognize that not all situations can be reconciled without outside judgement. It is for this reason that a judicial system exists.

*Why do you think people are reluctant to settle disagreement between themselves? What are the destructive ripples that can emanate from involving others into a dispute of which they have no part? What is our witness to the world when we cannot reconcile issues between ourselves?*

When Israelites could not rectify a disagreement or wrong between themselves, they were told to take the disagreement to the priests. The priests were among those officials who would assist the judges. They were the descendants of Levi. Priests not only administered the rites and offered sacrifices in the tabernacle, they were also teachers of the Law. Why go to the priest prior to seeking a judge? A priest possessed a knowledge of the Mosaic Law. They served as the intermediaries between the people of Israel and God. For example, the priests offered sacrifices “on behalf” of the people. The actions of the priests were vicarious. The priest would do for the people that which they could not do themselves. The very presence of a priest in a dispute reminded the parties involved that justice is a gift from God. Their deliberations and actions were being carried out in the presence of God. The priests added the awareness that all human activity possessed a spiritual dimension, and that justice was the gift of God. Hopefully, approaching the priests in a difficult situation might help achieve reconciliation and truth. Though the priests are not mentioned in the opening verses concerning judges and officials, they are specifically mentioned when addressing the difficult moments when truth is not always easily perceived.

*Christians in difficulty will often seek counsel from a minister. Why do you think this is? What does a pastor bring to and into the difficulty that cannot always be provided by the secular world? Are there hinderances involved in seeking pastoral counseling in general? Can you respectfully and lovingly identify them? How do you think church members could better handle conflict between themselves? Can you recall an experience in which pastoral counsel helped two parties reconcile? If so, what was the contribution of the pastor that most helped?*

Israelites are told to take their difficult conflicts to the priests and the judges. There are occasions when the truth will remain elusive. There are decisions to be made that will not satisfy the parties involved. Difficulties between people almost always involves a degree of anger. People are passionate about justice and should be. However, when a decision is reached with which we disagree, our passion and anger can quickly arise and act in a destructive manner. Accusations of favoritism, injustice, etc. can be hurled in anger. Sadly, many walk away from such decisions

“angry at the world.” Naturally, every attempt to avoid favoritism should be avoided. All attempts to discover the truth and act upon truth should be taken. However, our humanity continues to stifle and limit us. Decisions can be reached that are not understood by one party. One of my dearest friends served a Superior Court Judge. He once told me, “As soon as I render a verdict, half of the court room will become angry at me.” He is a just, kind, and Christian man. Still, he recognizes that decisions are not always clear, understood, and especially not embraced by all involved.

*Have you witnessed anger and its consequences related to “final decisions?” What good did the anger accomplish? Why do you think it is important to respect the decisions of those who fairly consider a situation or case? What are some positive healthy actions that can be adopted when we feel an inaccurate decision has been rendered?*

### *Necessity Two: Wisdom and Clarity*

I am moving quickly to the issues of wisdom of clarity, for they are directly related to the above material. In the process of justice, wisdom and clarity are of absolute necessity. When passions are involved in disagreement, vision can become distorted and words twisted. Distortion and twisted testimony muddy the waters. Passions not only inflame disagreements, they can blind us to the truth. Thus, great care must be taken to determine the truth, for only truth fully liberates. We are warned in the text against favoritism and partiality. In last week’s lesson these were addressed. Favoritism and partiality do not just involve wealth. Usually we consider the injustice of showing the wealthy favoritism. However, there are other destructive vehicles of favoritism. Sexism is one of those. In the biblical era, women could not testify in a court for no other reason than she was female. Even if she was an eyewitness to a crime, her word meant nothing. Thankfully, our society continues to move beyond such favoritism. However, a person’s ethnicity and race can also hinder the pursuit of justice.

Any reality that hinders the discovery of truth should be challenged and eradicated. God’s truth is that shining light in a dark world. Jesus is the embodiment of truth. Truth is what we must seek in all of life, especially in conflict. Verse 20 of Deut. 16 states, “Follow justice and justice alone.” We could express this axiom in the phrase, “Follow truth and truth alone.”

*Can you identify possible favoritisms and instruments of partiality that hinder justice today? Can these snake their way into our disagreements and conflicts with one another as Christians? What are the long-term consequences of allowing favoritisms and partiality to exist unchallenged? How can they be constructively and lovingly challenged for the sake of truth and justice? What does the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus say about the importance of truth? What did Jesus teach about truth? What do you think it means to be a people of “the truth?” Are there subtle dynamics that can creep into our personal judgements? Can you identify some of them? What can we do personally, and together, in seeking truth in all areas of life?*

### *Necessity Three: Humility and Acceptance*

In Deut. 17, Israel was instructed to accept the final decision of those God has appointed. The Israelite was never to “show contempt” toward those God appointed, even when disagreeing with the decision. This stringent acceptance was necessary for Israel, especially in the beginning of their corporate life together. Certainly, mistakes were going to occur. The command to accept the decision does not mean that truth is devalued or searching for truth should be surrendered. The only way social order could be maintained was through such acceptance.

Such total acceptance is not easy for us in our modern culture. Sadly, throughout history, systems designed for justice have become tainted and corrupted. However, in spite of such sins the system itself is still based on goodness and justice. Today, we are given the opportunity to challenge decisions through such vehicles as appeals.

Still, there is merit to accepting a decision when we cannot achieve full clarity. Life isn't fair! God is fair; life isn't! Again, this does not mean we are to become apathetic or lethargic in seeking truth. There are going to be situations when the decision will not appear fair. We can lovingly continue to the search for truth while choosing not to show contempt or disparage those who made the decision. They acted with the truth available.

Such acceptance requires humility. God is the Lord of justice. What goes around does come around. We do reap what we sow. In the end, true justice will always exist and win the day. Until that day comes, we must humbly trust God and continue to live a just life in the days following.

*Can you recall and articulate a decision that appeared unfair? Was it unfair because clarity concerning the truth was too difficult? Was it unfair because bias and favoritism were present? What Christian responses would prove helpful in both cases? What can we do to increase our trust in God's wisdom and justice? Since life is so often unfair, what should our response be as Christians who seek a just world?*

## **Prayer**

Almighty God, we confess our human frailty. Our sin so often blinds us to truth. We confess our arrogance and pride in believing others should see life exactly as we see it. Free us to trust in your justice and righteousness. Free us to be patient in waiting for justice. 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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## **Justice and the Marginalized**

**Winter Quarter: Justice, Law, History**

**Unit 2: God: The Source of Justice**

## **Sunday school lesson for the week of January 30, 2022**

**By Dr. D. Craig Rikard**

### **Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 24:10-21**

**Key Scripture (NIV):** “Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.” Deuteronomy 24:18

### **Lesson Aims**

1. To recognize the remarkable contribution of the Mosaic Law to today’s call for social and economic justice.
2. To recognize the dignity of all who labor.
3. To recognize the need to personally ensure the dignity and well-being of all in our human family.

### **Introduction**

The Mosaic Law consists of three major sections. First, there is the decalogue, or what we call the Ten Commandments. Then there are the social ordinances that govern the way we live in community. Lastly, there are the worship ordinances. Our text today falls in the area of the social ordinances.

The Mosaic Law was truly a gift from God, far superior to the governing documents and requirements of the surrounding nations. Remember, these laws were of great necessity to a new nation living in a hostile polytheistic world. One of the overall purposes of the Law was to set Israel apart from their neighbors. The Mosaic Law distinguished them not only for the just way they were to be governed, but also to draw the world’s attention to Israel’s loving, just God. Israel is to know God’s holy expectation and God’s holy heart through obedience to the Law. Consequently, Israel’s obedience to the Law is to enlighten the world in justice and to draw attention to Israel’s one, true God. Obedience to the Law was therefore a means of living orderly and witnessing.

The world was to see justice and truth in the Mosaic Law. Thus, when we study the various ordinances we are to understand not only their content, but their message and witness as well. Our lesson today offers a two-pronged message. First, when we obey an ordinance we should try diligently to avoid dehumanizing the parties involved. Secondly, we do all in our power to avoid diminishing our loving spirit.

### **The Text**

*Do Not Diminish the Humanity of Another*

The opening section of our text involves our behavior toward those who have borrowed from us. As it is today, ancient Israel lending involved collateral. The one borrowing had to put up

something of value to secure the loan. This section of the Mosaic Law is undergirded by personal morality and ethics. The person making the loan should NOT enter the home of the borrower to secure the collateral or pledge.

Why is this stated in the Law? This requirement protects the humanity of the borrower. When a person borrows, it means they are in need. Usually, it is a family in need. It is always difficult to ask another for help. It can make us feel weak or “less than.” Gail, my spouse, and I married during the mid 1970s in the midst of a severe recession. Work was difficult to find, the price of gasoline skyrocketed, and credit was almost impossible to acquire. When we purchased any item on credit, it felt as though we had to plead or beg. It did feel dehumanizing.

Boundaries are important in many facets of life. They are definitely related to our humanity. There is a space that defines us. It distinguishes you and me. There is a space around our family, our home, and other personal places. When someone invades that space without invitation, our sense and protection of self, family, and home is violated. Imagine someone entering your home, uninvited, and taking what they feel is theirs!

Israelites often needed to borrow. Those without had to ask of those who did have. Thus, the two parties did not stand on equal ground. The lender could make the borrower feel “less than” by engaging in actions that reminded them of their lack. In our text, the lender is not to enter their home to secure the collateral. Such a brazen act said to the needy, “I now have the right to enter your home because you are in a position of need.” Imagine putting up a rare sentimental family heirloom because you needed funds just to get you through the month. Imagine that we promise to bring the heirloom to them only to hear, “No, we’ll come to your house, go in, and get it.” Imagine the inhumanity of such an act. How would we feel? Thus, the Law required the lender allow the person to bring the pledge to the lender.

This ordinance related to borrowing continues. We are required, if the person is truly poor, not to keep their pledge as collateral if it creates suffering for the needy family. In our text, the example is used of a poor neighbor who has placed their cloak in the care of the lender. The lender has the option of keeping the cloak until the loan is paid. The lender can use the cold of night to prompt the cold borrower to repay the loan. Again, such action is very dehumanizing. We are asked to let them keep their much-needed security if it helps alleviate the suffering of the poor family. It is one thing to use a cloak as collateral; to use their suffering also as collateral is quite another.

The Mosaic Law, especially here, states the importance of keeping one’s word and promises. If you needed some money to get through a month and I could help, I could lend it. Imagine me asking for some collateral. I just informed you, “I don’t trust your word.” Naturally, in the business world collateral is necessary. However, it still states all people cannot be trusted.

We are never to treat those who struggle as “less than,” or as less than human. The borrower is our brother and sister. We live together as God’s people. It is necessary to borrow money and

important to pay back the loan. It is even more necessary to preserve the humanity of our brothers and sisters.

We can lend in ways that do not involve money. I can lend you a hand. Now, do I expect something in return? If so, I created a debt. Lending always means one person is in need and the other has the possession to fill that need. This position in life itself places one in a dominant position. All transactions should be conducted with moral and ethical care. Great lengths should be taken to help preserve the dignity of those hurting.

*Can you recall a moment when you needed to borrow from another? How did you feel about borrowing from another? Were you treated with dignity? If you help another, how can you do so in a manner that does not make them feel dehumanized? Jesus helped people in a manner that made them feel important and special; can you give examples?*

The request to help people in a humane and loving manner continues in our text as it addresses paying those who work for us. In verse 14 we are pointedly told to “not take advantage of hired worker” who is poor and needy. People who struggle in the depths of financial struggle are often desperate. The employer can take advantage of that desperation, requiring the worker to toil longer and harder. While in college I worked in a mobile home factory. While waiting for a tool to be repaired I overheard two foremen conversing. They needed a worker to perform a task many would consider too demeaning. Adding misery to danger, the worker would need to work past quitting time. One of the foremen asked, “What don’t you ask Larry?” The other foreman answered, “What makes you think he will take it?” The response bothered me. He said, “Because his family is going through a hard time, and he’s desperate.” He intentionally wanted to secure the most desperate person for the task. He wasn’t asking because the person had the desire to work. He asked because he had the worker over the proverbial barrel.

The Law also required that the employer pay the needy worker immediately. Employers could often wait days and weeks before paying a worker. They could dangle the carrot before them, knowing they would keep working. The employer could pay them immediately and their life would change little. However, for a needy worker, having the daily wage in their possession gave them security and hope. If the employer elongated the payments they would gain and the worker suffer. If pay was withheld it could eventually lead to the worker having to ask, perhaps even beg for their wage, further dehumanizing them in their struggle. The Law also makes it a point to treat an Israelite and a foreigner the same. The requirement to treat individuals humanely was not a national law, it was a human law. God indeed is a respecter of persons. Read Acts 10:34-43.

This text may not appear to relate to many of us who do not employ others. However, many people serve us in life. It might be in a department store or at the fire station. As followers of Jesus we must always treat those who work for us, with us, or serve us as ones who are deserving of dignity and respect. It is most remarkable that what is so needed today was addressed in the ancient Mosaic Law.

*Have you witnessed desperation in a worker? Have you been a desperate employee? How do you believe a person feels when that desperation is used for the benefit of another? What are the destructive dehumanizing effects of the worker having to take the employee to court for their pay on both parties? What did Jesus life and ministry teach about helping those especially needy, and at times desperate? Most of the miracles in Mark involved desperation on the part of the needful. Read the narrative regarding Bartimaeus in Mark 9. How did the crowd treat Bartimaeus and why? How did Jesus treat him? What do you think are the implications of Jesus question to Bartimaeus “What do you want me to do for you?”*

### *Do Not Diminish Our Loving Spirit*

Prior to Christ, God created us with the beautiful capacity to love and care. In Christ our compassion is intensified and our loving reach greatly extended. We are new creatures! Our new life in Christ must be nurtured. As a matter of fact, if it is not nurtured it can become diminished. This ability to diminish one’s loving spirit was also a dynamic in Old Testament faith.

Remember, in ancient Israel, the community was valued over the individual. This desire to preserve the community led to the punishment and even destruction of anyone who threatened their corporate life. Sadly, those related to the threatening individual were also judged and punished. Often this punishment was death.

As in a former lesson, we return to the story of Achan in Joshua 7. He had violated the Mosaic Law by taking items dedicated to idols from a defeated tribe in Canaan. In the end, Achan, his wife, his children, and his livestock were all put to death. In our text the Israelites are called to engage in a more loving response. While it is true that many of the harsh penalties are given in the Law, we must not forget Israel is a new nation living in an old, hostile world. Survival mattered. However, the nation’s survival as a people should never come at the expense of caring about another. There was always a call to protect and preserve the life of others. A people who executed people so easily can quickly grow hard-hearted. All humanity is interconnected. The loss of one affects us, even if that individual is guilty. There were occasions in which the loss of a tribal member was necessary for Israel’s survival and for their understanding that violating God’s Law is a serious matter. However, the continual taking of life, especially the life of the innocent, diminishes the heart of the nation. The surrounding nations often acted in cruelty and devalued life. However, Israel was to live differently. They were to be God’s light in the world, and through their actions they were to reveal God’s heart. They may have started in the same moral and ethical place as the surrounding nations, but their journey with God was moving away from taking life toward giving life.

*What do you believe occurs when people engage in destructive behavior repeatedly? What do you believe happens to a community that becomes accustomed to violence? When life is devalued? What do you believe happens to the individual? Do you believe a community can become so judgmental they lose their heart? Can this happen to the individual?*

The closing section of our text addresses the contrast between selfishness and sharing. If a man owns an olive orchard, he can go over and over those trees until almost every limb is bare. Naturally, his profit and gain would rise. However, many workers depended upon the “left-overs.” The poor worked, and yet found little joy and serenity. The promise of a tomorrow was not always present. I built a church for a community in a very poor area of a poor country. Many of those helping us had a single week’s wage in their possession, none in a bank. I could only imagine the stress of living on such a tight budget. One injury could leave the worker without bread. Leaving fruit on the trees and grain in the fields was customary for Israel. It added to the bare existence of many.

We live in an age of great debate over wealth. Many in the world asks, “How much does a person need to live when others are hurting?” This is a meaningful and important ethical question. The Bible rarely criticizes those who do well from their labors. However, it does address repeatedly those who gain at the expense of others. We are witnessing the debate in our nation’s political and economic life. However, as Christians we must ensure that we are “sharers.” We are also those who call for economic and social justice for the poor and hurting.

*How do you understand this section of the text as it relates to the current cultural and political climate? Can you recognize and hear the debate in your life? Again, it is remarkable that the call to be just, respectful, and caring for all is old, very old. What does this text say to you about your personal sharing? Where do you believe the church can be far more instrumental in helping those who seem to be gleaning from what’s left?*

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, thank you for the relationships that give our life meaning. Thank you for the potential relationships that await us in life. Teach us to “walk in each other’s shoes.” Give us compassionate hearts with open eyes. Grant us the courage needed to establish a just world “as it is in heaven.” 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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## **Stetson Bennett – a champion**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

Stetson Bennett, IV is the College Football National Champion Georgia Bulldogs’ quarterback and a heartwarming lesson in determination. As you know, Stetson played football at Pierce County High School and was a lightly-regarded two-star quarterback upon graduation. In reality, he had a couple of small colleges interested in him, but, as a boy, Stetson dreamed of playing quarterback at the University of Georgia. So, at this point, Stetson chose the less-glamorous

route of becoming a walk-on at Georgia. The first year he was red-shirted and became the quarterback of the scout team. The next year he transferred to a junior college in Mississippi where he helped his team win the conference title. While considering playing in Louisiana, he was offered a scholarship to Georgia by Coach Kirby Smart. Stetson spent the next year at Georgia serving as the back-up quarterback behind Jake Fromm, now a New York Giants player. Stetson played in five games. Then came this year and Stetson was still the back-up and down on the depth chart of the Georgia quarterbacks. But, as you are aware, the lead quarterback got hurt, Stetson received his chance, and the rest is a National Championship for Georgia, the first in 41 years. But in addition to all Stetson's efforts to play quarterback, he also had to deal with the multiple doubters off and on field as to whether he had the ability, talent, and size to play quarterback at Georgia.

The other night during the Championship game Stetson proved a resounding yes! It was only fitting that he received the offensive player of the game. Now, I don't know Stetson Bennett personally, only that he is 23 years old and a celebrated Georgia quarterback, and I am a fan. However, I would like to point out several things we might learn from his life and experience.

First, dreams are important! And this goes way beyond football. The New Testament tells us that part of the salvation process is to be saved from aimlessness, to get ourselves organized around some great dream or purpose or vision. So, what we need in our lives is some master passion, some supreme loyalty to hold our scattered selves together, to give us direction and to make our lives meaningful.

Second, believe in yourself! Countless people who have learned how to keep going report that at least one of the ingredients for endurance is the understanding of the meaning of one's life. These people believe that every life has a purpose. They know that none of us can do everything but that all of us can do something. They believe in themselves.

Third, determination is vital! My mother-in-law worked her way through college – she worked in the kitchen, cleaned restrooms, and did a variety of other jobs. Then she began to teach and attended the university at a distant city on weekends. She earned her degree and then taught for 39 years. Then there were those illnesses. She had a brain tumor, open heart surgery, the balloon surgery, a stroke, and a number of other surgeries. But all the time her determination to keep going and quiet endurance made the difference in her life's purpose. As she once said, "Determination or endurance is not really about being happy but rather about being committed and faithful."

Fourth, be a team player! Study your Bible! The Bible is not the story of solitary figures. The Bible is the story of Moses and Aaron, Paul and Barnabas, Ezra and Nehemiah, Ruth and Esther, Mary and Martha ... the list is endless. As it has been pointed out, teamwork is even a feature of the very nature of God. What is the Trinity? We worship a God who is one in three. The thing

that seems to make the champion Georgia Bulldogs and Stetson Bennett great is that they were a team with a purpose.

I'll close with Stetson's words in one of his last night's interviews concerning the victory. He stated, "I hope it gives someone hope. Keep your mouth shut, work hard. Life is tough. Work through it." Stetson Bennett – a champion!

*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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## **Entering on a New Year**

### **WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN**

**ANNE PACKARD**

*Monday, January 1, 1776, entry of Rev. Francis Asbury's journal: I am now entering on a new year, and am of late constantly happy, feeling my heart much taken up with God and hope thus to live and thus to die.*

Francis Asbury sailed to America in 1771 at the ripe age of 22 years, unaware that he would never return to his birth country. He served as Wesley's assistant during that first year, preaching in 25 different settlements. When the American Revolution broke out four years later, he was one of only two British Methodist lay ministers who stayed in the colonies. In an attempt to protect these early Methodist congregations, Asbury remained neutral in the conflict between Great Britain and the newly formed United States thus making him an enemy to the people in Maryland where citizens were required to take an oath of allegiance to the new country.

During 1775, while Asbury traveled preaching to whomever would listen and trying in vain to stay healthy, he also had to be aware of Paul Revere's midnight ride, the battles of Lexington and Concord, the second Continental Congress meeting, and the battle of Bunker Hill. Asbury was not living and ministering in a vacuum. He was attempting to reach people who were living in a time of great uncertainty, political division, and even violence. Sound familiar? What's Old Is New Again!

As Asbury began 1776, he started by writing two facts. He was entering a new year and he was happy. How was it possible for Asbury, a foreign man living in a foreign land which had recently declared war on his homeland, to be happy? Didn't he realize that violence was at hand? Was he unaware of the financial insecurity the colonies faced? Did he not see neighbor fighting neighbor? How is it possible for Francis Asbury to be happy at a time like this?

Simply put, his heart was taken up with God. Not with anxiety or uncertainty or a fresh news cycle, but with God. Asbury was reading the Bible daily, praying hourly, meeting with like-minded people to discuss God's will, and reaching out to those who had not yet been saved. It wasn't just his heart that was taken up with God, but his mind, spirit, time, and energy, too. His life was taken up with God.

So, as I enter on a new year which may hold uncertainty and division, may I, like Francis Asbury, have a life taken up with God. Instead of losing weight, may I take on the weight of daily Bible readings. While exercising my body, may I also exercise my prayers. While meeting with friends, may I remember to focus on God's will. And while worrying about my own needs, may I also remember to minister to the needs of those less fortunate. I think I'll call it Francis Asbury's "sure fire" recipe to a truly Happy New Year.

*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 - January 2022**

1/01 – Cindy H. Autry: 2958 Roswell Lane; Columbus, GA 31906  
1/01 – James Hancock: 4360 Manor Millwood Rd. S; Manor, GA 31550  
1/01 – Larry Roberts: 12 Foxfire Estates Circle; Waynesville, NC 28785  
1/01 – Dan Robinson: 15 Kent Rd.; Tifton, GA 31794  
1/02 – Sharon Loyley: 1544 Harris Ridge Rd.; Young Harris, GA 30582  
1/03 – Marcus Tripp: 3791 Overlook Dr.; Macon, GA 31204  
1/04 – John Harrington: 4820 Oak Arbor Dr.; Valdosta, GA 31602  
1/06 – Joyce Harris: 111 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
1/07 – Darrell Carter: 2450 Odum Screven Rd.; Screven, GA 31560  
1/07 – Tommy Martin, III: 606 Chastain Place; Macon, GA 31210  
1/07 – Jerry Sharpe: 192 McElmurray Rd.; Waynesboro, GA 30830  
1/08 – Annette Brooks: 114 Sunset Dr.; Fitzgerald, GA 31750  
1/08 – Ernie Rogers: 1803 Pineknoll Lane; Albany, GA 31707  
1/08 – Gary Starrett: PO Box 113; Bolingbroke, GA 31004  
1/11 – V.L. Daughtery, Jr.: 3713 Bermuda Run; Valdosta, GA 31605  
1/12 – Eddie Braswell: 1110 Moore Dr.; Americus, GA 31709  
1/12 – Grady Vance: 127-B Nina Dr.; Eatonton, GA 31024  
1/13 – Randy Nease: 195 Zipperer Rd.; Guyton, GA 31312  
1/15 – Gary Morris: 2445 Jacqueline Circle; Moultrie, GA 31768  
1/17 – Ed Ellington: 675 Arthur Wolfe Rd.; Dublin, GA 31021  
1/18 – Steve Rumford: 130 Arlington Row; Macon, GA 31210  
1/21 – Billy Wicker, Jr.: 400 Ridgecrest Rd.; E. Dublin, GA 31021  
1/22 – Tom Davis, Jr.: 155 Twin Creek Ct.; Athens, GA 30605  
1/24 – Joe Dunagan: 510 Timber Oak Dr.; Bristol, VA 24201  
1/25 – Frank Harris: 250 Water Tower Court; Macon, GA 31210

1/27 – James Ford: 3511 16<sup>th</sup> Street NE; Hickory, NC 28601  
1/27 – Bill Jones: 106 Hilldale Circle; Vidalia, GA 30474  
1/30 – Harold Feightner: 107 Harvest Point; Warner Robins, GA 31088  
1/30 – Holland Morgan: 2 E. 62<sup>nd</sup> Street; Savannah, GA 31405

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## **OBITUARIES**

### **Mrs. Sally Lou Strickland**

Sally Lou Strickland, age 91, of Stockbridge, Georgia, passed away on Monday, December 27, 2021. She was born in Cochran, Georgia on June 9, 1930, to the late Alonzo and Ruth Powell.

Sally was also preceded in death by her husband, Lewis Wallace Strickland; brothers Carlton and Charles Powell; and sisters Dolly Hart, Alice Powell, and Elvenia Powell.

She was always a “Mom” and very dedicated to her family. She was very crafty, loved to cook, and she was a top producer for Tupperware. Sally was truly a pastor’s wife, with a servant’s heart, and she helped Lewis make his ministry when they worked together. She was a president of the United Methodist Women’s ministry and they were members of McDonough First United Methodist Church.

Mrs. Strickland is survived by her children, Michael (Kim) Strickland of Acworth, Ga, and Sheryl (Wes) King of McDonough, Ga. Grandchildren, Challaghan Strickland, Rory Strickland, Skylar Strickland, Tristan Thomas and Dawson Babischkin and several nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held Tuesday, Jan. 4 at McDonough First United Methodist Church with burial following at Cedar Hill Cemetery in Cochran, Georgia. In lieu of flowers, please make contributions to the church.

### **Rev. Thomas Jackson McCollough, Jr.**

Rev. Thomas Jackson (Jack) McCollough, Jr., 94, a native of Woodbine, Ga., passed away Friday, December 31, 2021, at his home at Wesley-Woods of Newnan.

He was born May 15, 1927, in Woodbine to the late Thomas Jackson McCollough, Sr. and Hilda Wright McCollough. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his wife of 51 years, Virginia Jones McCollough.

Rev. McCollough attended Young Harris College before receiving a Bachelor’s degree from Emory University and Masters of Divinity degree from Candler School of Theology at Emory University.

During his life as a member of the South Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, he served 13 different congregational charges. His ministry included chairing the United

Methodist Rural Fellowship, The United Methodist Volunteers in Mission, and fulfilling other roles in the South Georgia Conference.

After retiring from active ministry, he continued with a life of service by providing pulpit supply to local congregations, organizing and leading numerous hurricane and other disaster relief efforts for United Methodists Volunteers in Mission (UMVIM), church construction for UMVIM, organizing and planning volunteer efforts through Woodbine United Methodist Church to construct dozens of wheelchair ramps for people in Camden County, and serving on the Board of Directors at Young Harris College (YHC).

Inspired by the life and teachings of John Wesley, he established the McCollough Wesley Travel Scholarship fund at YHC for pre-ministerial students to study in England. He made spending time with family and friends a priority throughout his life, and he also enjoyed fishing, reading, meditating, and participating in local community civic organizations.

A graveside visitation was held at Homeward Cemetery near Waverly, Ga. on Jan. 6, 2021. An interment service followed, officiated by Rev. J. David Hanson and Rev. Jan Conner. A memorial service will also be held at a later date for friends and family at St. Paul United Methodist Church, Atlanta, Ga. With loving concern for all in attendance, the family requests that everyone in attendance wear a mask.

Survivors include a sister, three children and spouses, four grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and numerous nieces, nephews and extended family.

Rather than flowers, the family requests memorial contributions be made to Young Harris College's McCollough Wesley Travel Scholarship at <https://www.yhc.edu/giving/online-giving>.

Condolences may be expressed online at [www.allisonmemorialchapelandfuneralhome.com](http://www.allisonmemorialchapelandfuneralhome.com).

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## **Scripture Readings**

### **January 23**

#### ***Third Sunday after the Epiphany***

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10, 30

Psalms 19 (UMH 750)

1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

Luke 4:14-21

### **January 30**

#### ***Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany***

Jeremiah 1:4-10

Psalms 71:1-6 (UMH 794)

1 Corinthians 13:1-13  
Luke 4:21-30

**February 6**

***Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany***

Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13)  
Psalm 138 (UMH 853)  
1 Corinthians 15:1-11  
Luke 5:1-11

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**Events in the South Georgia Conference – 1/18/2022 edition**

**Youth Worker Winter Retreat – Jan. 20-21**

Registration is now open for the South Georgia Conference's Youth Worker Winter Retreat, Jan. 20-21, 2022, at Little Ocmulgee State Park. This retreat is a time for youth workers to remember their calling, their why. The last 18 months have been the hardest times to navigate in ministry; youth ministry has changed and youth workers need the tools, the relationships and reliance on God (and God alone) to continue. This one-day retreat will give youth workers time together to worship, to reset, to learn, to encourage, and to dream, again. For more information, contact Suzanne Akins, Associate Director, Connectional Ministries at [suzanne@sgaumc.com](mailto:suzanne@sgaumc.com) or call (912) 638-8626 ext 107. [More information](#) / [Register](#)

**Basic Lay Servant Training, Macon – Jan. 21-22**

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 Forest Hills 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](mailto:anne@thechapelministries.com). [Register](#)

**Winter 2022 Certified Lay Ministry Training, Leesburg – Jan. 29, Feb. 5, Feb. 19, March 5, March 19, April 2**

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

**Winter 2022 Certified Lay Ministry Training, Brunswick – Jan. 29, Feb. 12, Feb. 26, March 12, March 26**

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

**Vashti Day – Feb. 6**

Located in Thomasville, Ga., The Vashti Center, a mission of the United Methodist Women, works with children and youth with a variety of challenges. On Sunday, February 6, every local church in South Georgia is encouraged to receive a special offering to support the ministry of Vashti. To learn more about Vashti and its great ministry, visit [www.vashti.org](http://www.vashti.org).

**Andrew College Sunday – Feb. 13**

Founded in January 1854, Andrew College has continuously provided an academically challenging liberal arts education within a nurturing community for more than 160 years. A member of the South Georgia Conference, Andrew strives to inspire academic and spiritual growth across its historic 40-acre campus. The qualified faculty and caring staff engage with students in an intimate setting to encourage a lifelong love of learning and a strong sense of civic leadership. Students are regularly invited to strengthen their Christian discipleship through weekly chapel services and participation in a myriad of religious offerings. Andrew Sunday seeks to gain support for the College and identify prospective students. To learn more about Andrew College – a United-Methodist affiliated institution in Cuthbert, Georgia - visit [www.andrewcollege.edu](http://www.andrewcollege.edu).

**Clergy Time Apart with Bishop Graves & Rev. April Casperson – Feb. 15**

Bishop Graves invites all South Georgia clergy to a special virtual Clergy Time Apart that will help pastors learn how to more fully care for themselves in order to more effectively serve. Set for Tuesday, February 15 from 10 a.m. until noon EST via Zoom, the virtual conference will focus on “Empathy as Pastoral Leadership: Continuing to Care while Maintaining Spiritual Wellness.” [More information](#) / [Register](#)