

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – NOVEMBER 15 EDITION

Bishop David Graves assigned to South Georgia

Bishop David Graves has been assigned to the South Georgia Annual Conference and will serve as the Episcopal leader for the next two years. He will also continue giving oversight to the Alabama-West Florida Annual Conference. This announcement came on the final day of the 2022 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference held Nov. 2-4 at Lake Junaluska, NC.

Bishop Graves was elected bishop in July 2016 by the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. He was assigned to the Alabama-West Florida Conference in September 2016. In addition, he has been [serving South Georgia since September 2021](#) following the retirement of Bishop Lawson Bryan.

The SEJ Committee on the Episcopacy reported the following assignments of the Bishops within the Southeastern Jurisdiction. Rev. Don Adams and Mr. Bill Hatcher served as the South Georgia representatives on the committee.

Episcopal Assignments

- Alabama-West Florida - Bishop David Graves
- Central Appalachian Missionary - Bishop Leonard Fairley
- Florida - Bishop Tom Berlin
- Holston - Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett
- Kentucky - Bishop Leonard Fairley
- Mississippi - Bishop Sharma Lewis
- North Alabama - Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett
- North Carolina - Bishop Connie Shelton
- North Georgia - Bishop Robin Dease
- South Carolina - Bishop Jonathan Holston
- South Georgia - Bishop David Graves
- Tennessee-Western Kentucky - Bishop Bill McAlilly
- Virginia - Bishop Sue Hauptert-Johnson
- Western North Carolina - Bishop Ken Carter

These Episcopal Assignments will begin January 1, 2023.

Each jurisdiction's college of bishops and committee on the episcopacy arrange coverage of the episcopal areas, with some assigning bishops - like Bishop Graves - to serve more than one episcopal area [as 16 bishops have done over the past two years](#) with General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference both postponed by the pandemic.

All active bishops are eligible for reassignment at jurisdictional conferences.

Bishops are elected for life and serve in their assignment until retirement (required by the *Book of Discipline* to be the jurisdictional conference following their 68th birthday). Bishops are elected at Jurisdictional Conference and then are assigned to Episcopal Areas, which may include one or more Annual Conferences within that jurisdiction for a four-year term. Due to the pandemic and the rescheduling of the Jurisdictional Conference, delegates will meet again in July 2024.

During the 2022 SEJ Conference delegates from the 14 annual conferences within the Southeast gathered

under the theme “This I Know.” They heard reports and voted on business matters and worshiped together. The delegates also elected three new bishops: Bishop Tom Berlin, Bishop Connie Shelton and Bishop Robin Dease. The conference concluded Friday morning, November 4, with a Service of Consecration for the newly elected bishops.

Read more about the SEJ Conference at www.sejumc.org/sej-conference-2022.

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The Methodist Home for Children and Youth: Breanna & Noah tell their stories

By the staff of The Methodist Home as published in the [Gateway magazine](#)

Founded in 1872, The Methodist Home provides care for children and families in need across South Georgia including a continuum of residential care (Children’s Homes), community foster homes, specialized treatment programs and counseling services to better serve our community. The Methodist Home is a faith-based organization working to better equip at-risk youth and families for the future. Their mission is to be a model agency that restores childhoods, strengthens families and cultivates a people-building organization. Below are stories from Breanna and Noah whose lives have been changed from the care they received at The Home.

Breanna’s Story: Beating the Odds

Breanna is an alumna from our Valdosta campus and graduated with her bachelor of social work from Savannah State University this year! Her time at The Methodist Home gave her hope for her future, as she found freedom in being a “normal teenager” under the care of her staff members. She says, “They didn’t make me feel like a foster youth – I got to experience the same things as other people my age.”

The connections she made at The Home did not stop there, as she still talks with some of her staff members from her time here. **“The made me feel a part of their family. I didn’t feel like it was just a job for them.”** We desire for all of the young people we serve to feel this same way, knowing we are a big family who does not stop caring for them after they leave our home.

Breanna would describe herself as ambitious, funny, and brave, and those are absolutely accurate! She is a first-generation college student and did not have any role models in her family to look up to or ask advice from when entering the unknown college scene. But, something in her told her to keep going. Breanna says she believes she has a “divine calling” in the field of social work. She recalls advocating for herself while she was in foster care, and is excited to be that person for others in a similar place as she once was. “I’m a living testimony... Some college days were so hard and I wanted to give up, but I remembered why I did this. I know there is a reason for everything.”

She completed a project during her college career about social support systems for foster youth and realized how our culture often labels these young people as unsuccessful. But Breanna believes “if they have the right help and people to uplift them, that can make a difference.” She is living proof of that: **“I was labeled by society and I beat the odds!”** Breanna is currently pursuing her master’s degree and says she stays motivated by her younger brother, who is still in the foster care system, and desires for him to receive the same opportunities she did that gave her the chance to grow and thrive.

“Don’t be afraid or ashamed to ask for help” is Breanna’s advice to current youth in foster care. She experienced first-hand what can happen if you share your need for support! **“I want to thank The**

Methodist Home for sticking beside me and keeping in contact with me. Thank you for making me feel like family and feel important.”

We are honored to call Breanna an alumna of The Methodist Home and are looking forward to supporting her as she makes a difference in the lives of children in foster care!

Noah’s Story: Onward and Upward!

Noah is well-known around our Macon campus because he has called it home for nine years! He is also the first graduate from Price Academy, our school on campus. Typically, Price serves our youth up to the eighth grade, but in 2020 we established a program for our older youth who could benefit from a different school setting. Noah jumped on this opportunity and excelled!

This year, the campus gathered for our annual Awards Banquet to honor the growth of our young people. But there was something extra special in store – all of our young people got to cheer Noah on as he walked across the stage! It was truly a remarkable moment.

When Noah was asked why it was important to him to graduate high school, he said, “I promised I wouldn’t give up when it was hard. **I used my pain and struggle to motivate me** and I wanted to prove to myself and others that I won’t give up easily. I have so many people who put their faith in me and believe in me and I want to try my best to live up to that.” Noah has a bright future ahead of him, and he says **“being at The Methodist Home has given me family support. I couldn’t have done it if it wasn’t for this place. They pushed me to want more than the bare minimum.”**

Noah is looking forward to what is to come down the road, and says there are two things that he values above everything else: being a good father and husband. He says, “I know everyone fails at times, but I don’t want to fail at those things. I can choose to make a better future for myself, so when I have kids, they will have a life I didn’t have... Graduating is another example of that – I can show them that they can do it, too. **I will give my future kids the support I didn’t have until I received it at The Methodist Home.”**

A determined young man, Noah is excited to continue his education by going to college and believes that although he will continue to face challenges, what matters to him is how he works through the hard times. **“There are going to be difficult times in your life, but the question is how you are going to handle it. You can do anything you put your mind to. It’s important to be full of life, give it your best, and when you fall, pick your head up and keep going!”**

We are immensely proud of Noah. We will miss his leadership and kind spirit around campus when he heads off to college, but know he will continue to touch people’s lives in this next season!



Look back, give thanks, move forward

Remember God’s past provisions, let go of expectations, and find new ways God is working today

By Laura Buchanan, United Methodist Communications

Neighboring has changed. Technology has transformed our daily living. Relationship building must overcome screen time. As societal norms shift, each generation has a moment of realization: “Things just aren’t what they used to be.”

“It’s funny how we glorify things in the past and we tend to dread things in the future, the unknown,” says Anne Bosarge, Director of Leadership Strategies and Local Church Resources in the [South Georgia Conference](#) of The United Methodist Church. “We kind of forget the uncomfortable things that happened and yearn to go back to the familiar. We want it to be like it was – but the world isn’t like it was.”

Pause and remember

It’s healthy to take time to remember the past. Hindsight offers a chance to evaluate all that we have experienced. We see God fulfilling promises. We see God’s goodness and grace.

“When we remember who we are, whose we are, who God is and what he has done, we can give thanks and praise for God’s provision,” Bosarge shares. “Part of being able to see what God is doing in the midst of challenging circumstances is recognizing what he has already done and how he is working in spite of what is going on around you. And the only way to do that is to have a mindset of awareness.”

Embrace the new

“Our past experiences form expectations that we bring with us as we move forward,” Bosarge observes. “We think we know what the future holds and what it will be like, but many times, it isn’t what we were expecting. It’s different. Then we have an interesting reaction: we compare the new things God is doing to the way it used to be.

“Some people joyfully welcome the new, while others mourn. We do this in our homes, churches and communities. It’s tempting to continually reminisce about the ‘way it was,’ but if we do this, we might not see the new ways God is moving.”

As our lifestyles morph due to technology and cultural changes, we must remain openminded.

“These new things are not bad, in fact, these are opportunities for us to consider how we will respond to God’s call to love our neighbors in this new time and space,” encourages Bosarge. “Don’t be so sad about the way that it used to be that you miss the joy and the possibility in the way that it is now. Don’t be so focused on what you have lost that you can’t see what you are gaining.”

Discover how God is working

Bosarge asks, “Do we look at our world and say, ‘God used to be working in my church, neighborhood and the relationships I used to have.’ Or, do we say, ‘Okay, God, show me where are you working.’ So often, the places where God is working are not the places we expect him to work.

“God is the same God now as he was then and he is moving us to new places in the future. He doesn’t say, ‘One day I will do this.’ He says, ‘I am already doing this.’”

Technology now allows us to broadcast worship services to those who haven’t entered a sanctuary in years. Children can see themselves as part of our beautiful, diverse, global community. Home is wherever we best connect with people who love us. Work-life balance is more prevalent. Volunteer and ministry opportunities abound.

“God is renewing our minds through fresh viewpoints and thinking so that we can see the possibilities he has for us,” says Bosarge. “God is making a way for new relationships in your life. It’s not like it used to be, but just because it’s not like it used to be doesn’t mean that it can’t be great. God is inviting you to see it. He’s making a new way. He’s already at work.”

Go deeper by studying scripture

Remember the past

- [Psalm 42:4-8](#)
- [Psalm 77:1-13](#)
- [Psalm 111](#)

Give thanks

- [Psalm 103:1-5](#)
- [Psalm 105: 1-6](#)

Find a new path forward

- [Ezra 3:8-13](#)
- [Isaiah 43:18-19](#)

Laura Buchanan works for UMC.org at United Methodist Communications. She can be reached at lbuchanan@umcom.org.

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United Methodists to Meet in Charlotte for Worldwide Conference

The Commission on the General Conference announced today that the 2024 United Methodist General Conference will be held April 23 – May 3, 2024, at [Charlotte Convention Center](#) in Charlotte, North Carolina.

“The Commission selected Charlotte as the site that best met our varied needs. We believe that delegates and attendees will be pleased with all the city has to offer,” said Kim Simpson, Chair of the Commission on the General Conference. “Charlotte is a part of the Western North Carolina Annual Conference – but due to the shorter timeframe for planning, both the Western North Carolina Conference and the North Carolina Annual Conference will co-host the event.”

In making the selection, Simpson said that the Commission looked at the suitability and capacity of meeting facilities, availability of adequate space, the proximity of hotel rooms, accessibility and convenience of travel and costs of meeting space, lodging, meals and airfare. Proposals from three cities were considered, but ultimately Charlotte was determined to be the best fit.

Charlotte, known as the [Queen City](#), is the 16th [most populous city](#) in the U.S. and a major airline hub for American Airlines. The 600,000-square-foot convention center recently completed a \$126.9 million expansion and is only 7 miles from the Charlotte International Airport and within walking distance of 200 restaurants.

“We are honored to host the 2024 General Conference of The United Methodist Church,” said Bishop Kenneth H. Carter, Jr. of the Western North Carolina Conference. “Our people are hospitable and welcoming, and we trust that the delegates who gather for what promises to be an historic gathering will be blessed by the city of Charlotte and the state of North Carolina and its warmth and beauty.”

“We bathe this gathering in deep prayer while also praying for each delegate who will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as we spend time in Holy Conferencing. It is my prayer that the same spirit will empower and

encourage us to see the possibilities and live the promise,” said Bishop Leonard Fairley of the North Carolina Conference. “May you experience the beautiful natural setting of North Carolina, and the amazing hospitality of its people as you do the work of the Kingdom always remembering you are Beloved of God.”

The last General Conference was set to happen in Minneapolis, Minnesota, until the pandemic made it necessary to postpone the quadrennial legislative event until 2024. At the upcoming conference, the Commission will follow appropriate protocols related to COVID-19 to safeguard attendees’ health.

Delegates from Africa, Europe, Asia and the U.S. will attend the 11-day gathering, which is expected to attract about 5,500-7,500 people.

“It is such an honor to be able to host the 2024 General Conference of The United Methodist Church,” said Mike Butts, Executive Director of Visit Charlotte. “I’m excited that delegates and attendees will get to experience the region’s warm hospitality and enjoy all the offerings that make Charlotte such a dynamic city.”

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About General Conference

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church. The assembly meets at the beginning of each quadrennium to consider revisions to church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for church-wide programs for the next four years.



South Georgia Conference seeks Chief Financial Officer

The South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church is currently seeking a Chief Financial Officer (CFO). This role is responsible for all financial responsibilities in accordance with the appropriate sections of the *Book of Discipline* of The UMC.

The South Georgia Conference includes the geographical area of South Georgia with Columbus, Macon, and Waynesboro as the Northern boundary. In addition to overseeing the financial and benefit functions of the Conference, the CFO also supports the overall administrative office functions of the Conference. The CFO relates to the Council on Finance and Administration, Board of Pension and Health Benefits, Board of Trustees, Personnel Committee, and Equitable Compensation Commission. The CFO serves on the Extended Cabinet, as the Conference Statistician, and on other conference teams and committees when appointed or requested to do so.

This individual will succeed [Dr. Derek McAleer who will retire December 31](#).

The *Book of Discipline* gives the South Georgia Conference Council of Finance & Administration (CFA) the authority to hire this position. CFA, under the guidance of Rev. Dr. Shane Green, senior pastor of St. Paul United Methodist Church in Columbus and chair of CFA, is utilizing the services of the General Conference on Finance and Administration in the hiring process. Throughout the process, Dr. Green is also in consultation with the Conference Board of Pension and Health Benefits (BOP) as this position also supports their work.

The primary roles of the Chief Financial Officer include:

- Prepares and develops the Conference budget in consultation with the Council on Finance and Administration.
- Oversees the receipt and disbursement, in accordance with the actions of the Annual Conference and the provisions of the Book of Discipline, remittances from local church treasurers for all duly authorized general, jurisdictional, annual conference, and district causes.
- Executes the policies established by CFA relating to cash flow, investments, and other financial matters.
- Provides counsel and guidance to districts, local church treasurers, financial secretaries, and committees on finance regarding their fiscal responsibility and the development of standardized financial recording.
- Calculates all Conference apportionments as approved by Annual Conference and distributes apportionments to local churches, as well as coordinates the preparation and distribution of monthly apportionment statements and bills to local churches.
- Coordinates the preparation and distribution of regular and periodic reports related to receipts and disbursements to appropriate persons, boards, and agencies.
- Collaborates with the Council on Finance and Administration on the annual audit and revising the procedures of the Finance Office according to the audit findings with consultation of CFA.
- Oversees and manages receiving, recording, and disbursing Conference funds to the appropriate recipients.
- Oversees administrative areas of the Conference office, ensuring compliance with the Book of Discipline, Conference office policies, applicable employment laws, regulations, and industry standards.
- Provides oversight of the Human Resources and Benefits functions regarding, but not limited to, the establishment of Benefit Plans, Wespeth relationships, and staffing, recruiting, and training of conference employees.
- Serves as the Conference Pension and Benefits Officer for Wespeth on all matters relating to pension benefits and services under the Clergy Retirement Security Plan (CRSP) and Comprehensive Protection Plan (CPP).
- Serves as the Conference Statistician in the preparation of the annual reports and coordinates the development of Statistical Tables for the Conference Journal.
- Collaborate with the Board of Trustees in securing adequate property and liability insurance, worker's compensation insurance, and all other insurance needed by the Conference.
- Prepares and/or reviews, distributes, and interprets accurate and timely month-end and year-end reports for all Conference boards and agencies, local churches, and other related parties as may be required.

The position is based in Macon, Ga. and is open to lay and clergy persons.

[For more information and to apply, click here.](#) Interested applicants can also email a resume and cover letter to jobs@gcfa.org. The closing date for applications is November 21, 2022. If you have any questions about the open position, please contact Cianta Hogan, GCFA HR Manager, at 615-369-2357.



**FROM THE BISHOP
DAVID GRAVES**

Dear Friends of the South Georgia Conference,

Nancy and I are overjoyed to be assigned to the South Georgia Conference. Over the past fifteen months, we have met so many wonderful people across the conference. As your bishop, I am deeply honored that I am able to continue serving here and partnering with you in the life-changing ministry in our local churches. God is at work, and I look forward with great joy and anticipation to what lies ahead for the South Georgia Conference in this next season.

While jurisdictional conferences were meeting last week, the Commission on General Conference announced that the next General Conference will be held April 23-May 3, 2024, in Charlotte, NC. I am grateful to the commission for arranging these logistics. It is helpful as we move forward to know this date. As a reminder, General Conference is the only body of United Methodists who can vote to either uphold or change the *Book of Discipline*. Having not met in eight years, there will be ample legislation before this body. In between General Conferences lots of narratives circulate whether it is persuasive letters, aspirational resolutions, straw polls, etc. None of these things can change our *Discipline* or how The United Methodist Church is governed. This two-week General Conference is the only time changes may be made.

If you attended any of the clergy or laity gatherings in September, you heard me explain the history of our United States jurisdictions. It is important to know they were formed in 1939 as a response to the merger of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church South - then called the Methodist Church. The Southeast wanted to establish jurisdictions for reasons that included: 1) they did not want a northern bishop, and 2) they did not want a black bishop. Jurisdictional Conferences were created to elect and assign bishops with regional accountability.

While at the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference (SEJ), the delegates elected three bishops. I would like to extend a warm welcome to Bishop Tom Berlin, Bishop Connie Shelton, and Bishop Robin Dease. These gifted leaders will have a positive impact on their conferences, the jurisdiction, and the denomination. I am proud to welcome them into the SEJ College of Bishops.

Most importantly, we are launching a year of prayer. It will guide and direct all we do in the South Georgia Conference in the coming year. Soon you will hear more about this initiative and how we can center our work around what God is calling us to do. Our annual conference theme in 2023 will be based on Acts 4:31, “When they prayed.”

I am grateful for how you have made Nancy and me feel at home. Your calls, letters and notes sustain us when it feels hard. Yet we know this work is not too hard because Jesus is at the center of our work. I humbly ask for your prayers in the coming months as we continue in ministry together. In turn, I’ll be praying for you and your church.

In Christ,

Bishop David Graves



FAQ document, Video, & Disaffiliation Timeline

The Bishop, Cabinet, Conference Staff, Conference Chancellor, and the Conference Trustees have worked together to develop a timeline around disaffiliations to help guide local churches. [View the timeline here](#). In addition, Bishop Graves and conference leadership have put together a [video](#) as well as [written FAQs](#) based on questions received at the September gatherings across the conference with laity and clergy.

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We Are God's Handiwork

Fall Quarter: God's Exceptional Choice

Unit 3: We are God's Artwork

Lesson 12

Sunday School Lesson for the week of November 20, 2022

By Craig Rikard

Lesson Scripture: Acts 19; Ephesians 2; Revelation 2:1-7

Key Text: *We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Ephesians 2:10*

Lesson Aims

1. To understand what Paul means when he states we were "spiritually dead."
2. To better understand the reality we could not and cannot save ourselves from.
3. To appreciate the motivation of God in saving us through Christ: love and grace.
4. To contemplate what it means to be God's "poetry" (artwork).

Introduction

In chapter two Paul moves from his joyful salutation into the major message he seeks to impart. However, the joy and gratitude that opened the letter to the Ephesians are ever-present. For background information on the church at Ephesus, please consult the former two lessons and the teacher's manual. Still, it is important to repeat that Paul is writing from prison. He is nearing the latter part of his ministry. Like all of us, Paul writes with greater depth and understanding as he ages. God has given Paul "grace upon grace" and "truth upon truth." The apostle has walked faithfully with Christ. He has prayed fervently; and, he has walked through a myriad of experiences. The more difficult life becomes for Paul, the greater his joy and deeper his trust in God.

Often we fail to consider the sacrifice Paul made to follow Jesus, though Paul would emphatically state that it was God who sacrificed for Paul. Paul's sacrifice was the "response" to God's grace. He was a "pharisee of pharisees." The apostle was well-respected as a pharisee and fervent in his belief. His passion for his office of Pharisee was most likely the underlying reason why Paul was given - or volunteered - for the task of ridding Judaism of the Christians. After one single experience on the Damascus Road, Paul left his former life behind. Jesus came to Paul, not vice versa. The community of Pharisees would now consider him a betrayer. He would become as vile to them as the Christians they persecuted. Yes, Paul surrendered all. It is also important to remember that Paul came from a family with close attachments to the Judaism embraced by the pharisees.

It is also helpful to repeat God's message to Paul through Ananias. God would inform Paul that there was *much to suffer*. This is not exactly the most exciting message for a new convert to hear! However, by the time Paul writes his theological masterpiece of Romans, he recognizes that it was the suffering that deepened his faith and empowered him to face the present and future with joyful confidence.

When we conduct an overview of Paul's belief in Christ (as expressed in his writings), we discover six major themes. First, Paul understood well that we are sinful and cannot save ourselves. For Paul, the Mosaic Law was the teacher that instructed us in the reality of what we should be yet failed to be. Not only did the Law teach us our failure in keeping the Law, it also taught us that we cannot do it! Second, since we could not save ourselves, God saved us in Christ by choice. God chose to save us in Jesus Christ for the reason that He loves us. Love was and is the divine motivation at work in our redemption through Christ. Third, he believed in the reality of the Spirit-filled life. Paul believed the Holy Spirit was present in the Christian and especially in the Church. When we gather together, there is great spiritual power. Fourth, Paul believed the Church was the body of Jesus Christ. We are the presence of Jesus in the world, continuing the ministry of Jesus for ages to come. Fifth, Paul believed our life in Christ has given us true hope. Hope to Paul meant that Christ is with us at all times, never forsakes us, and uses every moment for the Kingdom of God. This was the major reason Paul did not fear adversity and suffering. He knew, in the hands of God, even suffering could reveal God's Kingdom moving in the world. Finally, Paul believed there is life to come. Paul believed to be absent from the body was to be with the Lord. Therefore, death had no sting, the grave no victory. Of course, there were many other revelations of truth that Paul embraced. However, the above six seem to always find their way into Paul's letters to the Church.

Today's lesson emerges from the belief that we cannot save ourselves. Yet, God has done so through Christ. It is God's grace that saves us, not our works. Works are the *response* to God's salvation, and, thus, very important to the Spirit-filled life. As Christians and members of the Church, we are members in the Kingdom of God. Thus, we are experiencing the Kingdom in the here and now, and we also anticipate its ultimate coming as expressed in Revelation 21.

The Text

We Were Dead

Death in the Bible means "separation." Our sin leads to a self-centered life apart from God. Notice, I use the word "sin" instead of "sins." Sins are those individual thoughts and actions that are destructive and dehumanizing. They violate God's law of love as revealed in Jesus Christ. Remember, the law of love - or the Shema - encapsulated all Mosaic Law, especially the Ten Commandments. If we walk in the unconditional love of Jesus and respond by loving in kind, we walk the path of righteousness. Those who love God, love others. Thus we do not engage in idolatry, covetousness, adultery, etc. We separated from God, not because God has abandoned us. Our own actions and thoughts separate us from the righteous life God desires for us. We are separated from the life God desires for us. We cannot become our better selves, nor accomplish all that is possible apart from the Lord. Our sins also separate us from one another. All divisions that dehumanize and cause destruction arise from our sin. The life to which we are called is a life in community. To live the Christian life is to be committed to the Christian family. We are also to live in outreach to the world of lost, hurting people. Our sins leads us to consider ourselves above the greater good of all that God desires.

"Sin" on the other hand refers to a "state of being." To use the word sin is to identify our "sin nature." Sin is that state of being in which we live as those separated from God. Our individual sins create a sin nature and lifestyle. When we embrace our sin and choose to ignore God, we walk alone - not "with God" - though God is always with us. Our sins and sin separate us from God, each other, and the life God desires for us. Thus, Paul wrote "The wages of sin is death." Notice he did not mention specific "sins" but "sin." The consequences of a lifestyle that neglects and ignores God is, to Paul, death.

Jesus died for all of the *sins* we have committed and gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to overcome our *sin nature*. As Christians, we are a forgiven people. However, we are still tempted to compromise our faith daily. The Spirit within us brings to remembrance all that Jesus taught and did, opens our eyes to the

presence of God in daily walk, and enlivens our conscience to recognize that which is of God and those things that are not. This walk in the Spirit is the “sanctified walk.” The Spirit within us sets us apart from the world, continually cleanses us as the conscience calls us to repentance, and empowers us to reject and overcome the temptations of the world.

What is your understanding of spiritual death? Adam and Eve were told that if they ate of the “other tree” they would die. They did not physically die. Therefore, what did “death” mean in the story of Eden? Can you identify those things from which we were separated in Eden? Prior to surrendering our life to Christ, we lived in a state of separation. Can you identify those things from which you were separated? How would you describe your life in Christ as it relates to our former spiritual death? Take a private, personal inventory of your life. Write down those things that separated you from the meaningful life you have now. Also, write down those things you now have in your life since following Christ.

Using the metaphor of the physical body, a dead body cannot resurrect itself. It has no power to make the lungs operate or cause the heart to beat. A dead body can only be resuscitated when there is outside action acting upon it. When the heart stops, those in the medical field or a good Samaritan with knowledge of CPR, take action to restart the heart. Without such action, death is certain. Thus, we are spiritually dead and cannot save ourselves. However, God’s love and grace acted upon us in Jesus Christ.

I find it interesting that the Gospel reveals that when Jesus died “He breathed his last.” In CPR, we empty ourselves of breath and breathe it into another that the lungs and heart might work again. Jesus was that breath for all humanity. Those, who by faith receive that eternal breath, are made alive in Christ. Breath is a major metaphor in Scripture. In Genesis, God breathed into us “the breath of life.” God tells Ezekiel to call forth the wind, same word as breath, upon the dry bones in the valley. Jesus then breathed His last, and at Pentecost the Holy Spirit came as a “rushing, mighty wind (same word for breath).”

In Ephesians 2, Paul reminds us that “all of us” lived at one time and were residents of a dark, egocentric existence. I once heard a pop song on the radio that contained the lyric, “I see the world and feel no romance.” I apologize for not being able to write down the artists’ name or the title of the song. I heard the song before the time of the cell phone and my memory often fails me. The artists were singing that they felt a disconnect from the world. Prior to our life in Christ, Paul implies that we did feel a romance with the world. The darkness courted us, and we responded. Paul will remind us in this text that in Christ we too will no longer feel the romance with the world. We will still feel the temptations and the pull. Yet, we have the Spirit within us to rise above it. Our romance is now with the Kingdom of God.

When Paul wrote that for the Christian, “The former things pass away and everything becomes new,” he doesn’t mean that we are instantly perfected. Many have struggled in the early years of their faith. They have given their life to Christ. Yet, the old continues to exist and tempt. So what is new? Our *desire* is new! We no longer desire that romance with the world. We no longer desire to live in the darkness. When we, in weak moments, engage in the world, we feel a sense of guilt. The guilt is not to condemn but to call us back to righteousness. After all, righteousness is what we desire. Our desire, under the power of the Holy Spirit, moves us ever onward and higher in Christ Jesus.

Can you express how the objects of your desire has changed in Christ? What is that for which you most long? When our former life rears its head, what are the ways that God helps us to keep our eyes on the Kingdom of God? What is the benefit of guilt when we walk with Jesus?

The Redemptive Conjunction

When Paul addresses our sin and consequences, he almost always moves toward the conjunction “but.” It is Paul’s manner of stating, “Yes we were deserving of judgement, BUT God acted in Christ.” He writes in Romans, “The wages of sin is death, BUT the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” *But, however, and yet* are often conjunctions of hope in Scripture. What a great message follows that conjunction! “BUT out of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.”

Paul shares with us the eternal foundation for our redemption: *God’s love*. Yet, Paul doesn’t just write “God’s love,” he writes “God’s *great* love.” We have no language to adequately describe or capture the depth, height, and breadth of God’s love. When John recorded “For God so loved the world,” he could have omitted the word “so” and the sentence would not lose meaning. “So” is that tiny word we often use when we cannot find a word. I listened to a young female church member describe her frustration with a male teen over his behavior with the words, “He is just so...so...so aggravating!” John wants us to know God so...so...so loves us! God’s love is the foundation of grace. This love acted upon us when we were dead in our sins and trespasses. Love is the divine CPR breath that awakens our soul. God’s love in Christ was the eternal breath that raised us from our spiritual death. God has made us alive “in Christ” and “with Christ.” The loving power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same powerful love that “made us alive.”

What do you think the apostle John meant when he wrote, “Not that we loved God first, but that God loved us first, but gave his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”? Though not a literal breath, can you share the moment - or moments - when God awakened you in Christ? How has your vision changed? Your hearing? Since it can often be overwhelming to describe verbally all that God has done for us in Christ, what are the other ways we can share (along with our verbal witness) our experience, joy, hope, and meaningful life with others?

Paul continues that we were raised with Jesus and seated us with him in the heavenly realms. As Christians we are in this world but not of this world. We are spiritual residents in the Kingdom of God while residents in this world. Our eyes now begin to see that transcendent Kingdom alive and moving in the world. When we see purest love, we are looking upon the Kingdom. When we see justice, mercy, and grace we are gazing at the Kingdom here and yet to come.

The greatest physicists and scientists believe there are many dimensions of reality. We live in a three-dimensional world (four if we consider time) and yet try to comprehend God who stands over and beyond it all. If there are a thousand dimensions of reality, God is the sum total of all of them. The Kingdom of God is another dimension of reality. It is more than just “another,” it is the reality of God. At the end of life, we move from this life into the kingdom of God. However, again, it is important to realize that God’s Kingdom is present in the world. The Kingdom is revealed through love, light, truth, beauty, meaning, etc. I add the “etc.” because no person can capture all the means God employs to reveal the divine nature and truth to us. Paul believed that right now, as Christians, we live as those sitting with Jesus in the Kingdom of God. Physically, we are here, alive in the world. Spiritually, we are alive in the Kingdom as God uses our presence here to reveal the will of God for all.

Have you always understood the Kingdom of God as a “place” we go after death? What do you believe it means when we are “in the world but not of it”? Can you share moments when the Kingdom of God moved upon you and your life? Since we are citizens of God’s Kingdom how does this citizenship give us purpose in this life?

It is at this point that Paul introduces us to a proper understanding of grace. Grace is an undeserved gift. Our salvation and new life in Christ is a gift of grace. We could do nothing to earn it. Remember, we were dead in our trespasses and unable to raise ourselves to life. We were acted upon by God. God has always been the initiator of relationships. We did not love God first, God loved us first. It is God’s great love that prompts

and motivates us to love in turn. Thus, our life in grace is a *response* to God's grace. If God had not moved upon us in greatest love, we could not live the life of love and compassion that we now live. We would remain lost in our sin.

It is God's grace that saved us and continues to move us ever upward and higher in our life. Paul emphatically states that God's grace is a gift we receive by faith. We cannot work for it, thus none of us can boast. For Paul, our total salvation is a gift from God, and our life is a response to that salvation. We accept this great gift by faith. I can offer my spouse a gift out of great affection; however, she must open her arms and receive it. The gift of salvation is not something we can see or touch. Thus, to receive it by faith is to act in utter trust. God has revealed He is trustworthy in Christ. Thus, we confidently accept what God has done for us in Christ and continue to embrace that gift every day of our life.

Humility is a vital facet of our faith. If we dared believe we deserved God's grace, or in some manner earned it, we would suffer from the sin of pride. Humility is the recognition of God's greatness and also our frailty. It does not mean we perceive ourselves as worthless. After all, God perceives us as precious and loves us. We were loved prior to our accepting God's grace in Christ. For, again, God's love acted upon us when we spiritually separated from God and the Kingdom of God. We often speak as though God loved us on the cross. God loved us before the cross; for this love is the very reason Christ accepted the cross to redeem all the world. Humility and faith are intertwined in the Christian life.

Did you at one time try to earn God's love and attention? Why was it impossible? Why was it unnecessary? How is God's grace at work in our life now? Do you serve God as a grateful response to what God did for us in Jesus Christ? Or do we find ourselves tempted to gain favor with our actions? Do we hope our actions will move God to hear our prayers? Why are the last two questions rooted in misunderstanding and falsehood?

God's Poetry

Paul reminds us that as followers of Jesus, we are God's handiwork. The Greek word for handiwork is "poema," from where we derive our word poem. We are each a poem of God. We are eloquent expressions of God's grace. Each of us, like a poem, have our own rhythm and rhyme. No two of us are alike, yet we all have something to say and do that is beautiful in the eyes of God. Few things fill the human spirit with fulfillment like purpose. We have the will to make our choices. When we choose to follow Jesus and participate in the Kingdom of God moving in the world, God fashions us into works of divine art. When we think of art we think of the artist as inspired. The word inspired comes from the Latin "inspirare." The word inspire means "to breathe." The poet takes in the world about them and takes in the wonder and beauty as they would a breath. Their exhale of that inspired breath is their poetry, their art. God has breathed into us the Holy Spirit. We have taken that inspired breath through faith. Our lives are thus exhaling that breath as works of compassion and redemption. After all, living involves taking in the breath and letting it go. Only then can we take in the next breath. This serves as a great reminder of spiritual life. In the beginning, God breathed into us the breath of life. We refused to give back obedience and stopped spiritually breathing. When Jesus breathed his last, he gave to God everything we refused to give. Faith in Jesus, metaphorically speaking, is to accept his exhale. Accepting Jesus as Lord doesn't just involve "getting something." It first involves our ability to let go. When we accept Christ, we let go of our sins, for God forgives them. We let go of our misguided dreams. We let go of grudges and bitterness. In doing so, we receive a new breath of life, an eternal breath.

The eternal life God has breathed into us by grace empowers us to continually let go of all things destructive and accept all things righteous and holy. Again, we are God's works of art in process. No two of us are the same. Like poetry, we each have our own rhythm and rhyme in the world. Each of us is a unique expression of God's creativity, Jesus' love, and the Spirit's power.

Have you ever considered yourself to be a work of God's art? Have you perceived others as God's work of art? If we recognize that every person has God's artistic fingerprints all over their life, how does this change for the better the way to treat others?

Summary

Again, Paul has packed so much into a few verses. Our greatest metaphors cannot come close in describing the wonder of God's gift in Jesus. Paul's inspired words and the imagery he uses allow us to understand the nature and wonder of our faith. We can contemplate the greatness of God's love for us and for what God has made possible for us. Most amazing is the love of God in Christ, and the nature of God's Kingdom remains far greater than human words can describe. We need another word! John revealed we have that word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Holy Spirit inspired the words of Scripture. When we read those words with the living Word in our hearts, we are enlivened and illumined. Paul wrote earlier to the Corinthian Church in I Cor. 2:9, "eye has not seen, nor ear heard, what God has in store for those who love him." Thus, there is always more love, light, truth, joy, and meaning to come! The best is yet to come!

Prayer

Almighty God, thank you for your indescribable love in Jesus Christ. Thank you for the life you have given us as residents in your Kingdom. May each of us continue to humbly accept your grace that we might become inspired instruments of your divine will in the world. In Jesus name, Amen.

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

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God Gives Tools for Our Protection

Fall Quarter: God's Exceptional Choice

Unit 3: We are God's Artwork

Lesson 13

Sunday School Lesson for the week of November 27, 2022

By Craig Rikard

Lesson Scripture: Acts 19; Ephesians 6:10-24; Revelation 2:1-7

Key Text: *Put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes you may be able to stand your ground, and after you've done everything, to stand. Ephesians 6:13*

Lesson Aims

1. To understand the importance of our choices and decisions.
2. To realize God has provided all we need to withstand temptation, especially in our most vulnerable areas of life.
3. To understand the need to always be ready for spiritual battle.
4. To recognize our constant need to remain planted and anchored in God's truth.
5. To recognize the all-important discipline of prayer as we engage in spiritual warfare.

Author's note: This lesson is very long. This passage of Scripture contains a wealth of spiritual treasure. It is difficult to unpack it all at one sitting. The lesson is intended to be a supplement to the Teacher's Book. I pray the two can provide all you need to help your listeners grasp Paul's closing words to the Ephesians. Again, all pronouns are traditional, though God transcends all language and cannot be bound by gender. Finally, for the Winter Quarter I pass the baton to my dear colleague Dr. Jay Harris. I love his lessons and so do you. He is of great heart and mind. Pray for him as I will.

The Message of the Text

Paul usually ends his epistles with words of encouragement, a call to be faithful, and offers the practical means on how to live out our faith in daily life. He is bringing his thought in this letter to a close, calling us to live the faith he beautifully expressed in the former chapters. He offers us four responses to live faithfully in the world.

Be Strong

The closing of this letter should be read in its historical context. Persecution is growing, and Paul knows life for the Christians will become difficult if not dangerous. This concluding passage is concerned with the temptations Christians face and the spiritual battles we fight.

Throughout the letter to the Ephesians, Paul has beautifully and powerfully described what God has done for us in Christ. Now, he ends with a real concern: "What are we going to do in response, especially when facing adversity?"

Living the Christian life is not a passive lifestyle. It is true that God has done everything for us through grace. However, it is up to us to embrace and apply God's gift in the circumstances of life. The words "be strong" mean that our free will and choices are vital in fighting and overcoming temptation. Whether we live in weakness or strength is up to us.

When my granddaughter was about to encounter someone with whom she was angry I said, "Now, be kind." I have taught her compassion and kindness all her life. However, I could not be kind *for her*, nor could I vicariously take her place. The moment was hers, and her actions would have to be hers. I provided her with all the wisdom I could possibly muster. Still, she would have to be the one to choose kindness over expressions of anger.

After all God has done for us: "be strong." Jesus told a parable of ten virgins waiting for the coming of the bridegroom. One did not possess enough oil for her lamp. Thus, she attempts to borrow oil from another. However, her attempt fails. There are some things that cannot be borrowed. We are influenced by the faith of others. We can draw strength from their wisdom. Yet, we must own a personal faith. Faith in Christ is ours to own, nurture, and enact in life. When we face temptation or confront evil, we are usually alone. We face a personal battle. We can try to ignore the temptation, but we quickly discover we cannot. Or we can yield to it, God forbid! We must choose to "be strong."

However, Paul adds an important preposition. We are to be strong "in" the Lord. Though the decision to fight and overcome belongs to us, the strength to overcome comes *from the Lord*. We are "in Christ," and "Christ is in us." The Spirit of Jesus is within us. Remember, following his baptism Jesus faced the strongest temptations in the wilderness. However, the strongest temptation he confronted occurred in Gethsemane. He faced the possibility of horrific suffering and death. Jesus could have escaped from the garden in an attempt to avoid crucifixion and death. However, Jesus had accepted the call to be Messiah. At His baptism He accepted the ministry of life, death, and resurrection. Following His baptism God spoke, "This is my son, in whom I am well pleased." We cannot escape the reality that Jesus possessed choice. He chose faithfulness and sacrifice when tempted to become selfish. He chose love when tempted to neglect and ignore others. He

chose death that the world might know just how far God would go to tell us he loved us and how deeply God desired to redeem us.

This is the Christ that dwells within us through the Holy Spirit. Thus, as Christians we possess the strength to say no when facing temptation. The power in us is a “mighty power.” As Paul stated in the salutation, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power indwelling us. God never ask of us what we cannot give!

Temptations usually attack the most vulnerable area of our lives. When faced with temptation, what is the first action you take? How can you draw upon the power you have in Christ? What do you think it means to “act in confidence”? Can you share a time when the temptation was so strong you doubted your ability to stand strong? If you overcame, how did you overcome? Do you embrace the power in you through worship, prayer and study? Can you share passages of Scripture and other devotional materials that help you find your confidence in God? Can you share a moment when a particular Scripture or passage entered your mind in a time of temptation? How did it empower you? How do you think the Body of Christ can help each other grow in confidence?

Put on the Full Armor of God

Again, notice the action to be strong is to be ours. The actions we take are to be taken in confidence. Remember, “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 1:4). God has given us what we need to face temptation, evil, and all the hosts of darkness. Naturally, Paul is not speaking of literal armor in our text. He uses a soldier’s armor as a metaphor. The gifts God has given serve the purpose of “spiritual armor.” This spiritual armor, which we examine later, is to cover every spot of vulnerability. Though God’s power indwells us, we are still flesh and blood. We are still people with emotions and lingering habits we developed in the past. All of us have places of vulnerability. We are not asked to be strong alone without the protection necessary for spiritual battle.

Can you identify the vulnerable areas that relate to your spiritual walk? Are there areas in which you sense weakness that prove more difficult for you when tempted? Can you name the most common and repetitive temptations in your life? How can you, with the help of God, strengthen those areas of your greatest vulnerability?

Before we examine the armor God provides, Paul wants us to realize our struggle is not simply a human struggle. We daily battle against the dark spiritual powers of this world. The manner in which we respond to these powers has a profound effect upon our spiritual walk. In our journey of faith, we learn to discern light and darkness. We learn that darkness does not always present itself in the obvious. Darkness and evil are often subtle and sly. As a matter of fact, darkness can take on the appearance of goodness and beauty. It is quite interesting to me that the ancient book of Genesis clearly recognized this trait of the darkness. The fruit of the forbidden tree appeared “pleasing to the eye.”

I participated in a small group in seminary for spiritual growth. One of the members sat down overjoyed. He praised God and said, “Dr. King did not mark four of my answers on the test wrong when they were!” All of us looked at him, surprised. One member of the group asked, “Don’t you see anything wrong with what you just shared?” The happy student answered, “No. Why?” The good and honorable thing to do was to inform the professor of the mistake and take the consequences. For the student, the mistakes looked beautiful! The mistake was an act of goodness for him. He thanked God for letting the accident happen. However, the professor’s mistake was a wrong that needed to be addressed. He left the group feeling down but did the right thing. In his vulnerability, he saw darkness as light. In our humanity, we were vulnerable through our inability to recognize the darkness subtly existing in the evil. The serpent was described as the most beautiful

creature. In a single moment of weakness, humankind was exiled from Eden. The dark, spiritual realities in the world are powerful and destructive. We can never take them lightly.

Can you share a time when a temptation appeared as harmless or benign? Did it appear as so pleasing to the eye that you were blinded to its destructive power? When did it “rear its destructive head”? How would you have responded differently after being “bitten” by the darkness?

It would prove impossible for us to create a list of all temptations or all manifestations of evil. It is our walk with Christ that empowers us to differentiate between the darkness and light. The Holy Spirit does not just empower us to withstand temptation; the Spirit helps us *recognize* and *distinguish* between good and evil. As I’ve stated in previous lessons, I now recognize certain realities as darkness that I formerly considered benign.

An evangelist came to town during my college years. At the end of his “everyone can be healed” message, he offered a black book for money. Inside the cover one found tabs with certain illnesses listed. When a person was sick, they were to find their illness on a tab and open the page. There they would find a list of individual biblical texts. Instead of taking medication, the person was to read the text three times a day. As a baby Christian, I initially viewed the book as helpful. After all, if the evangelist believed it helped people to be healed how could the book be an instrument of darkness. As I continued to walk with Christ, I quickly recognized the darkness. The person wasn’t evil, just misguided. However, individuals would become very ill when they refused to take their medicine, instead opting for the verses. Just as importantly, I realized he had misused Scripture, taking them out of context. I was young, new to the faith, and uncertain about life. I was vulnerable. Today, I would immediately recognize the dark, destructive consequences in using that book.

Each of us have experienced such moments. Perhaps those moments were not as obvious as the one I shared. Still, there were times when you saw something as pleasing, attractive, and even good. Later, as you journeyed with Jesus, you began to see the darkness. We should not simply trust others to tell us what is light and what is darkness. The advice and wisdom of other godly people are helpful. Others are essential to our growth in faith. However, each of us must learn to recognize for ourselves the darkness in life.

It is important to understand we should never go through life looking for darkness. Instead, we look for God and God’s light. As we encounter the light, the darkness is revealed. One cannot walk closely with God and not recognize the good from the evil. As a minister, I find it a mistake to preach constantly on the manifestations of darkness all about us. As soon as I mention five, there are always five more. There are always many more! Sadly, many walk through life looking for all the things that are wrong or of the devil. On occasion they are mistaken. In those moments when they are correct they rarely share with their listener how to deal with it. When we study the life of Jesus we find the Lord rarely pointing out one evil after another. He confronted them when evil stood before him, challenging him. The vast majority of Jesus’ ministry was teaching and preaching the Kingdom of God. He didn’t have to look for temptation and evil. When we walk in love, truth, and light the darkness always confronts us.

If I preach the presence of a loving Christ, an empowering Christ, and the joyful life made possible for us, I am equipping people to discern what stands in opposition to that message. If I preach a loving God, people will recognize hatred. If I preach forgiveness, people learn to recognize grudges and bitterness. There is darkness in the world and powers of darkness. They should never be ignored or neglected. They are overcome through a life of prayer, Bible study, devotion, worship, and service. When we walk in light we see life as it is. We recognize God’s presence, and the snares and acts of evil. And, always, God is more powerful.

In our text, when Paul speaks of the armor of God, notice the armor is for “defense.” The darkness comes against us for the righteous life we live. Some might ask, “But aren’t we supposed to come against all evil and darkness. The answer is a strong yes. However, we come against it by living a Christian life that cannot be ignored. Christianity challenges the darkness and evil. Love is a threat to hatred. Light is a threat to darkness. Good is a threat to evil. Peace is a threat to division. Paul wrote in Romans 7:21, “So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand.” (ESV)

Can you share how walking with Christ has helped you discern good from evil? What do you think is the danger of depending totally on others to point out darkness and light? What disciplines do you find most helpful in developing a discerning life? Can you identify the danger in judging a moment as darkness or a person as promoting darkness without a life of prayer, study, worship, and service? What do you think is destructive about always looking for the darkness? What do you think is so helpful about seeking God’s presence and light in all moments of life? Can you share a moment when your Christian faith brought out an expression and temptation of darkness?

Paul asserts with certainty that there is a realm of evil consisting of evil powers. Though Paul does not use the title “Satan,” he is most certainly addressing the evil one. Satan means “adversary.” Therefore, not every moment is an encounter with the presence known as Satan. However, according to Scripture, Satan is the origin and force behind all dark moments. There is a spiritual realm of spiritual powers. We cannot gaze into that realm, nor do we have adequate words to describe it. However, we do see expressions of that realm in this life.

It is extremely important to remember that we do *not* recognize “two gods.” We worship the one true God, the Creator, the one who joined humanity in Jesus Christ and redeemed us. Satan is never presented as an equal. In the mystery of God’s will, Satan is allowed to exist and tempt. Still, according to Revelation, it is evident that when the Day of the Lord arrives, the evil one will be destroyed and all evil works with him. However, we do not have to wait until the end of the age to inflict harm upon the realm of evil. With the Holy Spirit with us, and through our choice to be strong in the Lord, we can defeat Satan and the realm of evil in any given moment.

We are asked by Paul to “stand firm.” After the onslaught of temptation and evil, God has provided us the strength we need to stand firm, not giving an inch of ground. Paul goes on to write, “after we have done everything, to stand.” Though, again, it is our battle, and our strength is in the Lord. What is the “everything we have done?” After we have chosen faithfulness to God, recalled what the Lord has taught us, and passionately prayed for God’s power to be unleashed in the moment, we will stand.

Do you feel prepared to face difficult temptation? If yes, from where do you draw your strength? If not, what do you believe will help you to be prepared?

In this closing section of Ephesians, Paul mentions in verse 13 “the day of evil.” We are to put on the full armor of God that we may stand in the day of evil. There is a difference between the daily battle we face against temptation and the darkness in the world and what Paul meant by the “day of the Lord.” In the Old Testament, the Day of the Lord represented the total arrival of God’s righteous, just, and loving Kingdom. It also is the time when evil will end. It is the day when evil is vanquished and peace, justice, and righteousness stream from the holy city of Jerusalem. From Jerusalem God will rule the world in holy righteousness. The Old Testament prophets often wrote of the Day of the Lord. It was a day for which the Jewish people longed. The expectation of the Day of the Lord was especially strong in times of defeat and distress. When Israel and Judah fell to foreign powers, the people of Israel lived in hope that the Day of the Lord would soon come.

This is the same day of which we read in Revelation. However, the Day of the Lord in Revelation was for the redemption of the world, not just Israel. It is important to understand that prior to the arrival of the Day the

world would undergo apocalyptic events. Great battles against evil would occur. As discussed earlier in this lesson, ultimate goodness, love, and righteousness are drawing nigh. Thus, evil powerfully rears its ugly head. Matthew 13 reads, “The tares grow side by side with the wheat” as the final harvest arrives.

Consequently, Paul’s closing exhortation applies to both the present and future. The greater the assault of evil, the greater our need for the armor of God. Paul was writing, “These are the gifts that will protect you in the battle against evil: truth, righteousness, readiness, faith, salvation, and the word of God.” Thus, we will examine the importance of these gifts and recognize their protective power.

Have you noticed in your walk of faith that temptation does not leave you? Can you share some experiences in which you were living in a faithful manner and experienced a battle with darkness? What do you believe is the difference between always looking for darkness and always looking for God’s light? Why do you believe walking in the light and seeking God daily are more spiritually productive than looking for signs of darkness?

There is truth. As Christians, we are people of the truth. We are girded in truth. Darkness and evil are always associated with lies and twisted truth. In Eden the serpent asked, “Did God really tell you not to eat of the tree?” Twisted truth doesn’t deny the existence of truth. Instead, it makes us question whether we interpreted the truth correctly. The serpent asked, “Is that what God really said?” Again, darkness has proved subtle from the beginning. One must regularly study and pray so that the truth of the Lord is clear for us.

Another form of deception is the half-truth. Half-truth is related to the omission of information in sharing a story or in offering an explanation. A young man in love may buy a beautiful diamond ring for his fiancé. The salesman could say, “This is a beautiful diamond on a beautiful gold band.” Later, the innocent young man may discover the beautiful gold band was “gold plated.” The fact that it was a beautiful ring was true. However, leaving out vital information allowed darkness to enter the moment. Half-truth is just as harmful as any blatant lie.

We follow the one who said, “I am the truth.” There is no shadow or turning in Him at all. His love is pure, His righteousness is pure, and His redemption certain. If any temptation or expression of evil raises doubt concerning the truth in Jesus, we are to stand firm in the Lord. Truth must never become a victim of trying to be liked, or to move upward and higher in the world. If we sacrifice truth we have taken a step into darkness, and darkness is always destructive.

Can you share an experience in which truth rescued you from a serious mistake? Can you share an experience in which truth rescued you from falling into temptation though the temptation appeared “pleasing to the eye?” Can you share how truth empowers you to discern light from darkness? Can you share a specific example?

A belt holds all pieces of the armor in place. It ensures the pieces of armor fit properly. Of course, it contains the sheath of our sword, and, without the belt, other pieces of the armor may prove too loose and hang away from the body. It is the truth of God, embodied in Jesus and imparted to us in the Holy Spirit, that holds our spiritual life together. It is the truth that Jesus was God incarnate, that He lived in love and mercy, that He sacrificed and gave Himself for the sins of the world, was raised and now sits in the heavenly realms, and shall return to establish the Kingdom of God in its fullness. This truth holds every aspect of our faith together. If one facet of the truth revealed in Jesus is removed everything begins to loosen and fall away. Our righteousness, love, faith, and hope are held together by God’s eternal truth.

Paul then addresses the importance of righteousness. As Christians, we can discern goodness from evil. Through prayer and introspection we can identify that which is Christ-like and that which is not. Our own personal righteousness still falls short. We are a work in process. Our own righteousness might be frail, but

the righteousness of Jesus within us is eternal. In Christ we highly value righteousness. In Christ we draw strength from his righteousness. Through faith we appropriate His righteousness as our own. I may be aware of my failures and vulnerabilities, but I am aware that Jesus has none. Thus, I trust the one within me, the righteous one, and stand my ground. Where we stand in lack, He is our sufficiency. The question, “What would Jesus do?” sounds like a commercial slogan today. However, it is a vital question when facing temptation. Though I am vulnerable, when I ask, “What would Jesus do?” I am drawing strength from His righteousness presence within me; from what I know, Jesus would pray and stand firm. We are to surround ourselves with the knowledge of Jesus’ righteousness and stand firm. If alone, we might fear strong temptation, but we know what Jesus would do.

The breastplate is among the most important pieces of armor. It protects the heart and every major organ. Righteousness is the antithesis of wickedness. When confronted with evil and temptation, we stand in a righteousness given to us in Christ. Jesus’ goodness is continually at work within all of us, and evil cannot overcome goodness. Righteousness was given to protect our heart. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) reads, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

We are not, on our own, righteous. Yet, God has declared us righteous in Christ. How does the righteousness of Jesus within you empower you when facing evil and darkness? What does it mean to you to be considered righteous by God through the forgiveness of Jesus on the cross? How do you believe you can appropriate that righteousness in your life? How can the gift of righteousness of Jesus empower you to live a righteous life? Have you noticed a change in your heart as you’ve walked with Christ? Have you been more capable of making righteous choices in your faith journey? What factors in your walk with Jesus have changed and empowered your heart?

Paul now mentions having our “feet fitted with readiness” that comes from the gospel of peace. To be ready is also to “be prepared.” Though we walk through life seeking God and God’s goodness it does not mean that we should be surprised when confronted by temptation. The tares are growing alongside the wheat! A state of readiness does not mean that temptation and evil are all I think about. It means through prayer, study, worship, and service I anchor myself in truth, and I am aware that I am walking in Christ’s righteousness. Those who live in righteousness can expect spiritual battle. Therefore, we must be ready. Choosing to follow Jesus doesn’t mean we are totally prepared to face evil. We must appropriate and develop those gifts within us through the Holy Spirit to stand strong. We may not be totally prepared to overcome the darkness in a given moment, but the one within us is more than capable. We are to faithfully act with what we have, pray for that which we need, and trust God.

Footwear, or boots, are related to journey. We are not going to walk far without covering for our feet. We journey with Christ through life. We will encounter beauty, light, love, and life. When we recognize darkness we do not abandon our journey. All of the past steps we’ve walked with Jesus prepare us for the moments we face now and in the future. Walking with Christ ensures we will be ready when darkness appears.

The Christian faith is always described as a walk or journey. However, Paul seems to imply that when we encounter evil to “stand firm.” Why do you believe Paul does not encourage us to rush headlong into spiritual battle? Do you think it is because we are still a people with vulnerabilities and weakness? (Note: we are not in any spiritual battle without God being presence.)

We know we are participants in the “Gospel of Peace.” As Christians we are aware of where all things are headed. We know the Kingdom of God is already moving in the world and is coming in all of its glory in the future. We pray “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” The Kingdom of God is a Kingdom of peace. Thus, we can stand strong and firm, knowing with confidence that the Kingdom coming is already present in the world. It is especially present within us. In John 14, Jesus said, “My peace I give to you, not as the world gives.” We stand before temptation and darkness with a deep, abiding peace.

We are anchored in truth, which is indestructible. We are clothed in Jesus' righteousness, which cannot be penetrated by evil. Thus, we know we are anchored in the eternal, the unchangeable, and the all-powerful. We stand with our feet girded and ready for what comes because we know who is already here, and the life He gives for all time.

As residents in the Kingdom of Peace we act as faithful residents. People of great serenity know where they stand in life, what is most important, and where their behavior is leading. People of peace also accept life as it is and embrace it. Life as it is offers everything beautiful, loving, and meaningful. Still, darkness exists in this life. Genuine peace does not have to wait for temptation and evil to be totally eradicated. Peace is found when we understand temptation and evil may inflict wounds but never destroy us. They can create confusion and chaos but never steal our assurance of who we are and where we are headed. Our feet are anchored in God's peace.

What do you believe is the difference between God's peace and peace as the world understands it? Do you find comfort in knowing that in Christ not a single temptation can destroy you? Can you list the different ways God's peace is different from our culture's understanding of peace? For example, the world and culture define peace as the absence of conflict. God's peace is present even in the midst of conflict.

Paul's metaphor continues with the images of a shield and sword. The shield is always for protection. It is used to fend off blows. Some of the other pieces of armor are to protect the warrior against the blows that often can't be seen. Thus, we are dressed and ready to withstand those blows. However, the shield is used to divert the blows we see coming. Our shield is our faith.

Faith does not shrink or cower in battle. Faith trusts in the protective armor and trusts the fact that we never fight alone. Paul most likely was using the metaphor of the armor used by Roman soldiers. In battle, as the enemy approached, the Roman soldiers would stand as close as possible together. They would lock their shields together to form a strong wall. When Christians stand together, we possess tremendous power against evil. Our individual strength is important. Our personal faith is powerful and helps us fend off the strongest temptations. However, walking through life in community with other brothers and sisters is to present a powerful front against all that is evil, destructive, and dehumanizing. Often, shields were made of animal skins. On occasion the soldier would wet the animal skin, thus dousing any flaming dart or arrow. The eyes of faith see the dart coming, and our mind of faith responds and moves our shield into position. One of the strongest gifts bestowed upon is the gift of faith.

What do you believe is the difference between hope and faith? Our faith is in Jesus Christ and also in the promises of God, especially in God's Kingdom. How does faith in that which is coming empower you in the here and now? Do you believe God's Kingdom is present when the realm of evil is present? Does knowing the final victory of good over evil help you stand firm, and when necessary to say, "No!"?

The head is the most vulnerable part of the body in battle. Salvation in the New Testament meant far more than being saved from judgement after death. Salvation meant "wholeness." What God did for us in Jesus Christ encompasses our entire life. We are saved from ourselves, from meaninglessness, from alienation, and from broken relationships. Apart from God's salvation for us in Christ, we are standing in a vicious battle without a helmet. The truth we hold dear, the righteousness that endows us with discernment, the moral backbone we possess, and the peace that anchors us in the most troubling times are made possible through the salvation of the Lord.

How would you answer if someone asked you, "What do you mean when you say 'God saved you'?" Since God saved you in every way possible, do you believe we have a witness in every moment? Since

Satan and darkness attack us at the point of our vulnerabilities, how does our salvation through Christ protect us from those attacks? Do you have weaknesses you have never addressed? Do you have vulnerable areas of life that you have never considered how Jesus' salvation can create strength?

All of the above pieces of armor and accompanying attributes are for defense. They protect us and help us stand our ground in confidence. Now we address the offensive weapon. We have the sword of God's word. The word is the inspired, revealed truth that we hear, remember, store in the heart, and speak against evil and temptation. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, he addressed every temptation by quoting Scripture. Satan had nothing to say against the word of truth.

The inspired word touches the heart and illuminates the mind. I recently realized anew just how powerful scripture is. Twenty-three years ago I offered a one-minute devotion and Scripture over the radio. It only lasted six months before the church decided to use another means to reach the community. I received a call this year from the sound engineer. He was a good person but not affiliated with a particular church. He lost a loved one. When the funeral director asked if there was a pastor, he gave my name. I had not seen him in over twenty years. He remembered the messages and scripture. Over all those years, somewhere in his heart was stored the inspired Word. Never underestimate the power of the Word.

Paul certainly wasn't speaking of memorizing the Word or knowing exact quotes. Remember, there was no Bible when Paul wrote Ephesians. The Old Testament and a few letters of Paul that were circulated were all many Christians possessed in relation to writings. Still, not every Christian had a copy of the Old Testament or Paul's letters. The Christians were very dependent upon the oral transmission of the Word. The Greeks, most often, were not familiar with the Old Testament. Paul certainly meant for the Old Testament to be understood as God's Word for he saw Jesus as the embodiment of the Law. However, he asks the church to remember and embrace his message and teachings. Paul's message was given by THE WORD of John 1:1. Even the first Gospel was written near the end of Paul's life. Eventually, Paul's writings would be gathered and become the major portion of the New Testament.

Paul was in essence encouraging the Ephesian Church and all Christians to remember and take to heart the message and teachings Paul delivered concerning Jesus the Christ. The Christian Church handled Paul's message with great care. When copying Paul's letters, for the purpose of circulating them to other churches, great care was taken in the process. The Word of God was inspired before it found its way to the printed scroll. Thus, the early Christians were to remember the truth of the Old Testament as Paul connected the message of Jesus with the redemptive message of the Old Testament. And the inspired messages of Paul and those sent by Paul were to be taken to heart. The spread of the inspired word, oral and verbal, was a great weapon in driving the darkness away. The Word exposed the falsehood. The Word exposed lies. The Word liberated hearts.

Do you have a disciplined method of reading and studying the Word? Can you share how you remembered the message of the Word when you were tempted or engaged in a spiritual battle? Have you considered that since God's Word is inspired, it inspires you? Have you considered the Word's power to inspire the listener? Can you share a favorite Scripture when facing spiritual battle and temptation?

Pray

Above all, the Christian community was to pray. Prayer is never presented in Scripture as something we do in very difficult moments. Prayer is a vital, necessary discipline in one's walk with God. The one praying truly believes God hears. As the psalmist wrote, "Our God hath a listening ear." When we begin our day in prayer, we bring God into our spiritual conciseness. In prayer we learn to see God in life throughout the day. Learning to pray without ceasing is to carry on a conversation with God all through the day. It is difficult for

evil and temptation to strike a blow when we are in regular communion with God. After all, we know who dwells within us, we are confident in God's power, and we are prepared.

Paul's entire message on the armor of God offers one basic message. Our Christian faith will expose us to darkness. Therefore, let us always be prepared. A recognition of what God has done and a faithful response on our part provide the means to overcome and triumph.

Do you pray to start your day? How does prayer at the beginning of the day help you to see God in life? What do you believe it means to pray without ceasing? If you have trained yourself to pray without ceasing, can you share how you pray in such a manner and the great effect it has on your life? Since prayer opens our hearts and minds to the presence of God, how does prayer help us when facing darkness?

Prayer

Almighty God, thank you for your inexpressible gift of grace. Thank you for the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray to stand strong and firm at all times but especially in the midst of temptation. May your inspired Word be stored in our hearts, and may it live in our voice. In Jesus name, Amen.

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



Handling Dejection

By Hal Brady

All of us have felt defeated and dejected. More than once we've spread our wings only to have them clipped and disaster happen. Welcome to the human race! Nobody succeeds every time.

Most of us are aware that the great baseball player Babe Ruth hit 714 home runs. But how many of us are aware that he struck out 1,330 times? And most of us are familiar with the success of the biblical character Joshua. He took over from Moses and led the children of Israel successfully into the Promised Land. But what about his defeat and dejection?

The mantle of leadership had fallen upon Joshua's shoulders now that Moses was dead. Joshua's time had come. The children of Israel had crossed the Jordan River, and the first city they came to was Jericho. There they experienced a significant victory. So, the people celebrated and rejoiced at the goodness of God and their smashing triumph. And Joshua himself received personal congratulations all around. But the next city they were to come to was a smaller city, Ai. This looked easy compared to Jericho. No need to send the whole army there, just a company or two can take care of the situation. But tragically the Israelites suffered a terribly humiliating defeat. In the initial skirmish of the battle, they lost 36 men. Then they were routed and many of them were slain as they tried to flee for safety.

Now, Joshua didn't handle the situation well. He was defeated and dejected. He fell on the ground, and he, along with the elders, threw dust in the air. It was a sign of deep mourning, and that's where God found him. However, God didn't let Joshua continue wallowing in defeat and dejection. "Stand up!" God said. "Why have you fallen upon your face?" (Joshua 7:10). Then God told Joshua to search out the reason for his defeat and dejection and do something about it.

So how can any of us handle our defeat and dejection?

First, dejection is inevitable! Today, numbers of us are being victimized by what is called the success syndrome. The pressure upon Americans to succeed is enormous. Children, teenagers, and adults are all under unbelievable pressure. Winning is everything, and we view defeat, mistakes, or failure as the worst thing that can happen. Hear me now! If we start out in life to accomplish anything sooner or later, we are going to experience defeat and dejection. But there's an old adage that's true. It says, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." Better to make the attempt!

Second, defeat or dejection doesn't have to be fatal! An employee in a large corporation cost the company a million dollars. The man was called in to see the boss, and he fully expected to be fired. But his boss had a different approach. "Do you know the secret of making a million dollars?" asked the boss. "It's making good decisions. And do you know the secret of making good decisions? It's making bad decisions and learning from them. I've just invested a million dollars in you, so learn from your mistake." In terms of defeat and dejection, there are two categories: people-learners and non-learners. When learners make a mistake, they are less likely to repeat it.

Third, we can dedicate the defeat or dejection to God! Several years back a man said, "I failed in my marriage. We both made a wholehearted effort. We sought counseling and help. We honestly did everything we could, but we failed. It's over. But now I am just beginning to realize how very much I gained through that defeat. I learned maturity, wisdom, insight, understanding, compassion, and tolerance. I am so much richer because of my failure." And then he said, "Would it be alright if I dedicated my failure to God?"

Isn't that what Paul did? His persecutions, his shipwreck, his disappointments, his thorn in the flesh—all were dedicated to God. You see, Paul knew that he could never find victory if he were burdened down in defeat and dejection. As God said to Joshua after the death of Moses, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will not fail you, not forsake you, only be strong and very courageous..." (Joshua 1:5,6).

And that's also God's wisdom for us!

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)



Hush

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN ANNE PACKARD

As the South Georgia Conference prepares for the birth of the Messiah, may we remember the wonder and magic of that night, calm our minds and open our hearts in preparation for the miracle.

Luke 2:1-20: The Birth of Jesus

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while^[a] Quirinius was governor Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register. ⁴ So Joseph also went up



of
from the

town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was



expecting a child. ⁶ While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷ and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. ⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the

people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” ¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ “Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”



¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” ¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been

told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Anne Packard serves as Conference Historian and director of the Arthur J. Moore Methodist Museum on St. Simons Island. Contact her at director@mooremuseum.org.

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27 ‘Pilgrims’ Participate in South Georgia Walk to Emmaus in Spanish

By Daniel Medina

The Walk to Emmaus of the Heart of Georgia community was celebrated in Spanish October 27 – 30, 2002. During this year’s retreat people came from various states, including North Carolina, Florida, Massachusetts, Georgia, and the Dominican Republic to serve as volunteers or to participate for the first time as participants, also known as ‘pilgrims.’ There were 27 new pilgrims – all women this year – and 54 servant leaders participating in this event.

The Walk to Emmaus is a program of The Upper Room that develops Christian disciples and leaders by inspiring, challenging, and equipping people for Christian action in their homes, churches, workplaces, and communities. It also benefits members seeking to renew a relationship with God, grow spiritually, or find a firmer foundation for their lives.

Through The Walk to Emmaus, as they seek to become healthy and vital congregations, local churches have both a resource for growing disciples and a tool for developing leaders for their disciple-making systems.

Although this Walk to Emmaus in Spanish is administered largely by Christians of South Georgia and the South Georgia Conference Hispanic/Latino Ministries office, other members and Hispanic Ministries offices of other conferences provide valuable assistance in the development of this program and event. Collaborating conferences this year were from North Carolina, North Georgia, and Florida.

If you would like to know more about how to participate or serve in this program, please contact Daniel Medina, director of the conference's Hispanic/Latino Affairs office at danmedina007@bellsouth.net.

Rev. Daniel Medina is the director of Hispanic/Latino Affairs for the South Georgia Conference. He can be reached at danmedina007@bellsouth.net.



150 Years demonstrating the Love of God with Actions and in Truth

By Alison Evans

If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. ~ 1 John 3:17-18 (NIV)

As I reflect on 15 decades of healing and hope, I am amazed by the many, many instances where you have loved our children **with actions and in truth**.

Over the years, **your giving spirit** has made a huge difference in the lives of so many children. Here are some examples:

- The elderly daughter who visited with her son and shared her mother lived here as a child, and accepted Christ here...and because of this place, the daughter and grandson were raised as Christians in a loving home environment.
- The two rambunctious brothers who arrived from a home where care was lacking... one obtained his PhD and served as a **Minister, Author and Counselor**, the other served as a **Naval Officer** and had a **30-year corporate career**.
- The young lady who just needed a safe stable home and is now a **Deputy Sheriff**, married, mother of two and provided kinship care for others in need.
- The teenage boy who came to us drifting with no sense of purpose or direction...now a **fine young Marine** serving our country with pride and dignity.
- The successful, talented **Administrative Professional** who, after she graduated from The Methodist Home, worked for a big CEO of a huge company and left a large bequest that made a difference here.

And so many more...**nurses, social workers, teachers, church leaders, business owners**...fathers, mothers, grandparents... members of so many communities across our state and nation. I am **so proud of all our Alumni** and the many successes they have achieved.

YOU and those before you, have shown them love through your amazing, steadfast support.

YOU have prayed, volunteered, given sacrificially and some even named The Methodist Home as a beneficiary of their will to continue our ministry into the next generation.

YOU have stepped up, filled the gap, and demonstrated your compassion and kindness to those in need **with actions and in truth.**

Thanks be to GOD for YOU and the vital part you have in our work. Thank **YOU** for loving and nurturing our children.

WE need YOU to commit to this legacy now more than ever. Please wrap your arms around us and carry us into the next 150 years!

Ms. Alison Evans is the CEO of The Methodist Home for Children and Youth.



United Women in Faith of ConneXion UMC host first prayer breakfast

By Carol D. Hunt

“Prayer for Such a Time as This” was the well thought of theme for the first prayer breakfast held at ConneXion United Methodist Church.

Psalm 133 reminds us, “How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.” That is exactly what happened on a pleasant, crisp Saturday morning on October 15, 2022. This prayer breakfast, hosted by the United Women in Faith at ConneXion United Methodist Church in the beautiful city of Savannah, Georgia, was just what was needed for everyone.

The women showed out and showed up! There were several churches where the women were well represented from all around, including: Canaan Community United Methodist Church, Trinity United Methodist Church, Fresh Fire From Heaven, St. Mark Baptist Church, Magwood Memorial CME, Primal Baptist Church, St. Paul CME, and Mt. Zion AME, South Carolina. Evon K. Beavers is the president of the local United Women in Faith unit.

It was a grand morning well spent with a hearty breakfast meal. There was great fellowship, food, and fun. In addition to a beautiful gathering of which the Holy Spirit showed up, the genuine warmth of love filled and overflowed in the room. This is only the great beginning of even greater things to come.

1Thess. 5:11 “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”

Carol D. Hunt is a member of ConneXion UMC in Savannah, GA.



Obituary: Mrs. Naomi Lorene Ferris

Naomi Lorene Reed Ferris, 94 of Waycross and widow of Rev. Orville Ferris, passed away Thursday night (October 20, 2022) at Baptist Village in Waycross after an extended illness.

Born in Kalkaska, MI her parents were Ernest Reed and Bernice Beaver Reed. She is also preceded in death by her first husband, Billy Winfred Sanders; her second husband, Orville Leroy Ferris; 2 great grandsons; and several brothers and sisters.

Naomi was a pastor wife and a member of Akin United Methodist Church. She loved camping, gardening and redecorating.

Survivors include her 4 children and their spouses, Kenneth Ronald Sanders (Nell) of Waynesville, Kim Sanders Barnard (Wendell) of Waycross, Keith Reed Sanders (Lisa) of Brunswick and Kay Renee Ferris of Waynesville; 8 grandchildren, Kenneth L. Sanders, Kelly L. Sanders, Christopher J. Ryals, Cory J. Ryals, Reed Sanders, J. Michael Ingram, Kristina R. Martin and Karalyn R. Arnold; several great grandchildren; several great great grandchildren; a sister, Sharon McKenzie Seiber of NC; and also several nieces, nephews, other relatives and a host of friends.

Visitation was held Tuesday afternoon (October 25, 2022) from 1pm – 2pm at Frye Funeral Home, Nahunta. A graveside service was held Tuesday afternoon (October 25, 2022) at 3pm at Akin Memorial United Methodist Church Cemetery with Rev. Rick Turner officiating. Pallbearers were Kenneth L. Sanders, Kelly L. Sanders, Cory J. Ryals, Reed Sanders, J. Michael Ingram, and Elliott Ippolito.

Arrangements are with Frye Funeral Home, Nahunta. Sympathy may be expressed by signing the online registry at www.fryefh.com.



Obituary: Rev. George King

Reverend George King, 93, of Macon, GA, passed away Sunday, November 6, 2022. A memorial service will be held Saturday, November 12, 2022, 3:00 p.m. at Wesley Glen Ministries Chapel with the Reverend John Irwin officiating. A reception will follow the service in the chapel. Inurnment will be private at Bethel Methodist Church Cemetery, Knoxville, Georgia. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Wesley Glen Ministries, Inc., 4580 N. Mumford Rd., Macon, GA 31210.

Son of the late Semon and Mabelle Lucinda Hubbard deKonig (King), Reverend King received his undergraduate degree from Bob Jones University and master's degree from the University of Alabama, with doctoral studies at Duke University. He worked at IBM for many years, where he was on the team developing Fortran. He also worked with the Department of Defense at the Pentagon.

Reverend King was a member of Lizella United Methodist Church. He was a retired Methodist minister where he served in North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama. Reverend King was preceded in death by his brother, Weston King.

Reverend King is survived by his wife of 75 years, Ruth Moseley King of Macon; daughters, Caro King Shanahan (Jake) of Sandy Springs, Georgia; Donna Milling (Philip) of Austin, Texas, and Kate King of Macon; grandchildren, Laura Munn (Chad) of Dunwoody, Georgia, Chris Milling (Trish), and Alex Milling (Jen) both of Austin, Texas; and great grandchildren, Andrew Munn, Brodie Munn, Lorelei Milling, Jonah Milling, and Rowan Milling.

Hart's on Cherry Street, Hart's Mortuary and Cremation Center, 765 Cherry Street, Macon, GA 31201 has charge of the arrangements.

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Retired Clergy Birthdays – November 2022

11/01 – Thomas Maddox: 5938 State Route 7 South; Gallipolis, OH 45631
11/03 – Loretta Dunbar: 7552 Edgewater Dr.; Columbus, GA 31904
11/03 – Edwin Smith: 305 Grindstone Creek Dr.; Clarkesville, GA 30523
11/04 – Russell Edwards, Jr.: 1660 Jennings Mill Rd.; Watkinsville, GA 30677
11/07 – Eve Tomberlin: 137 Aston Hall; Macon, GA 31078
11/08 – Gary Carter: 400 Hill Manning Rd.; Cochran, GA 31014
11/08 – Mary Ann Traver: PO Box 1934; Richmond Hill, GA 31324
11/09 – Douglas Force: PO Box 1938; Hinesville, GA 31313
11/09 – Joe Flowers, Jr.: 390 Brook Hollow Dr.; McDonough, GA 30252
11/11 – David Johnson: 916 Watermelon Run; Charleston, SC 29412
11/12 – James E. Davis: 170 Caney Branch Dr.; Homerville, GA 31634
11/12 – John Mitchell: 123 Lundy Court; Macon, GA 31210
11/14 – Woody Roberts: 1259 Hwy. 36 E.; Barnesville, GA 30204
11/14 – David Tart, III: 312 Knob Hill Rd.; Valdosta, GA 31602
11/14 – Donald Youmans: 287 Pacolet Ridge Lane; Tryon, NC 28782
11/20 – Lynn Roberts: 1209 Loblolly Lane; Bainbridge, GA 39817
11/21 – Robert Hall: 4221 Stone Mill Ct.; Martinez, GA 30907
11/21 – Kitty Newton: 187 Newbridge Rd.; Sylvania, GA 30467
11/22 – John McGowan: #1 Ramblewood Circle; Valdosta, GA 31602
11/23 – Jack Atkinson: 3530 Cottonville Rd.; Grant, AL 35747
11/25 – Rex Odom: 4062 Vineville Ave.; Macon, GA 31210
11/27 – Gordon Goodwill: 2911 Charlie Lane; Statesboro, GA 30461
11/28 – Richard Turnipseed: 12420 Clubhouse Court; Tavares, FL 32778
11/30 – Enoch Hendry: 306 E. 54th St.; Savannah, GA 31405

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Scripture Readings – November 15 edition

November 20

Twenty-fourth Sunday After Pentecost, Year C

[Jeremiah 23:1-6](#)

[Colossians 1:11-20](#)

[Luke 1:68-79](#)

[Luke 23:33-43](#)

November 27

First Sunday of Advent, Year A

[Isaiah 2:1-5](#)

[Psalm 122](#)

[Romans 13:11-14](#)

[Matthew 24:36-44](#)

December 4

Second Sunday of Advent, Year A

[Isaiah 11:1-10](#)

[Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19](#)

[Romans 15:4-13](#)

[Matthew 3:1-12](#)

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Advent Resource Roundup – Nov. Advocate

As you begin preparations for the Advent and Christmas seasons, consider the following resources for new ideas.

Nurture:

- [An Advent Songs of Ascents](#) - 2022 worship series from Discipleship Ministries
- [Advent Candle Lighting Liturgy](#)
- [Cokesbury Advent Studies/Resources](#)
- [Advent study comparison chart](#) from Cokesbury to help you decide what Advent study to use with your church or small group this year.
- [Ways to Celebrate Advent with Kids](#)
- [Youth Lessons “An Advent Song of Ascents”](#)
- [Advent Prayer Stations](#)
- [Sharing the Christmas Story, Sharing Our Faith](#) Webinar - Three authors - Adam Hamilton, Matt Rawle and Lacey Warner - discuss with host Rachel Billups about their Advent studies and what inspires them at Christmas.

Outreach:

- [4 Great Advent Outreach Ideas](#)
- [Christmas is not your Birthday](#) - Pastor Mike Slaughter inspires readers to approach Christmas differently, and be transformed in the process.
- [Creative Christmas Outreach](#) - Discover ways to engage your congregation in fun, meaningful efforts that will extend a personal word of welcome to people in your community who are searching for connection.
- [Giving Tuesday](#) - Giving Tuesday, a global generosity movement unleashing the power of radical generosity, is November 29. Giving Tuesday was created in 2012 as a simple idea: a day that encourages people to do good. Since then, it has grown into a year-round global movement that inspires hundreds of millions of people to give, collaborate, and celebrate generosity.

Witness:

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

Advocacy:

- [God's Unimaginable Surprises](#) - This Advent resource, developed by the Commission on Religion and Race, includes sermon starters & children's sermons for each week of Advent, focusing on the Isaiah lectionary texts.
- [Engaging Advent](#) - How do we see past the tinsel, the shiny wrapping, the Christmas songs that have been playing since October and the Black Friday specials that were announced well before Thanksgiving, to see where Light is already breaking through?
- [Greening Christmas](#) - Find practical tips for “going green” for a more satisfying and less stressful Advent season.
- [Alternative Giving](#) - This article shares ideas on fair trade markets for churches to offer as gift-giving opportunities that make a difference.