

## **SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – MAY 3 EDITION**

### **The Chapel's new playground honors life, legacy of student leader**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Landon Martinez was bright, vibrant, fun.

He loved to serve and give back to the community for which he cared so deeply.

Landon's Landing, the new playground at The Chapel Midtown in Brunswick, bears his name and honors his life and legacy.

With bold, colorful murals from artist Bongang as a backdrop, the playground invites children to run, play, imagine, and enjoy God's creation.

Landon would have loved it, said his mom, Nicole Wright.

"Landon loved The Chapel and made many memories there. What an absolute honor to have his memory live on in the hearts of others in such a fun way."

Martinez was active in The Chapel's children's ministry, the Treehouse, and youth program, Thrive, before he died in October 2018 of meningitis at age 12. As a middle-school student, he participated in youth mission trips and retreats and served in the 2- and 3-year-old's classroom.

The playground is a perfect way to honor his life, said Paige Madden, The Chapel's Relationships Director.

"Landon was a really giving kid. He had a huge smile," said Madden, who previously served as the church's director of children's ministry. "If there was a new kid in the Treehouse or youth he'd be the first to go up and welcome them and make them feel at home. He was always the kid who noticed others and made them feel comfortable."

Landon's Landing was created to make children feel comfortable and at home, too, Madden said. Able to be seen from Georgia State Route 25 – a main thoroughfare in Brunswick – the playground beckons kids and parents to stop and play.

While they're there, not only do families have fun, but they find encouragement and hope through God's Word.

"Inside the playground's suspended tunnel are wooden panels that our current kids decorated with different Bible verses," Madden said. "1 Timothy 4:12 is written on one, and all of our TLT kids know and memorize it. Landon knew it, too. While we decorated it, we had a chance to talk about Landon, who he was and how he lived his life and why we're choosing to honor him in this way. Even though he's not here he'll be an example to others, like that verse says."

Not only was Martinez an example to others at church, he lived his life in a way that set him apart elsewhere, his mom said. Always on the go, he was active in 4-H, karate, theater, and the Boys & Girls Club.

“He was the kid who would reach out to the stranger or new kid in the lunchroom; he was a very, very outgoing kid,” Wright said. “He was wise beyond his years especially when it came to talking about the Lord and faith. He was a good kid with a huge heart, and he loved to give back.”

Martinez loved to give back, serving alongside his friends during The Chapel’s youth mission trips, Wright said. Whether painting a house or helping clean up a yard, he served with a huge smile and an infectious laugh.

“One of his favorite things he did at The Chapel was going on the middle school mission trips,” she said. “When I picked him up he was so filled with joy, and he couldn’t wait to tell me everything he did.”

In addition to Landon’s Landing, another way Wright, her friends, and The Chapel congregation share Landon’s love of Christ and passion for service is by celebrating his birthday serving others. Fittingly, Landon’s birthday, Feb. 17, is also Random Acts of Kindness Day, and last year one of Wright’s friends printed small cards with his story and ordered green silicone bracelets – Landon’s favorite color – that read “Love Like Landon” and “Be Kind.”

Wright, her friends, Landon’s friends, and community and Chapel members passed out the cards and bracelets while performing random acts of kindness throughout town. They shared candy bars, helped people unload their groceries, gave out gift cards, and spread kindness and joy all over Brunswick.

“It’s so cool that it falls on his birthday. No other day would fit him more than that,” Wright said. “He was a kind, loving, gentle soul. What better way to celebrate him on his birthday than to do random acts of kindness for people and spread the word about his story and how he loved Jesus?”



## **Task Force on Hispanic-Latino Affairs meets, plans, resources congregations**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Georgia is home to nearly 1 million Latinos. But the Church hasn’t done a great job to reach out and welcome them, said Rev. David Thompson, superintendent of the South Georgia Conference’s Coastal District and chairman of the Conference’s Task Force on Hispanic-Latino Affairs.

“This isn’t just a Methodist problem; the Church in general isn’t great at recognizing the sojourner in their midst,” he said.

Originally formed in 2016, the [Task Force on Hispanic-Latino Affairs](#) consists of lay and clergy members who are passionate about and involved in Hispanic-Latino ministries in South Georgia.

Regrouping after pressing pause during the pandemic, the task force recently met in person to discuss its goals and priorities for the next several years.

The purpose of the task force, Rev. Thompson said, is to create and manage the vision and strategy for reaching the Hispanic population in South Georgia and bridge the gap between communities.

“Scripture is really clear about how you’re supposed to treat the foreigner in your midst, the sojourner in your land,” he said. “We really don’t do a good job of that in the American church, of embracing people who are here from foreign countries and showing hospitality, kindness, grace, and assisting them. It’s a huge, huge need, and frankly, it’s a terribly missed opportunity to share the gospel in some really practical ways.”

During the meeting those gathered also discussed what can be produced, made available in Spanish, or translated to better equip and resource Hispanic-Latino congregations.

Just a couple of weeks after the March 19 meeting, several South Georgia lay and clergy members filmed a Safe Sanctuaries training module in Spanish. They’re exploring ways Conference events can be made available in both English and Spanish, and have utilized the platform in Zoom that offers a bilingual track.

“This task force group comes to encourage the work and provide the resources our ministers and lay need and thus share concerns, goals, and joys,” said Rev. Daniel Medina, who serves as pastor of Nueva Vida United Methodist Church, associate pastor for Hispanic Ministries at Warner Robins First United Methodist Church, and as the South Georgia Conference’s associate director of Hispanic Ministries. “This is a group we needed to expand and strengthen our ministries and make this important community visible in our area and our conference.”

While the Task Force on Hispanic-Latino Affairs will provide vision, mission focus, and support to pastors serving the Hispanic-Latino community, the call to reach out, love, and serve is for everyone, Rev. Thompson said.

“This is everybody’s work. This is not just the task force’s work. Each community should be looking around and asking, ‘Who are the people who aren’t being reached with the gospel and how can we reach them?’ Look around your community and find the needs and meet them.”



## **Book of Recommendations & Reports for the 2022 Annual Conference Session now available**

Business items for the 2022 Annual Conference session are contained in the *Book of Recommendations and Reports* (BOR). One of the purposes of the BOR is to encourage delegates to read the recommendations, reports, and resolutions prior to arriving at conference. A good delegate is a prepared delegate.

The BOR is now available\* for download as a PDF file at no cost in its entirety or in sections. You can also purchase it for \$7 (plus tax and shipping) as a professionally bound book\*\* through lulu.com. Additionally, a version has been designed specifically for those wishing to utilize the information in electronic form only.

In addition to the *Book of Recommendations and Reports*, there will be additional reports that did not make the printing deadline. We will make these available online. Please read these reports prior to the Annual Conference Session to help prepare you for reports given during our Annual Conference online session.

Option #1: On-demand printing of the 2022 *Book of Recommendations and Reports* through LULU.com

**[CLICK HERE to order your printed copy today.](#)**

Option #2: Digital download / free PDF for making Printed Copies or Electronic Viewing

The *Book of Recommendations and Reports* is also available as a free PDF download. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to download the file(s). If you don't already have it installed, visit [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com) and follow the instructions. If you are viewing the document electronically, the page numbers have been formatted to match the printed version, enabling you to easily find a page when referenced during the Annual Conference session.

**Full version of the 2022 *Book of Recommendations and Reports* for printing/Electronic Viewing:**

**[2022 Book of Recommendations and Reports](#)** (154 pages)

**Section versions of the 2022 *Book of Recommendations and Reports* for printing/Electronic Viewing:**

**[Table of Contents](#)**

**[Section 1 - Preparing for Annual Conference](#)** (16 pages)

**[Section 2 - Resolutions](#)** (10 pages)

**[Section 3 - Recommendations](#)** (55 pages)

**[Section 4 - Consent Calendar](#)** (Reports) (67 pages)

*\*The 2015 Annual Conference session voted that all Annual Conference materials, including the Book of Recommendations and Reports, be made available online on the conference website and through other electronic means.*

*\*\*The Conference is using [www.Lulu.com](http://www.Lulu.com), an online print-on-demand publishing company, to print the 2022 Book of Recommendations and Reports. Orders will be made and processed via their secure website and shipped directly from their facility.*

---

## **Mission opportunities at Annual Conference**

- [Mission emphasis to support our conference agencies](#)
- [Special Offering for our North Katanga Partnership](#)

---

## **When God's people show up**

### **FROM THE BISHOP DAVID GRAVES**

In just a few short weeks, God's people of the South Georgia Conference will show up in Columbus for Annual Conference as we celebrate "How Great is Your Faithfulness." When we show up on June 5, it will have been three years since the conference last gathered in person. It has been a long journey. For four days, we will worship five times and we will see friends and make new ones. It will be a homecoming in some ways.

Of course, we have church business to deal with and perhaps some of it will be difficult. Yet, we are God's people and we need to be in a spirit of prayer as an Annual Conference, that when all is said and done, we can all say God was with us and "How great is your faithfulness."

I believe all that is going on in our church, in our world, and our communities, God is always showing up.

On Saturday, April 23, we were returning from a powerful event at Epworth By The Sea following the United Methodist Men's Retreat. Nancy and I had just gotten on I-16 from I-95. To this point, it had really been a journey as it seemed like half the United States was heading up I-95. We had to go around a traffic accident and evening was beginning to set in. A few miles up I-16, my right rear tire disintegrated, and we had to quickly pull off the interstate. The tire was gone down to the rim. A six-inch screwdriver fell out of the tire. It had been a long time since I changed a tire and never on my current Toyota Highlander.

Nancy said, "You need to call AAA because I don't think you can change it." I told her, "You can call AAA, but I am going to try and change it." Nancy shook her head and got back in the car to make the call as traffic whizzed by us.

I got the owner's manual out because the spare tire was up under the rear of the vehicle. I was trying to get it down, frustrated, thinking, "Maybe Nancy is right, I can't change this tire."

In the moment of my frustration and growing concern, God showed up in the form of a young couple. The first words out of Lauren's mouth were, "We are here to help you."

I sure needed help. Her next statement was, "We passed you and I said we need to stop; those people are old and they need help." The old part was a little hard to swallow, but we sure needed help.

Within 20 minutes, the tire was changed and we were back on the road to Macon. Nancy was right; I could not have changed the tire myself. We needed two jacks to get the car off the ground so the spare tire could be put on. The lug nuts on the wheel needed more strength than I could muster. They were wonderful people who just wanted to help us older people. Yet, there was a deeper God thing going on as they did it out of the kindness of their heart. It is amazing what happens when God's people show up. God shows up in ways we cannot begin to imagine. Even on the interstate with a flat tire.

Get prayed up, my friends, for all that is coming to Annual Conference. For it is amazing what happens when God's people show up.

I look forward to being a part.

In Christ,

David

---

## **Freedom For The Future**

### **Spring Quarter: God Frees and God Redeems**

#### **Unit 3: Liberating Letters**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of May 8, 2022**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

**Lesson Scripture: Romans 8:18-30**

**Key Verse: Romans 8:18**

#### **Lesson Aims**

1. List ways in which the Holy Spirit is active in the lives of believers.
2. Give an example from Scripture where the Holy Spirit interceded for believers.
3. Write a prayer to thank God for his presence during a difficult time.

Having stated in verse 17 that believers can expect to suffer, Paul then gives three grounds of encouragement: (1) the glory that will be revealed (vv.18-25), (2) the assistance of the Holy Spirit (vv.26-27), and (3) the fact that all things work together for good (vv. 28-30).

Therefore, the theme of our scripture lesson (8:18-30) is the believer's future glory. This passage begins "the glory that will be revealed in us" (v.18) and ends "those he justified, he also glorified," (v.30) on this note.

In between, Paul makes two basic points about this glory. First, it is the climax in God's plan both for his people and for his creation generally. And since we have not reached that climax, we must eagerly and patiently wait for it. Second, God himself provides what we need in order to wait eagerly and patiently. As mentioned earlier, the Holy Spirit helps us pray and God promises to oversee everything for our good according to God's unbreakable plan for us.

### **Lesson Context**

The Apostle Paul was engaged in several significant mission trips, the last of which was his trip to Rome for a hearing before the emperor. The book of Acts ends with Paul awaiting the trial (Acts 28:30-31). Rome was a destination he had long desired (1:13), but not necessarily in the status of prisoner!

According to scholars, the letter to Romans includes Paul's understanding of the Old Testament background for the Christian message, the nature of Christian salvation based on the atoning death of Christ, the centrality of faith as the only path for human salvation, the relationship between Christians of Jewish and Gentile backgrounds in the plan of God, and several other matters.

All this makes Romans both the most challenging of Paul's letters to understand and the richest depository of what he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25). The basis and reality of being justified by faith is the subject of Romans 1-4 in general and 3:24,28 in particular. Paul quoted Habakkuk 2:4 in Romans 1:17 to set the tone for the entire book: "the righteous will live by faith."

This means that faith – complete trust in Jesus – is the only way eternal life may be found. It cannot be earned by obedience, although obedience is important. It is not inherited by ancestry, although this is not important (3:1-2; 9:4-5). True life, eternal life, the life of salvation, is only found in trusting God to save us through his Son.

The question remains: Why do suffering and death still wreak havoc? Paul indicates the likelihood that Christians will suffer for Christ's sake, and he encourages the Roman believers to keep the big picture in mind: we are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17, not in our printed text).

### **I. Present Sufferings (Romans 8:18-25)**

Paul was trained by the respected Jewish teacher Gambril (Acts 5:34; 22:3). So for Paul to “consider” was for him to draw on both his faith in Christ and his vast knowledge of Scriptures. His thoughts are not to be taken lightly.

Paul was careful to put our “present sufferings” – whatever their causes – in proper perspective. Jesus’ resurrection initiated a new era of salvation and restoration. Because God’s faithfulness to his salvation promises have been revealed (Hebrews 1:1-3), suffering of any kind pales in comparison to “the glory that will be revealed in us.” Forms of the word “glory” occur here and in Romans 8:21,30, further defining what believers have to anticipate. The path of suffering ends with being glorified with Christ and with all who have traveled the same path.

In verses 19-22, Paul accentuates the importance this revelation of glory by tying the liberation of the whole of creation to it. “Creation” includes anything and everything God has made (8:22; compare 8:39; Colossians 1:15; Revelation 3:14). Here it refers to the entire created world with the exception of “the children of God.” While the adoption of believers is a present reality (8:14-15), this fact can be obscured by the troubles of living in a sinful world. The suffering that results from our fallen world can further conceal the reality of redemption that is already present (8:17-18).

Following the lead of the psalmist, Paul personifies the created world, using vivid poetic language to speak of its “frustration” (v.20) and its eventual “liberation” (v.21). The entire created world has failed to attain its purpose. Because of human sin, it is not what God intended it to be. “The one who subjected it” could be taken to refer to Adam as the reason for the curse. For Adam and Eve fell into sin and were no longer capable of exercising proper dominion. However, in context it is clear that God is the One who subjected creation to futility. Only God truly subjected creation – in his decree after the Fall – and only God did it “in hope that the entire creation itself will be liberated.” God will one day set the created world free from the decay that mars everything after the fall of human beings into sin. The fate of creation is tied up with that of humanity. As it was through them that creation was damaged, so it is through the glorified children of God that it will be restored again.

In verse 22, creation groans “as in the pains of childbirth.” The pain a woman about to deliver a child experiences is a vivid metaphor of suffering that has a joyous outcome.

This analogy of “childbirth” captures a common first-century Jewish belief that as the salvation of God draws near, conditions on the earth would worsen progressively, like the contractions that get worse and worse until finally the baby is born. Portions of Daniel 7 and 9 helped shape their expectation. Jesus also spoke of the difficulty of the evil times, both concerning events that were near at hand and others that would continue until his return (Matthew 24; John 16:1-11, 31-33). His disciples continued to speak of the troubles that would be seen before Jesus’ return under this age (example: 1 Timothy 4:1-3. All that pain, though, is meant to result in joy for the world. It is not a vain struggle.

Firstfruits as a concept comes from the Festival of Harvest, also called the Festival of Weeks (Exodus 23:16a; 34:22a; Numbers 28:26-31; etc). The people would make sacrifices to the Lord of the first grains they gathered. This expressed thanks to God's providing the harvest and confidence that God would bless the people with bounty throughout the harvest season. Like the firstfruits of a harvest, the indwelling of "the Spirit" within is a kind of down payment, guaranteeing what is still to come (Ephesians 1:13,14).

So we believers groan despite the fact that we have the Spirit. Once the Spirit, with his demand for holiness, enters our lives, we sense as never before just what God wants us to be. As a result, the Spirit increases our frustration at not meeting God's standard and our yearning to be what he wants us to be. What do we wait for? The redemption of the body refers to the rescue of the body from sin and death. That will happen when it is raised from the dead (8:10-11).

Yes, as children of God, we have already been adopted (8:16). Here is a classic New Testament example of the "already-not yet" tension that characterizes the Christian life. Certainly, we are God's children already justified, reconciled and brought into His family. But we are not yet God's children in the way we one day will be – possessing the full inheritance, enjoying perfect holiness in resurrected bodies, and glorified.

So Paul uses adoption imagery to describe our future reward as sons and daughters of God. Believers became "co-heirs" with Christ (Roman 8:17), heirs to the glory of salvation promised to Christians.

In light of the "already-not yet" tension, therefore, it becomes clear that hope is an inevitable part of Christian living. Now, Christian "hope" is not wishful thinking or anticipating a probable outcome; rather it is assured because hope is based not on our own faithfulness but on God's faithfulness to his promises (Titus 1:2-3). Still, we "do not yet have what we hope for," because in that case we would no longer require hope.

When Paul declared that "faith, hope and love" remain and the last is the greatest (1 Corinthians 13:13), it is not because faith and hope are of questionable values. Instead it indicates that when faith and hope are realized in Heaven, we will not need them as we do now to anticipate our promised future. However, love will still be the order of the day, even in Heaven. So God has promised us glory, a glory already existing in Heaven for us. But we cannot see it, hear it, or taste it! We must simply hope in confidence and patience (Romans 5:3-5).

English painter D.F. Watt's painted a picture entitled "Hope." It pictures a poor woman against the world. Her eyes are bandaged so that she cannot see ahead. In her hands is a harp, but all the strings are broken save one. These broken strings represent her shattered expectations, her bitter disappointments. That one last unbroken string is the string of hope. She strikes that string and a glorious melody floats out over her world. It fills her dark skies with stars. The artist painted a great truth. Even when all else is gone, we can still have hope. And no one is defeated until hope is gone.

With God's faithfulness and promise, we wait confidently and patiently with hope.

## **II. God's Presence (Romans 3:26-30)**

The state of the world can leave us so completely horrified, such as today, that we are left speechless. Our "weakness" includes every piece of evidence that we live in a sin-sick and dying world. But when we do not know "what we ought to pray for," the Spirit steps in on our behalf. This should really come as no surprise since Jesus promised the Spirit would be his disciples' "advocate" (John 14:16,26; 15:26).

Paul builds on this, giving believers confidence that "the Spirit himself intercedes for us." When words fail us in prayer, the Spirit does not.

Very important! When our lack of faith undermines certainty in prayer, the Spirit himself intercedes on our behalf. And so intense is the Spirit's prayer that Paul describes it as "groans that words cannot express." However, these groanings of the Spirit are perfectly in accord with God's will (v.27). Thus, God, who knows the heart, hears and answers those prayers. It is a great comfort to know that our inability to pray as precisely as we would like is not a hindrance to the working out of God's perfect will in our lives.

Now, we come to one of the favorite verses in Romans (v.28). How often in times of tribulation and trials have believers turned to Paul's reassuring words that God has not deserted us, but is working in every circumstance of life: "We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, and have been called according to his purpose." Needless to say, this is one of the great promises in all of Scripture.

Note the phrase that Paul attached to this promise: "Those who love him, and have been called according to his purpose." Not only is God continually at work, but those for whom He works, are faithful and true in their love for him.

Faith in the sovereign God means believing that God is in control of all things. Even the evil in this world is not beyond his control. Our problem here is that of limited perspective. Only God can see how all things work together for good regardless of the situation.

While the doctrines of foreknowledge and predestination are important to consider, Paul's letter precedes by centuries of debates about these terms and does not address the arguments that future Christians would engage in. Rather, Paul's point is that God is working within a plan, not haphazardly throwing people or events together in some sort of cosmic salvific experiment (compare Ephesians 1:11-14). Though choice or chance may seem to be the order of the day, we take comfort that God knew us long before we accepted the call to join him in his ultimate purpose for people: "to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Psalm 139:13). As we are told, this is both a new creation and a re-creation, for to be made in the image of Christ is to be restored to our unspoiled state of having been created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

In verse 29, as the first to rise from the dead into glory, Jesus' bodily resurrection made him "the firstborn" from the dead (Colossians 1:18). Because of his resurrection, we expect to be "among many brothers and sisters" who will also return to life (contrast 1 Corinthians 15:12-19). It is the promise of our own resurrection that is the ultimate hope we have in the midst of our sufferings (compare Acts 23:6; 1 Corinthians 15).

In the context of verse 30, Paul means that God has made an earlier decision about our future (8:29).

This predetermined plan has three stages. First, God has called us, giving us the opportunity to respond to the gospel by faith. Second, a positive response leads to being "justified," declared righteous through our faith in Christ because of his sacrifice on our behalf (3:24-26). The final stage is our being "glorified" when our own resurrections take place and we join Christ in Heaven for all eternity (2 Corinthians 15:42-58).

At any rate, in this text, Paul wants us to come away not with controversial theological questions but with a renewed sense of assurance that the God who began a good work in us will indeed bring it to completion in the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6).

## **Conclusion**

Christians have a hope that persists through the ordeals of life. Outside of Christ and our faith in Him, this hope is not possible; still, we observe and experience sufferings. Focusing on these things makes a person nearsighted. Thus, it is only with an eye on our future glory that we Christians cannot only endure hardships but also thrive in the hope of God's promises.

But while we hope for the glorious future in Christ, we still have work to do. Immediately our minds turn to evangelism – and rightly so – but these verses remind us that we are also responsible for all creation. God has made us stewards of his good earth, and while people suffer, all creation suffers. Likewise, believers' peace is the peace of the world as well. Our glory will be the glory of creation. So may we be people who have died with Christ and live again in the Spirit, be ambassadors of God's exciting intentions for all creation.

James Harnish, retired Methodist minister, tells the story of a little boy who was "not exactly" happy about going to church on Easter Sunday morning. His new shoes were too tight, his tie pinched his neck and the weather was just too beautiful to be cooped up inside. As he sulked in the back seat, his parents heard him mutter, "I don't know why we have to go to church on Easter anyway: they keep telling the same old story and it always comes out the same in the end."

And we thank God it does!

## **Action Plan**

1. How do you find a faithful balance in dealing with current challenges without losing sight of hope?
2. How do you respond to the fact that creation suffers because of human sinfulness?
3. What opportunities have God placed before you to grow in patience?

#### **Resources for this lesson**

1. “2021-2022 NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, Uniform Series, International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching,” pages 305-312.
2. “The NIV Application Commentary, Romans” by Douglas J. Moo, pages 265-271.
3. “The New Interpreters Bible, Volume X Romans, 1 Corinthians, pages 504-507.

*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).*

---

## **Freedom and the Law**

**Spring Quarter: God Frees and God Redeems**

**Unit 3: Liberating Letters**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of May 15, 2022**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

**Lesson Scripture: Galatians 3:18-29**

**Key Verse: Galatians 3:29**

#### **Lesson Aims**

4. Summarize what makes a person a child of God through faith in Christ.
5. Compare and contrast life under the law with a life of faith in Christ.
6. Write out the promises God has made to him or her as an heir.

If you have ever been to a roller-skating rink, you know they have special designated times for various categories to skate: boys, girls, parents, couples and so on. After a few minutes of the designated skate, the announcer proclaims over the loudspeaker, “It’s all skate time, everybody is invited to participate and skate!” At this point, no one feels left out.

In this week’s lesson, the Apostle Paul makes a sweeping declaration. This declaration invites all people to hear and experience the promises of God’s transforming good news.

#### **Lesson Context**

The Galatian Christians were a community of believers in the region of Galatia, located in modern-day Turkey. Paul’s missionary journeys took him through this region and its cities.

Depending on whether “Galatia” is understood in a political sense or a demographic sense it was during either Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 13-14) or his second (Acts 16:1-8:22) that he first taught the gospel message to the Galatians (see 4:12-13).

The year Paul wrote the Galatian epistle is unknown. Some research has proposed that it was written as early as AD 48 or as late as AD 57/58. The latter would imply that Paul wrote this epistle after the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15. If this were the case, part of Galatians includes Paul’s retelling of the council’s key concern: circumcision as part of adherence to the Law of Moses (Galatians 2:1-10; see Acts 15:5). These same concerns were of importance among the Galatian churches.

The Galatians had received the gospel messages from Paul (Acts 16:6; 18-23; Galatians 1:11-12), but there were some among them who tried to add to the message. These individuals taught that circumcision as part of adherence to the law of Moses was a requirement for salvation. But Paul declared to be “a different gospel” (see 1:6; 2:14). Advocates for this approach were known as “Judaizers” because they called for Gentile believers to adhere to the distinctions of Jewish law. And the Judaizers’ beliefs were understandable. From their point of view, Israel was and continued to be the distinct people of God. It was to Israel that God had revealed himself given his law and prescribed circumcision as a mark of his covenant (Genesis 17:7-14).

Paul urged the Galatian churches to reject the Judaizers’ addition to the gospel message (1:7-9). Paul reflected on his own “extremely zealous” experience in Judaism (1:14) as he highlighted his inability to follow the law to the point of justification (2:15-21). Through Christ, the promise of salvation was to be revealed to the whole world (3:6-9). And Paul went on to show the unifying nature of that salvation for all who would believe in Christ.

### **I. Inheritance (Galatians 3:18-19a)**

The fact that Paul begins with “for” indicates a continuation of his preceding discussion on “the inheritance” from God (Galatians 3:15-17). This inheritance implies eternal life and being counted righteous by God – for those having faith in Jesus (see Acts 20:32; Hebrews 9:15). Paul’s great concern was the means by which the inheritance was received.

If the promised life and righteousness came via “the law,” then God’s promises – especially his promises to Abraham – would be of little value. Simply stated, the law’s role was not to provide entrance into God’s “promise.” The Law was given to Moses 430 years after God’s promise (3:17). This fact provides a hint for God’s relationship with his people, He desires relationships, not regulations. If God’s inheritance was received by following the law, then his promises would be of no value and faith would be irrelevant (Romans 4:13-16).

The “promise of God,” made “to Abraham” centuries prior, designated a blessing (Genesis 12:1-3), a reward and heir (Genesis 15:1-6), and a guarantee of descendants (17:1-8). In contrast to the demands of the law, God’s gracious act was in giving the promise. And ultimately, God’s promises would be fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3:16).

Now, this observation led to Paul's essential question: "Why then, was the law given at all? Here, Paul anticipates the Galatians' response regarding the promise. If God's inheritance came through his promise then why should people of God continue to rely on "the law for salvation?" This question is Paul's way of addressing their (assumed) concerns since he couldn't be with them in person.

## **II. Law (Galatians 3:19b-21)**

Scholars tell us that the covenant (promise) is permanent: the law is temporary and provisional till the seed should come. The law is something added; it is not in God's original plan. It is limited in purpose because of transgressions. No matter how profoundly significant transgressions may be, the handling of them is only a part, not the whole, of Christian life.

The word "transgressions" indicates a violation of a boundary. In this instance, the boundary transgressed is the law (see Romans 2:23). The law "was added" to reveal the nature and extent of human transgressions (5:13, 20). As a result, people became conscious of their violations (Romans 3:20; 7:12-13). Through the Law of Moses, the Israelites had common language for understanding their transgressions and enforcing discipline. However, the law's application was limited as it served to reveal, rather than heal, transgressions.

The law would apply "until" a specific time ordained by God. Galatian Judaizers required obedience to the Law of Moses to become an heir of Abraham's "promise." However, Paul nullified their argument by noting a temporal aspect: the law was fulfilled by the coming of Abraham's "Seed," Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:16).

The law was foreign to the nature of God and so could not be transacted directly between God and his people. It was "mediated" (v.20) through angels and through Moses. The law's inferiority was due, in part, to its mediated nature. While scripture never calls Moses "a mediator," God gave him the law and entrusted it to his care. Other scriptures indicate a belief that "angels" served a role in revealing "the law" (see Acts 7:53; Hebrews 2:2). However, God's promise is without angels' mediation. Therefore, it is more enduring.

That the law was given through a "mediator" did not strengthen its influence. In fact, the opposite occurred. The mediated nature of the law differed from God's direct interactions with Abraham (Genesis 12:1). For believers, Christ Jesus serves as the mediator between God and humans (1 Timothy 2:5). As a result, there exists a new relationship between God and humanity, mediated through the "better promises" of Christ Jesus (example, see Hebrews 8:6). The law differentiated Jew and Gentile. "But God is one" and his people are one through faith in Christ (Romans 3:29-30).

In verse 21, Paul again anticipates a rebuttal, so he cites a possible concern for the Galatians. The "law and the promise" are not against each other. Both are of God and both are holy (Romans 7:12; 1 Timothy 1:8). However, each serves a different purpose.

One other thing in verse 21, the “law” was never intended to give eternal life. This is why Paul emphasizes that the giving of the law came years after God’s covenant and Abraham’s faith (Galatians 3:17). If righteousness could come by the law, then the work of Christ, particularly his death, would be “for nothing” (2:21). As the law shows humans their sinful ways, it follows God’s holy intention (Romans 7:7-10).

### **III. Faith (Galatians 3:22-25)**

Because Paul declared that all were guilty under the law, all were unfit to receive life on the basis of the law. This serves to contrast the law’s condemnation with the life provided by “what was promised.” Only those who believe will be counted righteous. And the righteous person will be considered a recipient of the promise (Romans 4:3, 13, 16), conveyed by the “seed” of Abraham, Jesus (3:16,19).

God’s plan never depended on the law. It was and is through faith in Jesus Christ and his faithfulness to follow the call of his Father that Jew and Gentile can experience the blessed promise of redemption. “Those who believe” become God’s children, regardless of their ethnic identity (John 1:12,13).

For Paul, this “faith” was more than a person’s mental trust or a deep-seated hope. Instead, he attributed faith to God’s way of dealing with humanity. Jesus’ faithfulness in following his Father was the way God revealed his righteousness to the world.

Before Christ’s arrival, “the law kept humans in custody.” This might imply that the law served as a restraint, showing the extent of sin through scripture.

Paul envisioned a new era of God’s working among humanity. This era was one in which God’s promise was “revealed” through “faith.” So Paul drew demarcations between the era of law and the era of faith with Christ’s faithfulness in his work being the moment of transition.

In verse 24 and 25, Paul’s next metaphor softens the description as he describes the law “as our guardian.” The illustration refers to the duties of certain servants in ancient Greco-Roman culture. These servants supervised the education of the household heir, keeping a close eye on the heir’s behavior, character-formation and discipline. Eventually the heir would mature and no longer need this guardian.

In a similar way, the law was only needed for a time. It served its purpose “until Christ came” and brought an end to the law’s power for justification (Romans 10:4). The law could only do so much for humanity in regard to the promises of God. Consequently, humans could never be “justified” by the law (see Acts 13:39).

Now, in the Galatian understanding, justification required both following the law and expressing faith in Christ. To that end, Paul highlighted the superiority and finality of “faith” in bringing justification. Since “this faith has come,” the law – serving as a guide – is no longer needed. The

reason is that the law has been fulfilled in Christ. What the law could not accomplish, God accomplished through Jesus.

Question? Are we seeking life by our law abidance – trying to be “good enough” by our own efforts – or are we finding life in the One who fulfills the law (see Matthew 5:17)?

In his sermon, “Finding Faith,” John Wesley declared, “The faith I wanted was a sure trust and a confidence in God ... Like Paul, I wanted a faith which would enable me to say, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by the faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me!”

#### **IV. Unity (Galatians 3:26-29)**

In “Shepherd’s Notes” by David R. Shepherd, editor-in-chief, points out that in this section, Paul makes these astounding statements about the new status of “all” true believers: (1) you are all children of God, (2) you are all children of God through faith and (3) you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Paul’s “you...all” included every believer in his Galatian audience, Jew or Gentile. The Judaizers’ insistence on adherence to the Law of Moses was great concern for Paul. Regardless of whether a person followed the law, all people would be considered the “children of God.” This was a phrase first used to describe the biological descendants of Abraham, those who were given the Law of Moses (see Deuteronomy 14:1-2). However, a new era had arrived, one in which God’s children were no longer marked by their observance of the law. Instead, they were marked by their expression of “faith” in Christ Jesus.

Therefore, Paul reminds these Galatian Christians that they had been “baptized into Christ.” Baptism unites the believers with the death of Christ and the glory of his resurrection. Further, baptism brought unity and a transformation by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jew or Gentile. The result was that Jewish and Gentile believers would become unified. “To have clothed yourself with Christ” implies putting to death the sinful nature and being renewed with a new nature, transformed by Christ.

The result of baptism into Christ is the formation of a new self in Christ. And this resulted in unity with others also in Christ. Paul then reinforces this reality by upending notable social structures of a first-century audience.

One’s racial heritage is not the last word for a Christian; there is neither Jew nor Gentile. One’s social status, including even imprisonment, is not the last word; there is neither bond nor free. One’s sex is not the last word; the Christian cause rests not upon gender but upon personality; there is neither male nor female. Paul deals with these profound problems on the deepest basis: “Ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” In other words, the person who grips these matters in Christ is on the way to freedom.

Having confirmed the diverse yet unified nature of God’s people, Paul explores the implications of this diversity. All people who express faith can belong to the body of Christ. And as a result, the promises made to Christ are applicable to all people who have faith. The promises made to Abraham’s seed are fulfilled through those people in Christ as they become heirs with him (Romans 8:17).

Thus, being in Christ implies having full access to the promise of his blessing. Further, it means his Spirit will be present in the lives of believers.

In his book “Porch Talk,” Philip Gulhey summarizes all this in a beautiful way. He says, “There is a certain transcendent joy in creating a thing of beauty. But even more fulfilling is to become a thing of beauty.” To become a thing of beauty – in Christ!

### **Action Plan**

4. How do God’s people live differently in light of God’s promises?
5. In what ways do Christians use good behavior to earn favor with God and with others?
6. What steps can believers take to ensure that they identify with Christ?

### **Resources for this lesson**

4. “2021-2022 NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, Uniform Series, International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching,” pages 313-320.
5. “The Interpreters Bible, Volume 10, by Raymond T. Stamm and Oscar Fisher Blackwelder, pages 512-520.
6. “Shepherd’s Notes” by David Shepherd, pages 45-52.

*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).*

---

## **Old time religion**

### **JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS**

#### **DAVE HANSON**

John Wesley came to Georgia in 1736 with one over-arching goal in mind. He wanted to establish a religious community like the early church. He wanted some “Old Time Religion.” He thought the ideal place for this experiment in Old Time Religion would be the frontier of Georgia. To that end, Wesley announced on his first Sunday in Savannah that while he was the pastor things would be done the “Old Fashioned Way!” This included the way babies were to be baptized – by Triune Dunking – the way communion was to be served – only to those who had made a prior confession – and the way marriages would be celebrated – after a three-week “Posting of the Bands.” He called it a return to Primitive Christianity.

He was excited at the possibilities of establishing Old Time Religion in the Georgia wilderness. His congregation was not at all thrilled by this idea. Resistance began from the beginning and John Wesley's 23 months in Georgia was filled with sorrow, pain, and disappointment. He learned a lot while in Georgia and, looking back some years later, could see that all was not darkness and discouragement.

*The Rev. Dave Hanson is a retired pastor and John Wesley scholar.*



**Seek to make life better for those in need**

**By Rev. Garth Duke-Barton, *Conference Secretary for Global Ministries***

We often think of missions as something done overseas or in a distant part of our country. There are multiple missions that happen in places we think would be immune to the effects of poverty.

If we lived in Washington, D.C., the seat of our government, we would find Christ House Medical Services Advance #381215. They provide comprehensive and compassionate care for people with acute medical needs who are experiencing homelessness. There are indeed homeless in the Washington, D.C. area. They are usually hidden when cameras are rolling. The church sees them and helps them, as we are able.

If we lived in Mississippi, not terribly far from or different than us, we would find people in need, too. The Gulfside Association, Inc. Advance #760235 helps by advocating for underserved communities to address poverty, education, and leadership. They have served in Jackson, Miss. for more than 100 years. They not only help with food and home repair, they also help people go to college.

Then there is Hinton Rural Life Center Advance #731372. It is in North Carolina providing home repair to address substandard housing issues that are linked to poor health. You wouldn't think such a beautiful place can have poverty when you look at their campus pictures, but it is there and they have found the people in need.

There are so many other places where the church serves in the world. We may not be aware of the missional needs around us. Look and see where a local mission might be of use. Then let's get our hands dirty as we seek to make life better for those in need.

*Rev. Garth Duke-Barton, pastor of Epworth United Methodist Church in Jesup, also serves as Conference Secretary for Global Ministries.*



**Retired Clergy Birthdays – May 2022**

5/01 – Jacque Asbel: 4116 Amberley Trail; Valdosta, GA 31602  
5/01 – John Beck: 1210 Tribble Rd.; Ft. Valley, GA 31030  
5/03 – Rick Turner: 798 Mallery St., Apt. 11; St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
5/06 – Eddie Morrison: 1610 Kings Way; Savannah, GA 31406  
5/11 – Stan Posey: 3936 Island Creek Rd.; Valdosta, GA 31601  
5/12 – Reese Nelson: 2804 Willow Wood Circle; Valdosta, GA 31602  
5/12 – Ron Womack: 404 Bobby Ray Rd.; Reidsville, GA 30453  
5/14 – Kenneth Watkins: 170 Sanford St.; Wadley, GA 30477  
5/15 – Tommy Roe: PO Box 56; Montrose, GA 31065  
5/15 – Dan Smith: 7176 Standing Boy Rd.; Columbus, GA 31904  
5/19 – Ronnie Howell: 32 Vanceville Co. Line Rd.; Tifton, GA 31794  
5/20 – Franklin Pierce: 602 Ft. King George Dr.; Darien, GA 31305  
5/22 – Jimmy Gilbert: 464 Penia Rd. N; Cordele, GA 31015  
5/23 – Jeri Pruette: 2188 Peacock Rd.; Quitman, GA 31643  
5/24 – Columbus Burns: 201 East 63<sup>rd</sup> St.; Savannah, GA 31405  
5/24 – Robert Beckum: 5031 Spyglass Court; Columbus, GA 31909  
5/26 – Faye Burgamy: 165 S. Burgamy Rd.; Warthen, GA 31094  
5/27 – Cile Mitchell: 130 Hitchiti Ridge Rd.; Juliette, GA 31046  
5/28 – Richard Newton: 1823 Kaufman Circle; Lady Lake, FL 32159  
5/29 – Marsha Emery: 3855 Dennis Creek Road; Talbotton, GA 31827  
5/30 – Luanne Kemper: 1412 Sapling Dr.; Orange Park, FL 32073

.....  
**Scripture Readings – May 3 edition**

**May 8**

***Fourth Sunday of Easter***

Psalm 23 (UMH 754 or 137)

Acts 9:36-43

Revelation 7:9-17

John 10:22-30

**May 15**

***Fifth Sunday of Easter***

Psalm 148 (UMH 861)

Acts 11:1-18

Revelation 21:1-6

John 13:31-35

**May 22**

***Sixth Sunday of Easter***

Psalm 67 (UMH 791)

Acts 16:9-15

Revelation 21:10, 22-22:5  
John 14:23-29

---

## **Events in the South Georgia Conference – 5/3/2022 edition**

### **Magnolia Manor Sunday – May 8**

Magnolia Manor is a South Georgia Conference ministry that serves older adults of all faiths in eight locations throughout South Georgia. On this Special Sunday, South Georgia United Methodists are asked to take up a special offering to support this vital ministry. To learn more about Magnolia Manor visit [www.magnoliamanor.com](http://www.magnoliamanor.com).

### **Living Life to the Fullest: An Older Adult Retreat at Epworth By The Sea – May 16-19**

This three-day retreat, held May 16-19 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island, will be fun, informational and spiritual. [Housing Registration](#) / [Schedule](#)

### **Online Advanced Lay Servant Training – May 17, May 19, May 24, May 26**

Lay Servant training is designed to educate those persons interested in stretching their faith to participate more fully in the ministries of the church. They have three main areas of focus: Leading, Caring, and Communicating. The advanced class, based on Cokesbury's book, "Each One a Minister," by William Carter is a study of the book of Ephesians and what it teaches us about how we are called to use our spiritual gifts. Advanced LSM Training includes learning how to put your spiritual gifts into service. This training will be offered via Zoom. You must complete all of the scheduled dates above to complete your training. To participate you will need either a cell phone that will allow you to download the Zoom app (please do so ahead of time) or a laptop, a steady wi-fi connection, and a willingness to learn in a modern way. Registration fee for the class is \$25. (Note: Basic Lay Servant class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) For more information, contact Anne Bosarge at [abosarge@sgaumc.com](mailto:abosarge@sgaumc.com).

### **2022 Annual Conference session – June 5-8**

The [2022 Annual Conference session](#) is set for June 5-8 in Columbus, Ga.

### **Peace with Justice Sunday – June 12**

Peace with Justice Sunday enables The United Methodist Church to have a voice in advocating for peace and justice through a broad spectrum of global programs. [Peace with Justice Sunday Pastor and Leader Kit](#)

### **Wesley Glen Day – June 19**

Fathers' Day is Wesley Glen Day across the South Georgia Conference. Show your support for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities by making a gift to [Wesley Glen Ministries](#) on June 19 in honor of a strong male role model in your life. Celebrate by wearing

your favorite Wesley Glen T-shirt from past years. Post your pictures on social media with the tags: #WesleyGlenMinistries #growingtogether