

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – SETPEMBER 5 EDITION

Jars of honey become an act of hospitality for Striplin Terrace UMC

By Allison Lindsey

Mr. Jim Ellis is affectionately known as the "Bee Guru" of Striplin Terrace United Methodist Church. His passion for bees has not only cultivated an understanding of these remarkable insects but has also ignited a new energy around hospitality among the Striplin Terrace UMC congregation in Columbus, Ga.

Ellis is a member of the local beekeeper's association and a dedicated educator in the world of bees. Every month, the members of the local beekeeper's association gather at Striplin Terrace UMC for their meetings, sharing their experiences, insights, and tales of beekeeping triumphs and challenges. Ellis' keen knowledge and passion for bees is contagious, and his enthusiasm is particularly evident in his interactions with children. He visits nearby schools and has conducted classes at Oxbow Meadows, an Environmental Learning Center of Columbus State University focused on educating, inspiring and empowering all people, including those with minimal access to nature.

Ellis also began sharing his passion with his pastor and fellow church members.

It was during a conversation with Ellis about dirt daubers that Rev. Rodney Porter, pastor of Striplin Terrace UMC, had an "aha moment." Ellis held up a dirt dauber and then removed the mound as he began sharing about the intriguing habits of wasps and their unique way of preparing sustenance for future generations.

"You see those black things there in the mound, those are spiders," explained Ellis. "They are completely alive but they are paralyzed. The mother wasp goes hunting for spiders and when she finds one, she stings them, and it paralyzes them. She then takes the spiders back to the mound and places them there. When she has enough, she lays her egg and when the egg hatches then the babies have live food to eat."

In that moment, Rev. Porter drew a powerful parallel between the instinctive behavior of these wasps and Christians preparing for future generations.

"That's a preachable moment," said Rev. Porter. "That is a generation preparing for a generation yet to be born. Which is, of course, what Christians do all the time."

This story began Rev. Porter's interest in the world of bees. Inspired by Ellis' passion and under his guidance, the church began a journey that extended beyond understanding bees to establishing bee hives on the church grounds.

The endeavor bore sweet fruit, quite literally, as the hives yielded a surplus of honey. With so much honey, the church decided to share this gift with others. With almost forty pounds of honey harvested from one hive, members and visitors to the church are now treated to jars of honey, a token of warmth and hospitality.

"We love it that the bees are located on church grounds and believe it is a great way to touch visitors with a local product specifically from us," said Mansfield Bias, a lay member of Striplin Terrace UMC. "We take great pride in the landscape of the church and even it is helping to share the good news of Jesus Christ."

As Rev. Porter and church members continue to learn from Ellis and continue to tend to the bee hives, they've discovered some wisdom from the beekeeping world - both practical and spiritual.

While bee hives only produce one yield per year, it's enough honey to last for years. Honey does not go bad, and it's not to be put in the refrigerator, they've learned. It also didn't take them long to learn that the hive is all about the queen.

“A bee hive will perish within a few weeks if there is no queen,” said Rev. Porter. “And, of course, that is also the church. A church that doesn't have God as its center will die off. Maybe not in a few weeks - but a church without God at the center will produce a church that wanders aimlessly and will eventually fall away.”

Striplin Terrace UMC continues to learn and discover through this newfound bee ministry. They are a congregation who can testify to the power of how one person's passion, another person's vision, and a congregation focused on hospitality can turn a church yard into a place of deep connection, love for neighbor, devotion to growing the kingdom of God, and, of course, enthusiasm for bees and honey.

Allison Lindsey is a member of St. Mark UMC in Douglas, Ga. and chairs the Conference Nurture Team.



United Methodists begin Idalia recovery

By Heather Hahn

The day after Idalia slammed the Gulf Coast as a Category 3 hurricane, Florida Conference leaders surveyed the results of the storm's destructive power.

But they also marveled at the United Methodist connection's power to heal.

“We have been on the road for just a couple of hours to visit impacted areas,” Florida Conference Bishop Tom Berlin said. “And during that time, three annual conferences have contacted our disaster-recovery personnel with offers of help.”

The fellow United Methodists from the neighboring church regions said they stood ready to offer [kits for flood cleanup](#), various kinds of equipment and [trained early response teams](#) to remove debris and help with other immediate needs.

While Idalia was still making its approach, [the United Methodist Committee on Relief](#) — the denomination's relief arm — was already processing a \$10,000 solidarity grant for the Florida Conference's emergency supplies.

UMCOR is helping to coordinate the deployment [of solar-powered trailers](#) to bring needed electricity to areas without power and working with conferences to deploy early response teams.

Both UMCOR and conference leaders plan to be part of the recovery for the long haul. That process is just beginning for many in Idalia's path.

The monster storm roared ashore as the strongest hurricane to pound Florida's Big Bend region, where the panhandle and peninsula intersect, in more than 100 years. Idalia then cut a ferocious path across Florida, Georgia and South Carolina even as it weakened to a tropical storm.

Idalia flooded towns, destroyed homes, toppled trees, snapped power lines and left widespread outages before drenching North Carolina and making its way to the Atlantic. Local authorities have said the storm is responsible for at least three deaths — two in Florida and one in Georgia.

This is the second major hurricane to batter Florida in less than a year, and many people were [still recovering from the wreckage of last September's Hurricane Ian](#).

Trish Warren, the Florida Conference's disaster response coordinator, said that after being pummeled by Ian last year, Pine Island was now experiencing flooding from Idalia.

"Some of the clients that we've been working with for long-term recovery now need response work again, which has just been very traumatic for them," Warren said. "So, we're having to provide some social and emotional care also."

As of Aug. 31, both state and church officials were still assessing the full scope of the damage in Florida.

The conference knew that United Methodist churches in Cedar Key and Steinhatchee, near where Idalia made landfall, had extensive damage. At least seven other churches in the conference's North West District also had at least some damage, said the Rev. Clarke Campbell-Evans, the district superintendent.

A pastor near St. Petersburg also saw his home completely flooded by the storm. Berlin said the pastor's district and church were now working to ensure the pastor and his family will be housed.

Cedar Key, located about four miles off the Florida mainland, saw its entire downtown and many of its homes flooded by a record storm surge that left household goods and other debris strewn through its streets and beaches.

Cedar Key United Methodist Church, which hosted a bustling vacation Bible school earlier this summer, was now dealing with flooding throughout its building.

"In all the storms we've had, never, to our knowledge, has water entered that church," said the Rev. Robin Jocelyn, pastor of the Cedar Key congregation and Ellzey United Methodist Church in Otter Creek on the mainland. "Our main mission at this point is to get the carpeting up and to get all the linoleum up and start the drying process as soon as possible."

Many of the church's members are dealing with flooding in their own homes, but some were unaffected and can help with the cleanup. Still, because of safety concerns, travel to the island on Aug. 31 remained restricted. Power was irregular, and no one on the island had running water.

The South Georgia Conference, however, is already preparing [to welcome early response teams to hard-hit Lowndes County and surrounding areas](#). While only one United Methodist church in South Georgia — Community UMC in Nashville, Ga. — had reported any damage, the teams have plenty of work to do in the next few days — clearing downed trees and other debris. A team from South Georgia will begin Monday assisting Community UMC, and the neighboring North Georgia Conference had already lined up three teams to help the South Georgia teams.

Luis Morales, who directs the conference's disaster response, said he had already seen God at work in the United Methodist storm response.

The closest and most extensive lodging for incoming teams is Camp Tygart, which has working showers and soft beds but, at this point, no electricity.

“I thought, at least we'll have a roof over our heads and a shower,” said Morales, who is also a registered nurse. But then, he said, he heard from Angela Overstreet of UMCOR with an offer of two solar-powered trailers to provide electricity at the camp.

He said he expects to be able to get to work early next week. “The connection of The United Methodist Church is amazing,” he said.

In South Carolina, early response leaders were dealing with a near miss at one of the conference's churches.

The night of the storm, the Rev. John Elmore was checking Holly Hills United Methodist Church for flooding when a massive tree toppled just feet from the church and his parsonage.

On Aug. 31, the Holly Hill pastor was working with Billy Robinson, the conference's coordinator of early response teams, to take a chainsaw to the tree and clear it from blocking the church's entrance. He and Elmore, who is also a leader of an early response team, chopped up the tree so that the city can remove it with a tractor.

The church also had some minor flood damage, but Elmore expected the church to be able to hold services on Sunday as scheduled.

He said churches need to know their city officials and local emergency management agencies to be able to respond when disaster strikes.

“You build relationships that might not see kingdom impact today, but the hope is those relationships have kingdom impact later,” Elmore said. “When you do what you're supposed to, the Gospel goes with you.”

At this point, United Methodist leaders are only deploying trained early response teams to help with immediate relief. In the months ahead, conferences will likely call on Volunteers in Mission teams to help with the rebuilding process.

Members of the Alabama-West Florida Conference, which borders two of the affected conferences, are among those ready to help when asked.

“Our hearts and prayers are with those who are beginning the recovery and rebuilding process today,” said the Rev. Chris Ackerman, the conference's director of disaster response.

“The Alabama-West Florida Conference knows all too well the pain and heartache in the aftermath of destructive storms. We will wait to hear from those in the Southeast coordinating efforts to help those in need and will deploy our response teams where needed.”

Prayers are also needed. Berlin asked United Methodists to pray for the people dealing with the storm's wreckage and those who endured Hurricane Ian last year and now must pick up the pieces again.

“We pray for our United Methodist witness as people donate supplies, donate material resources or volunteer time,” the bishop said. “We pray that it might encourage people in this area and be a witness for the love of Christ from our church.”

Hahn is assistant news editor for UM News. Contact her at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org. To read more United Methodist news, [subscribe to the free Daily or Friday Digests](#).

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South Georgia responds to Hurricane Idalia: ERTs needed

Idalia made landfall along the coast of Florida's Big Bend around 8 am August 30, 2023, and continued its way across Florida and into Georgia throughout the day Wednesday.

At this time, the South Georgia Conference disaster response team, under the direction of Luis Morales, is communicating with local Georgia officials and pastors in affected communities.

"I am thankful that Hurricane Idalia came and went," said Morales. "In its path we now have neighbors with no electricity, debris in their property, and even damage from flooding. I pray for continued safety to survivors, first responders and volunteers."

He is now encouraging trained early responders to look at their calendars and find time to volunteer and apply the skills they were trained for.

Early Response Teams

Right now there is an immediate need in the Lowndes County and surrounding areas for work teams. Morales has worked with Rev. Jerry Hudson and Rev. Danita Knowles at Camp Tygart to secure lodging for teams. While Camp Tygart is without power, UMCOR has offered the use of two solar power trailers from Footprint Project.

Please contact Kelly Crane (kelcrane@gmail.com), Glenn Martin (gmartin0704@gmail.com), or Luis Morales (ert@sgaumc.com) to schedule your ERT team or yourself to be part of a team. As always, don't self-deploy to a disaster area. Our disaster response team is working with local officials in affected areas to coordinate with their local disaster response efforts.

Financial Gifts

Your financial gift to UMCOR is especially appreciated as our giving is flexible in application and offers high impact. Monetary donations can be given to our disaster Conference Advance Special #6796 - South Georgia Storm Relief by sending to PO Box 7227, Macon, GA 31209 or [click here to give online](#). You can also give directly to [UMCOR US Disaster Response and Recovery](#) Advance #901670.

Our United Methodist connectional system is at its best when we come together to help those around us.

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Fanning the flames: grants available for innovative ministry

Do you have an innovative idea for starting something new to reach your community? Do you have a heart for the lost and a passion for the Gospel? Do you have an idea and a person or two willing to walk with you, but you need a little financial spark and coaching to get things going? If the answer is YES, the South Georgia Conference Congregational Development Team would love to come beside you and spark that idea to life with Spark Grant funding!

New leaders are doing new things to reach new people all around the conference. There are tiny sparks of hope and life around SGA that are causing others to catch a vision for what could be in their area as well. BBQ Church is happening twice a month to encourage fellowship and connection. Game Church is telling

Jesus stories in a way a gamer can understand. Ump Church is meeting the spiritual needs of baseball and softball umpires who are busy on the weekends and can't get to church. There are home churches and new church starts in various stages of development, and new things are popping up all over the place.

How are these leaders doing so many new things in the face of limited resources? What can the rest of us learn from what they are doing?

Here are a few things all of these new things have in common:

- Discipleship focused: The goal of these new things isn't to grow a church, it's to grow God's people. When you grow God's people, you will develop the church!
- Passion for the lost: Successful disciple-making comes from a heart to reach those who are unreached. Our desire to see people come to Christ must be bigger than the desire for us to have a comfortable place to worship.
- Commitment to the calling: Jesus never said the life of a disciple would be comfortable or easy! As a matter of fact, Jesus compared it to carrying a cross. Starting something new and reaching the unreached is a challenging and unpredictable endeavor. Remain committed to your calling, no matter where God leads you.
- Flexible in method, persistent in mission: The way we've always done things isn't working. This means we will need to attempt new methods to reach people with the gospel and introduce them to Jesus. Some of the things we attempt will succeed and others won't. We must be persistent in our mission of making disciples but flexible in the way in which we accomplish that mission. If we don't, we will quickly find ourselves more committed to the method than the mission.
- Think differently: If you are committed to reaching people no church is reaching you've got to think differently than the way other church leaders are thinking. The same thinking will not produce different results. Read things that are challenging to your mindset and point of view. Learn, grow, and stretch in your understanding of what the church can be.
- Willingness to get messy: "If you're not sweating, you're not serving." While serving can get us physically messy, more importantly we should also be willing to get emotionally and relationally messy. People who are far from God often find themselves in messy and sticky situations they think will disqualify them from God's grace. Walk with them in their mess. Be Jesus to them as you listen without rescuing or solving their problem for them.
- Gospel-focused, prayer-soaked: Why should we expend all this energy starting new faith communities and helping people become disciples? It's not to "save our church," it's to share the good news of the Gospel and respond to the saving work God has done in us. If Jesus isn't the focus and prayer isn't a priority, the new things we create will crumble like sand. We want to build on the rock, on a foundation of faith, truth, love, and the joy of being His children.

To learn more about the Spark Grants, visit www.sgaumc.org/ministryproposal1. The Congregational Development Team looks forward to seeing all God will ignite around South Georgia now and in the future. Let's fan the flame together! Questions? Contact Anne Bosarge at abosarge@sgaumc.com.



Georgia Methodist Foundation awards 36 students with scholarships

Thirty-six students received United Methodist Dollars for Scholars scholarships for the 2023-2024 academic year from the Georgia United Methodist Foundation. The Foundation partners with individuals and families who establish scholarship endowments, Methodist churches statewide, participating United Methodist-

related schools nationwide, and the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation to award matching United Methodist Dollars for Scholars scholarships valued at up to \$4,000 each year. Since 2011 the Foundation has awarded over 900 scholarships totaling nearly \$800,000. Three students from South Georgia were awarded with a scholarship: Carson Grady (High Point University), member of Isle of Hope UMC in Savannah; Hogan Mayhew (Andrew College), member of St. Paul UMC in Columbus; and Alexander Griffis (Andrew College), member of Bainbridge First UMC. [Click here for the full list.](#)



Enrollment at highest total in four years at Andrew College

[Andrew College's](#) Fall 2023 enrollment figures show a 19% increase in enrollment from last fall. This number is primarily due to a first-time freshman class that is the largest in four years and robust re-enrollment. The number of students residing in on-campus housing is also up 22% to its highest total since the fall of 2020.

“Since 1854, Andrew has offered students a quality education and individualized attention and worked to meet the needs of southwest Georgia,” said Dr. William R. Kennedy, President of Andrew College. “I want to thank the hard work and dedication of our enrollment staff, student affairs, faculty, and coaches this past year. Our entire campus community understands we are here for our students and want to help them succeed.”

Established in 1854, Andrew College is related to The United Methodist Church and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Situated in the rural southwest Georgia community of Cuthbert, Andrew College offers the Associate of Art, Associate of Science, Associate Degree in Nursing, Bachelor of Science and Certificates.



Helpful reminder from the Georgia United Methodist Foundation

Fall and the charge conference season is a great time for church leadership to do an annual audit of who can sign documents and authorize financial transactions on behalf of the church. When church officers and committee chairs change, or when there are staff changes, it is good stewardship to confirm your church authorizations are up to date! [Click here to read the Georgia United Methodist Foundation's latest newsletter.](#)



2023 prayer emphasis: September prayer guide

The South Georgia Conference is centering itself around prayer in 2023. September's prayer guide, written by district lay leaders John Ray (Northeast), Karen Forrester (Southwest), Denise Rooks (South Central), and Scott Cleaveland (Costal) is now available at www.sgaumc.org/year-of-prayer.



Antiracism challenge encouraged for the month of September

The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race is holding a “30 Days of Antiracism” challenge for the month of September. Each day, participants are encouraged to engage in an activity that helps them to become more antiracist in the ways they think and act.

Rev. Abra Lattany-Reed, Conference Director of Diversity and Justice Ministries, encourages South Georgia laity and clergy to join the challenge.

“Racial justice issues are front and center within the marketplace and impact the church,” said Rev. Lattany-Reed. “This 30 days of antiracism challenge is a reflective way to not only understand the mandate of God’s divine love for all humanity, but will build capacity by promoting the promises and emerging practices that reinforce a more just and compassionate society.”

The agency has created a free, downloadable calendar with suggested antiracism activities for each day of the challenge.

“GCORR has so many resources to help individuals assess and grow as a disciple of Jesus Christ,” said Rev. Lattany-Reed. “This challenge is essential to that development. Join in and participate and share your challenge experience with us at the Office of Connectional Ministries.”

[Read more and download the resource](#)



Join us for KidzQuest 2023!

[KidzQuest](#), the annual children’s fall retreat sponsored by South Georgia’s Connectional Ministries, is for students in 3rd-6th grades. Children and adult leaders from all around South Georgia come together with dozens of other church groups, learning how to worship, study God's Word, and understand what a relationship with Jesus really means. Amidst beautiful coastal scenery, amazing adult leaders (that's you!) and time away from home - these children are given an opportunity to experience Christ in brand new ways! This year's weekend retreat is set for September 22-24, 2023, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island, Ga. Visit www.sgaumc.org/kidzquest for more information and to register.



Update regarding Boy Scouts of America

A UMC Relationship Committee has been working with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to develop paths to serve the needs of both the local church and the BSA troop. The two path options are: 1 - an Affiliation Agreement or 2 - a Facilities Use Agreement. The latest, approved agreements can be found here: methodistscouter.org/conference-resource-page/. These agreements have been updated with the new insurance levels for the 2023 policy year.



September 10 Lesson: Jesus Silences Critics

Fall Quarter 2023: God’s Law Is Love
Unit 1: Love Completes; Law Falls Short

Sunday School Lesson for the week of September 10, 2023

By Craig Rikard

Devotional Reading: Hebrews 4:1-10

Background Scripture: Luke 14: 1-6

Lesson Aims

1. To recognize the role of the Retribution Principle in our perceptions of suffering and blessing.
2. To recognize those moments when what seem to be righteous actions conflict with the higher law of love.
3. To learn from Jesus' encounter with the Pharisee as to how we respond to such moments.
4. To learn the importance of the "Law of Laws."
5. To recognize the damaging perspective of the Pharisees in contrast to the life affirming teaching of Jesus.

Supplement to the Sunday School Lesson in the Teacher's Manual

Context of Luke 14:1-6 (*please read September 3rd Sunday School commentary for background information on Luke and the Pharisees*)

Background

As stated last week, one of the major contributions of Luke's Gospel is that he reveals the tension between grace and law and the inner moral life in contrast to the outer legalism. Luke includes dialogues between Jesus and the Pharisees to reveal the stark contrast of the legalism of the Pharisees and grace and love revealed in Jesus. Our text is the second such dialogue in Luke's Gospel. We often fail to realize the author of most biblical books have a particular message God has inspired them to convey. This message or messages serve as threads that run throughout the book. The thread of compassionate grace versus legalism runs throughout Luke.

The Pharisees were learned men in the Mosaic Law or Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. They strongly believe and teach that obeying the Torah is the only way to gain God's favor and approval. Since most of the masses had no access to the scrolls of Torah, they were dependent upon the lessons of Rabbis and Pharisees (also referred to as Rabbis) to hear and understand the Torah. This was very difficult and most often left them feeling "less than" in contrast to the religious leaders of Israel, and more seriously, as out of favor with God. Their lack of scrolls and dependence upon the Rabbis and Pharisees endowed the Pharisees with tremendous power. With that power the religious leaders possessed status, position, and wealth.

It is important to understand the nature of the Retribution Principle. This is an academic title assigned to the basic Old Testament understanding of how one's life is judged by God. The Jewish people believed, and were led to believe, that if one keeps the Torah they are blessed by God with health, success, and wealth. However, the opposite was also believed. If a person suffered or was poor and suffering, they deserved it because of their disobedience. In some cases, it was believed that if their parents were disobedient the negative judgement of God was passed to the children. Remember the Disciples question to Jesus, "Is this man blind because of his sin or the sin of his mother and father?" (John 5:1-9)

Jesus turned the Retribution Principle upon its head! He taught that God loved the poor, brokenhearted, and suffering. It wasn't their obedience to Torah that gained God's favor. God's grace and love for all was a gift, and life is a response to that gift.

It was customary for Pharisees to invite noted teachers into their home to dine. There was a certain social status associated with entertaining someone the crowds admired, especially one who claimed to possess knowledge from God. From several narratives in the Gospels, Jesus was often invited in order to ensnare him in a violation of Mosaic Law. Certainly, a Pharisee would consider himself smarter than a Galilean itinerant preacher and could entrap him in an infraction concerning the Torah. Our text is certainly one of those moments.

In what way does knowing Luke the physician and the context of the recorded events and teachings help you in understanding Luke's intent in writing it? In what ways does the Retribution Principle help us understand both Old and New Testament theology? How does it help us understand the social/political/economic structure of Israel in Jesus' day? How does the Retribution Principle help you understand how Jesus challenged this understanding? How does Jesus' ministry to the sick, poor, and suffering challenge the Retribution Principle? Why do you think Jesus' challenge to the Retribution Principle created a backlash against him?

Walking Through the Text

The Sabbath

No day was more sacred to the Jewish people than the Sabbath. Historical accounts exist of Jewish soldiers laying down their weapons rather than fight on the Sabbath, even if it meant their death. Violation of the Sabbath in Exodus 31:15 called for death. The Sabbath in Jesus' day continued to be a sacred day, set apart for worship and spiritual rest. Even those who farmed were asked to let the land rest on the seventh year. Faithful observance to the Sabbath was paramount to the Jewish people. The Sabbath was never meant to be a legalistic observance to help us stay in the good favor of God.

God's people were required to rest on the Sabbath Day. The Sabbath was observed from Friday evening to Saturday evening. One of the key requirements on the Sabbath was that no work be done. No one in the household was allowed to work, not even the livestock.

When my spouse Gail and I visited Israel, our tour led us to stand before the wailing wall just as the Sabbath began. The sun was lowing in the sky and the sense of the sacred overwhelmed us and left us speechless. From an upper room near the Wailing Wall was the equivalent of the theology school or Seminary, and the students would come dancing from the upper room on the Sabbath. I noticed many in our tour group had cameras ready. The students sent word down they were not coming out. Why? Cameras cause light and sparks, and in terms of Sabbath law created fire and light. The creation of fire while taking photos meant the violation of the Sabbath. This incident instilled in me the importance of the Jewish Sabbath.

Though unchurched as a young boy, I was aware of sacred law. I was taught certain behaviors were not allowed on the Sabbath. Many of you will remember the Sunday sales laws. Every business shut down and refused to sell. Today that strong sense of remaining true to the Sabbath has all but dissipated in American life. I also recall such leisure activities like fishing, sports, and other activities being forbidden on the Sabbath. Again, today such prohibitions no longer possess great weight. However, in Jesus' day, maintaining the rules about the Sabbath was paramount with serious consequences. Consequently, to trap Jesus violating the Sabbath Day was a serious matter. A violation of the Sabbath would discredit Jesus in the eyes of the Pharisee, and more importantly, in the eyes of the masses.

Many of the attempts by the religious leaders to discredit Jesus involved catching Jesus in a violation of the Sabbath. You may remember Jesus' disciples were charged with violating the Sabbath for picking corn on the Sabbath (Mat. 12:1-3). It is interesting to notice the events surrounding that moment at the cornfield. First, the question is raised, "What are they doing standing at a cornfield?" This is a place we would hardly

ever see the Pharisees standing. However, their jealousy and desire to discredit Jesus was so important to them that they are standing in a place they would usually never stand. Always remember, jealousy, dislike, and especially hatred can make us stand in places we would never otherwise stand. Secondly, Jesus knows they are watching, and he knows why they are watching. Jesus could have easily asked that all stop picking and eating the grains of corn for it was the Sabbath. However, he chose to keep picking corn. Why? In such moments Jesus recognizes an attempt to create chaos and damage on the part of Pharisees so he chose to transform their desire to entrap him into a teachable moment. Our text is one of those moments. Our narrative reveals the true nature of the Sabbath and exposes the errancy of the Pharisees and legal experts.

Can you share our culture's understanding of the Sabbath in your childhood? What were some of the behaviors and activities you recall that were forbidden on the Sabbath? In the Creation hymn in Gen. 1 and 2 we are given a poetic understanding of God's activity in creation. What makes the seventh day, the Sabbath, different? Can you share some of the ways in our present culture we can celebrate the Sabbath? In what ways does the Sabbath itself help us in worshiping God? How can we remain obedient to the Sabbath today? What are some ways we can keep the Sabbath so that God is worshiped?

The Pharisee

The Pharisee is a "prominent Pharisee," which conveys he is a man of well-respected religious authority and wealth. The guests were other Pharisees and experts in the Law. Most likely they were people of high social status in attendance. As revealed in last week's lesson, ritual cleansing and purification were highly important to the Pharisees. Therefore, no "unclean" person should be found dining with them. However, in the text we are presented with a man suffering from bodily swelling. Remember, the Pharisees and other Jews would have judged this man unclean, and to touch him would result in becoming unclean or defiled. We are not told how the man appears during the meal. He could have subtly entered in an attempt to see the one known as a healer, much like the woman with the issue of blood crawling through the crowd just to touch Jesus' garment. We are given few clues as to why he is there at all.

Yet, there is one possibility that certainly is in harmony with the prominent Pharisee's intent. The Pharisee could have intentionally allowed this unclean man to enter for the purpose of trapping Jesus. The man could place Jesus in a very difficult position. If he did not help the man he would be perceived as being uncaring. If he helped the man, he would be defiling himself and violating the Sabbath.

Can you articulate how needing to know the Law, in order to be favored by God, empowered the Pharisees? In what ways did the Pharisees have hold, influence, and power over the masses of people? For what reason do you think the prominent Pharisee invited Jesus to his banquet? For what reason would the prominent Pharisee allow the swollen man into the banquet to be seen by Jesus? How would the swollen man be used by the Pharisee to entrap Jesus? How does it being the Sabbath Day create the opportunity to trap Jesus? How could the suffering man be used to catch Jesus in a violation of the Sabbath?

The Suffering Man

There is no description of the man's illness other than him being swollen. He could have suffered from kidney or cardiac disease, both of which can create swelling in the body. However, all we can do is guess. Knowing the nature of the disease was not the reason Luke, the physician, recorded this event. There is little or no debate that Luke recorded this narrative to call attention to the tense conversation surrounding Jesus healing the man on the Sabbath. The dialogue allows us to contrast the Pharisees perspective of Jewish religious life with the life Jesus offers. The Pharisees represent the legal perspective that understands the events in life as they relate to the Torah and the Mosaic Law. Jesus offers a liberating, life-affirming perspective that sees all people as precious to God, and our behavior is to be grounded in God's love for us and our response to God's love. The experiences of life are to teach us to seek such love in order to share it.

Whatever the man's illness, *it was noticeable*. Undoubtedly a person could recognize the man's swelling. According to Jewish religious thought, the man was swelling abnormally because of his sin or the sin of his parents. In relation to the Pharisees teaching, the man was not to be touched unless ritual purification followed, for he was "unclean."

As stated above, I believe this man was used by the prominent Pharisee to create a trap that might ensnare Jesus in a violation of the Torah as it related to the Sabbath. Again, there is no commentary on how the man happened to be at the banquet. Most Jewish people who have been judged as a sinner and unclean would rarely burst into the home of a prominent Pharisee without invitation; serious consequences could follow. However, the Gospels do reveal moments when the poor, suffering, and sinful person found a way to be present. In Luke 7:36-50 we are introduced to a "sinful" woman who cried at Jesus feet and washed them with the tears and dried them with her hair. Most likely the costly perfume she carried helped her enter the banquet. It is an expensive gift, and if she claimed to have brought the gift for Jesus she could most likely enter.

Still, such moments were most likely rare. Many Jews feared the religious leaders, especially those whom society deemed sinful. The Pharisees did not make the life of the suffering easier. Their perspective of suffering people proved to be a heavy yoke about their neck. Again, they were judged to have deserved their illness or poverty as a result of their sin. Again, I believe the man suffering from being swollen was allowed to enter or even *invited* to set up the conflict. In the story of the woman with perfume in Luke 7, the Pharisees remarked, "If he were a prophet he would know who touches him." They conclude that the Messiah would immediately recognize the sinful and the unclean present. He would know what defiles people. The narrative goes on to reveal that Jesus did know the woman was considered a sinner. However, his response was to recognize her as a child of God and in need of grace like all people. Whereas the Pharisees judge her as deserving her plight, Jesus judged she was deserving of grace, mercy, and forgiveness.

In our text, we have the same dynamics at work. A sinful man, a man with noticeable illness, is near Jesus. Our passage, however, does not ask whether the man should be removed from the banquet because his presence can render all present unclean. Instead, the focus is upon the Sabbath and the laws surrounding it. This is a high, holy day in Judaism. The Pharisees believe the prohibitions in the Torah, combined with the prohibitions in the Mishna are clear. How will Jesus respond to this sinful man on the Sabbath? The Mishna, written in the years between the Old and New Testaments, contained specific regulations and requirements concerning the Sabbath. The masses could not remember the many laws and interpretations. Many of the prohibitions in the Mishna transformed the Sabbath from a joyful celebration into a burden.

How did the Pharisees and legal experts see the suffering man? Why did they believe he was sinner? Why did the Pharisees and legal scholars believe touching a sick individual make them unclean? What do you think would have usually happened in a banquet on the Sabbath when someone sick was found to be present? Consequently, the Pharisees said nothing. Why do you think they remained silent? After the man stood or lie down in the presence of Jesus what could have been the reason for their choice to remain silent? Remember, Pharisees were teachers who enjoyed showing off their knowledge of the Law while judging the "sinful." How does this fact possibly help us to understand that the encounter was an intentional set up? How would remaining silent help them catch Jesus in a violation of the Sabbath?

He Was Carefully Watched

Why were the Pharisees so determined to discredit Jesus and remove him from Jewish life? Again, Jewish society in Jesus' day was structured in an unjust manner. The Pharisees gained their respect, power, and wealth by memorizing, teaching, and knowing the Torah. There eventually were 612 Jewish laws. The laws the Israelites observed prior to the giving of the Mosaic Law ordered their society. The laws that preceded

the Ten Commandments were incorporated into the Mosaic Law as long as they did not contradict the decalogue. Then, interpretations of the laws were required. If they weren't supposed to work on the Sabbath, they had to ask, "How do we define work?" Thus, the law was expanding outward from the decalogue as other laws were incorporated through interpretations. The Jewish people were dependent upon the Pharisees and Rabbis to know what God expected. Yet, they always felt as though they displeased God. Without fail they violated the teachings of the Pharisees and struggled to fully know and understand the 600 plus laws. This was the "heavy yoke" of which Jesus spoke of in Matthew 11.

Then, Jesus arrives preaching, especially to the masses. His authority did not come from a religious education provided by the religious leaders of Israel. However, he assuredly was taken to Synagogue and the Temple during childhood and as a young man. Without doubt, attending Synagogue and observing the feasts and festivals greatly informed Jesus. However, he understood the Synagogue lessons more deeply and broadly than others, even his Rabbis. His authority came from God, thus explaining the response of those listening to Jesus. They claimed their hearts "burned within them" while he spoke. Therefore, the people referred to him as "Rabbi." Jesus created shaking, quaking ground beneath the legalistic system of the Pharisees. Jesus taught, "You do not need to determine how worthy you are to God based upon keeping the law." "I bring you God's good news, especially for you, and for those in prison, those who are brokenhearted, and the poor." Jesus proclaimed God's love for all and revealed God's intimate identification with those suffering.

How did Jesus' ministry threaten the power of the Pharisees? How would the plan of the Pharisee help in maintaining their power? How would discrediting Jesus help them maintain their status and position? How would healing the sick man on the Sabbath be used to discredit Jesus?

Furthermore, Jesus received tremendous backlash by reinterpreting, or offering, the proper interpretation of sacred texts. Jesus taught there exists only one law, found in Deut. 6, that you need to know and obey. This law is not written on tablets of wood and stone, instead being written on the heart. This is an "internal law." Deut. 6 reads, "Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus taught if one keeps the one law, they will keep all laws. Thus, Mosaic Law was not being abolished but fulfilled in the deepest sense. Jesus claimed, "I did not come to abolish the Law or prophets, but rather fulfill it (Matthew 5:17)." He further taught if we fall short of the Law of Laws, forgiveness is offered to the one genuinely seeking forgiveness and who desires to continue their journey in this law of righteous love. This one law was perfectly revealed in Jesus. Those who follow Jesus will be walking in this one law of love. It is not a law that ties a stone around the neck of the masses but rather offers grace and forgiveness and empowerment to follow him. The love required in this law is *not subjective*. We receive, embody, and share *the love of God* as understood in and through Jesus.

In what way does the Law of Laws (also the Shema, the One Law) challenge the legalistic system of the Pharisees and legal experts? In what way was Jesus the incarnation of the Shema? What is the connection between Jeremiah's prophesy of the inner covenant, written on the heart, and Jesus' proclamation that we need to obey only the Shema? In what manner does keeping the Shema help us keep all laws? Can you offer examples from the Gospels that reveal Jesus as the incarnation of the Shema? Search for examples of Jesus placing the godly love of the Shema over the legalistic interpretation of the Pharisees. What do you think was meant when Jesus said he did "not come to abolish the Law and prophets, I came to fulfill them"?

This teaching of Jesus had the power to challenge and lessen the power and hold the Pharisees employed over the masses, especially the masses in Galilee. Historically, when leaders have challenged and shaken power structures, and the vehicles that provided wealth and power to those leaders, there is strong backlash, even plots to kill. Jesus is, again, shaking the foundation of Jewish society with liberation, grace, love, and truth. The Pharisees are threatened and respond with attempts to catch this assumed "uneducated" Galilean in

a violation of Torah and thus reveal that he can't possibly be a messenger from God. When such attempts fail, the attacks grow in intensity and desperation, finally leading to Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and death.

Consequently, the Pharisees were "carefully watching" Jesus for any opportunity to accuse and strip him of religious authority. Perhaps the crowning moment that illustrates their frustration after failing to damage Jesus' popularity occurs during the Triumphant Entry. The crowd ran to him with shouts of "Hallelujah, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the Highest!" The religious leaders' response reveals the intensification of their fear, anger, and desire to remove him from their society. They said in frustration, "Look the whole world has gone out to him." If they were going out to Jesus, it meant they were not seeking the Pharisees. Jesus' ministry was bringing hope to all and threatening the social/political/economic structure of Israel.

How do you think Jesus's actions, preaching, and teaching are connected to the Sanhedrin's plan to crucify him?

The Question

We arrive at the climactic moment in the narrative. The phrase "there in front of him" regarding the ill man seems to imply the man had made his way to a place Jesus could see him, or maybe he was brought there. Perhaps this was a moment in which he was *brought* into the presence of Jesus. The careful watching of Jesus, along with the tense atmosphere at the banquet, seem to negate the idea he slipped into the banquet unnoticed. We have no mention of any attempt to remove him once he is there, even though his presence threatens them with defilement on the Sabbath. There is no accusation that the man is an uninvited guest, an intruder, from the prominent Pharisee or the legal experts attending the banquet. This seems to grant some validity to those who argue the man was intentionally brought to the banquet and used as a means of entrapment.

Instead of calling for the man to be removed, the Pharisees and legal experts sit quietly. Again, an odd response to a suffering man standing or lying in front of their invited guest, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus knows the intent of the Pharisees. It is Jesus himself who speaks first. Using silence is a great technique to prompt someone to speak. When there is silence at a meeting someone will eventually break it. The silence only increases tension until it becomes uncomfortable. It almost seems as though the religious leaders are sitting quietly thinking, "Let's see what he says to this!" Jesus obliged them. "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" It is a simple question, but also a loaded question. Jesus commonly used questions to turn the tables on those seeking to trap him. He has certainly done so in this moment. If they answer it is unlawful to heal on the Sabbath, they will have been obedient to the Torah and Mishna but will appear cold-hearted. If they answer it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath, they violate the very law that endows them with status and power. They are the ones entrapped, snared by the wisdom of Jesus.

Have you witnessed the use of silence as a means of "getting someone to speak"? Can you share it with your class? What was the hope of the Pharisee in remaining silent? Why do you believe Jesus' method of answering a question with a question is effective? How do you believe the Pharisees and legal experts felt when Jesus asked the question? In what ways would the question entrap the Pharisees and other religious leaders?

This is not just an attempt to escape a trap for Jesus. He is asking a question the Pharisees and legal experts need to answer for themselves. Either they love the Law more than the man or the man above the Law. Jesus wants them to understand they do not have to choose between the man and the Law. The One Law allows them to be faithful to the Law and the prophets by loving the man. However, they cannot yet see the truth or the light within Jesus' teaching. They have eyes to see and do not see, ears to hear but do not hear. The text reads, "They remained silent."

Jesus now shines a greater light, a glaring light upon the situation before them. This light is inescapable. Either this light will open their hearts to Jesus and his teaching, or they will reject it. They would be rejecting the obvious. Jesus “takes hold of the man.” A Jewish person would never attempt to touch an unclean thing or person, especially on the Sabbath. In touching them they become defiled. They could not participate in religious rites, festivals, and rituals unless they purified themselves. Yet, *Jesus touches him!* Jesus touched the sick all of his ministry. Perhaps there was no more remarkable moment to illustrate God’s love for all, and the nature of the real Law that should dwell in the heart than when He touched a leper. The man was instantly healed. The text reads he was healed and then sent on his way. The intent of Jesus was for the Pharisees and religious leaders to “see” the healing. Now would they rejoice the man is well, or would they condemn Jesus?

What do think would be the normal reaction of the Pharisees and other religious leaders when Jesus touched the sick man? Yet, though stunned, they remained quiet. Do you think they remained silent because they were shocked and could not think of what to say? This was the moment Jesus, in their thinking and belief, violated the Sabbath Day. So, again, why do think they remained quiet? They had him! Do you think Jesus asking his next question immediately after healing the man “beat them to the punch”?

If the religious leaders and prominent Pharisee said anything it is not recorded. They most likely remained silent for Jesus then adds to the glare of truth: “If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a ditch, will you not immediately pull him out?” Notice the word “immediately.” In case one argued that perhaps the man could be treated later, just not on the Sabbath, this man’s healing challenges such reasoning. Jesus did not wait for another day, another moment. Yes, it is the Sabbath, and he is going to reveal the true meaning of the Sabbath. Immediately he healed the man. As the teacher’s manual informs us, there were two streams of understanding regarding helping an animal from the ditch or well. First, strict interpretation of the Torah meant that you could feed the animal but could not free it. Feeding the animal did not violate the law but liberating the animal did. It required work to free the donkey from the ditch. Others allowed the donkey to be freed even on the Sabbath.

How did Jesus’ next question leave them speechless? How do you think Jesus related the healing of the sick man to the Pharisees treatment of a donkey in a well or ditch?

Naturally, the Law allowed work on the Sabbath if freeing a child. Compassion and love were granted the greater power when a child was endangered. Notice, Jesus used the phrase, “If one of you has a child...” It is greater importance when it’s our own child. We have the deepest interest and most powerful motivation when attempting to free our own child. Jesus’ next question intensifies that radiant glaring light for which there are only two responses: accept or reject.

How did Jesus relate his healing of the swollen man to rescuing a child from the ditch or well? What would be a father’s (or mother’s) response if their child was endangered from being in a well? How would the parents in Jesus’ question represent God? How do they represent Jesus’ ministry? How did Jesus using the law concerning a donkey in a ditch and a child in the ditch set up the contrast between legalism and living by the Shema?

The Pharisees and legal experts are willing to treat the sick, poor, and suffering as animals. They show little compassion and minimal desire to liberate them. Spiritually, emotionally, and even physically the suffering are “in a ditch.” They face circumstances that bind and imprison them. However, they are God’s children! It is God’s desire that they be treated as such. Compassion must motivate us. We must be willing to do all necessary because they are God’s child and our brother and sister. If the Pharisees and the others received this truth, they would celebrate the man’s healing. The man’s healing is equivalent to freeing a child from the well or ditch. Jesus loved the suffering man. Meeting the man’s need did not violate the Sabbath, instead it

revealed the true nature of the Sabbath. One of the highest means of worshiping God is to love one another as God loves us. It is an act of worship to liberate, heal a broken heart, and heal the broken.

How do you believe healing the man on the Sabbath fulfilled the Law according to Jesus? Why do think the healing of the man was an act of worship?

Sadly, our narrative doesn't end on a joyous note. The religious leaders remained silent. Not only are they silent, "they have nothing to say." They reject Jesus' teaching yet have no answer to the relevant and necessary questions Jesus asked.

Prayer

Almighty God, we ask your forgiveness for the many times we allowed excuses and our own legalism to get in the way of our God-given compassion. We thank you for everyone you use to pull us from the ditch. We thank you for the circumstances that taught us true righteousness through the Law of Laws. We pray for the wisdom to not only receive your light but to live in that light. In the name of Jesus, Amen.

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



About the Tough Times

by Hal Brady

A young preacher had given a practice sermon in a seminary class. His preaching professor was giving him a hard time. Finally, the young preacher said, "I thought it was a pretty good sermon." The professor asked, "Why do you think so?" The student resounded, "I preached it last Sunday in my church and three people cried." The professor replied, "I almost cried myself." Now, I'm sure that young preacher lost a little confidence. I know because I've been there myself.

Today I want to focus on confidence. But as a theological professor put it, "Sometimes confidence is mistaken for arrogance." Arrogance comes from confidence in yourself. Be sure: I'm not talking about that kind of confidence. You see, that kind of confidence will not make it through the tough times of life.

First, there's the problem of confidence! For sure, one of the main problems of confidence is that we carry it in a fragile human vessel, and it can be so easily shattered. Our relationships and our world always seem to be so tentative. They change so quickly and usually our confidence is not helped. Confidence is another one of those qualities that is always in danger of extinction. Bishop William Willimon, when he was Dean of the Chapel at Duke University, was visiting with a college student. He said this college student was a member of one of the dormitory Bible study groups on campus. The young man was telling Willimon about the group and then said, "You know, I've never felt the need of it back in DesMoines." "Why here?" Willimon asked him. The student replied, "Dean, do you know how difficult it is to be a sophomore and a Christian at the same time?" That young man was struggling with his confidence - or lack of it.

Second, there's the secret of confidence! The kind of confidence I'm talking about here is no "whistling in the dark" kind of confidence. The Psalmist who wrote Psalm 46 is not naive. He knows that there is nothing easy about life. He has every reason to be fearful and anxious. This psalmist in psalm 46 provides the absolute worse-case scenario. The "change" affecting the earth in verse two and three involves a direct hit tornado and earthquake that measures ten on the Richter Scale. Actually, the situation is even worse than that. In the ancient near Eastern understanding of the universe, the mountains were the foundation that

anchored the dry land that held up the sky. The most terrible thing that could happen would be for the mountains to “shake” or “tremble.” In essence, verses two and three are the psalmist’s description of the world’s falling apart. But in the face of “this worst of all situations,” the psalmist affirms God as “refuge,” “strength,” and “help.” When the very structure of this world cannot be depended upon, when our world is literally falling apart, God can still be depended upon.

The little girl was right as she finished her prayer with these words, “And please, God, look after yourself because if anything happens to you, we are all sunk.” The late Father Theodore Hesburgh, longtime President of the University of Notre Dame, had a favorite line he liked to quote. He said, “The only thing we really know about tomorrow is that the providence of God will be up before dawn.” The psalmist said, “Be still and know that I am God” (46:10). Be still! Stillness leads to perspective which leads to confidence – in God.

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).



Conference Updates & Happenings

Come join us for KidzQuest 2023!

[KidzQuest](#), the annual children’s fall retreat sponsored by South Georgia’s Connectional Ministries, is for students in 3rd-6th grades. Children and adult leaders from all around South Georgia come together with dozens of other church groups, learning how to worship, study God’s Word, and understand what a relationship with Jesus really means. Amidst beautiful coastal scenery, amazing adult leaders (that’s you!) and time away from home - these children are given an opportunity to experience Christ in brand new ways! This year’s weekend retreat is set for **September 22-24, 2023**, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island, Ga. Visit www.sgauhc.org/kidzquest for more information and to register.

Workshop planned for clergy focuses on 'the cost of care in your calling'

The South Georgia Conference Clergy Mental Health Task Force is sponsoring a one-day workshop for clergy focused on “Care to the Caregiver: The Cost of Caring in Your Calling.” Led by Rev. Thomas Waynick, LMFT, the workshop is set for **October 12, 2023, from 10am – 2pm** at the Pastoral Institute in Columbus, Ga.

Galatians 6:2 reminds us to carry each other’s burdens and in this way, you fulfill the law of Christ. This workshop, sponsored by the Conference Clergy Mental Health Task Force, will address the following:

- Effects of prolonged exposure to suffering and on-going demands
- Understanding and providing protection regarding risks
- The symptoms of carrying others burdens for a prolonged time

God commands that we love our neighbor as ourselves but we cannot give what we do not have. We invite you to this workshop to learn to give yourselves the same grace and compassion that you so often give to others in your ministries. The cost for this event is \$25 (lunch is included). [Click here to register.](#)

Rural Church Rising conference focuses on rural context

Rural Church Rising is a two-day conference - **October 27-28, 2023** - for lay and clergy people serving in rural contexts across the country. This conference takes place at the Warren Willis Camp and Conference Center (4990 Picciola Rd, Fruitland Park, FL 3473) in the North Central District of the Florida Annual

Conference, one of the most established rural districts participating in Fresh Expressions of church. For more information about the two day event, visit www.freshexpressionsfl.org/rural-church-rising-2023. The South Georgia Conference is offering scholarships for lay and clergy to attend making the cost to the participant \$50 per person (mileage and meals on your own). [Register here](#). If you have questions or need more information, please contact Anne Bosarge at abosarge@sgaumc.com.

2023 Lay Servant Ministries & Certified Lay Ministry

Check out the [dates & registration for the 2023 classes](#).

Reset Cohorts - 2023-2024

Do you remember how church used to be? Do you talk about going back to the way things were before the pandemic? Or do your “good old days” go even further back than that? Maybe you’d rather go back to what church was like 40 years ago when you regularly added new members and your Wednesday night dinners were the talk of the town. It’s good to remember what was, but only if that reflection leads you toward resetting your energy and resources toward your mission. The Office of Connectional Ministries is gearing up for year 2 of its "Reset Cohort." In this 7-month cohort, clergy and laity will spend time refocusing on the mission to which we’ve been called, “Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” If you’re longing for more than a return to the “good old days” and are ready to reset your church for missional engagement, Gospel energy, and a passion for people, this cohort is for you! [Learn more and register](#)

Lay Planter’s Training - Fall 2023

Here in South Georgia, we are seizing the opportunity to start new things for new people in new places. We are seeing a resurgence of grassroots efforts among our laity to dive deeply into disciple-making using new models for church planting like home churches, fresh expressions and more. Can you imagine what it will be like in a few years when laity across the conference will be engaged in leading discipleship efforts across the conference? These discipleship groups and home churches will be able to meet in all kinds of places, made up of all kinds of people. Coming up on July 22, we will have an informational zoom session to find out more about an online Lay Planter’s Course we will be offering this Fall to interested laity. Coming to the meeting doesn’t commit you to the course; it’s an opportunity to hear more about it. [Learn more](#)

Annual Eagles Retreat - Oct. 16-18

The Eagles, the retired ministers and spouses of South Georgia, have set their annual retreat for October 16-18, 2023, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons. This year’s program and presentations will focus on World War II. Participants will hear interesting and informative presentations about the beginning and the end of the war in the Pacific from a guest speaker traveling from Orlando, FL. Registration and room check-in begins on Monday, October 16 at 4:00 pm. Dinner will be served between 5:30-7:00 pm. The retreat will conclude on Wednesday, October 18 with lunch. Register by calling Epworth at (912) 638-8688 (ask to speak to Trice Roberts). Invite a friend or family member to come with you for this retreat for good food, fellowship, and fun. If you have questions, please contact David Tart at 229-300-8805 or revdtart@bellsouth.net.



Resource Roundup – September 2023

World Communion Sunday is Oct. 1

On World Communion Sunday, United Methodists will join Christians of different traditions to recognize our ecumenical oneness in Christ and to bring Christians together in a spirit of unity and peace. We have resources to inspire your community to fully embrace this Special Sunday. In the pastor and leader kit, find

offertory talks, children’s messages, age-level resources, social media graphics and more. Core resources will be available in multiple languages. Start planning today! [View resources](#)

Five things to do to take better photos and videos with your smartphone

While smartphones are capable of capturing fairly high-quality photos and video, you can achieve more-professional results by paying attention to a handful of details. Don't miss out on transforming your mobile device into a powerful tool for visual storytelling. Discover the secrets that will elevate your photography and videography skills to a whole new level. [Read more](#)

11 mistakes to avoid in church website design

Your church website is one of your most important tools for reaching people. But if it's not well-designed, you could be making some big mistakes. Look at these 11 common mistakes that churches make with their websites and see tips for avoiding these mistakes and creating a website that will help you reach more people. [Read more](#)

United Methodist/Wesleyan Small-Group Resources

(Discipleship Ministries) In a recent webinar, the most requested resources had to do with identity - what it means to be United Methodist. This response highlights a collective desire to understand and embrace our unique identity as United Methodists. The United Methodist Publishing House gave great suggestions for small groups and Bible studies. [Click here to read more and to see the full list of suggestions.](#)

5 Factors That Affected Your Church’s Income in 2022

(Discipleship Ministries) Were your church’s offering totals down in 2022? Maybe not, depending on how well you were receiving income during the days of the COVID pandemic. If you did start 2023 in a deficit, you may wish to place blame: your members, the finance committee, the folks who manage your church’s endowment funds, or maybe the pastor for not preaching stewardship enough. Before we start pointing fingers, it might be helpful to examine some hard data. [Read more](#)

United Methodist Publishing House Resources for the South Georgia Conference!

Whether there are faithful people in the South Georgia Conference who are beginning again, continuing their journey after a season of disorientation, grief, and loss, or just want to strengthen their commitment to our tradition, Amplify Media (a streaming resource from Cokesbury) is offering free resources for you and all continuing United Methodists at <https://amplifymedia.com/amplify-your-commitment-to-beumc/>.

UMCOR Mustard Seed Migration Grants Program Accepting Applications for 2023

United Methodist churches have the opportunity to help immigrants, migrants and refugees living in their local communities, thanks to the Mustard Seed Migration Grants program from the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). Applications will be reviewed on a rolling basis until October 1, 2023, and grant monies will be awarded within four weeks of grant application approval. The grants program, now in its third year, continues the agency’s 80-year tradition of helping refugees, immigrants and migrants seeking to build new lives. [Learn more here.](#)



Retired Clergy Birthdays – September 2023

- 9/04 – Earl James: 310 Avondale Circle; Warner Robins, GA 31088
- 9/05 – Gene Yelverton: 6345 Concord Church Rd.; Ellaville, GA 31086
- 9/06 – Sanford Wills: 1021 Sunrise Rd.; Preston, GA 31824
- 9/09 – Richard Soper: 102 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522

- 9/13 – Bernie Khaw: 344 S. Old Middletown Rd., Media, PA 19063
- 9/14 – Tom Johnson, Sr.: PO Box 127; Oxford, GA 30054
- 9/15 – Elick Bullington, Jr.: Lakeside Senior Care; 1025 N. Chester Ave., No. 11; Douglas, GA 31533
- 9/16 – Henry Bass: 404 Clyde Ave.; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 9/16 – Bob Norwood: 946 Old Wadley Rd.; Swainsboro, GA 30401
- 9/16 – Ray Youngblood: 214 Lee St.; North Augusta, SC 29841
- 9/18 – Burns Willis: 1815 E. Washington St.; Thomasville, GA 31792
- 9/19 – Wayne Moseley: 29 William E. Moseley Rd.; Collins, GA 30421
- 9/19 – Dan Pegram: 112 Tahoe Dr.; Pooler, GA 31323
- 9/21 – Virgil Lee: 208 Yorkshire Crescent; Thomasville, GA 31792
- 9/22 – Edwin Chase: 70 Shipwatch Rd.; Savannah, GA 31410
- 9/26 – Larry Sauls: 206 Westview Dr.; Dublin, GA 31321
- 9/27 – Andy Brownley: 34 South Broad St.; Alamo, GA 30411
- 9/28 – Donna Jordan: 404 Brentwood Dr.; Dublin, GA 31021
- 9/28 – William Ryan: 2138 Red Bank Circle; Sevierville



Obituary: Rev. Mary “Mollie” Danner

Mary Vye “Mollie” Wilder Danner, 80, of Moultrie, passed away Tuesday, August 22, 2023, at her home. Funeral services were held at 2:00 PM on Saturday, August 26, 2023, in the chapel of Baker Funeral Home with Rev. Dr. Jimmy Voyles and Mr. Buddy Brinkley officiating. Interment will follow at Leila Church Cemetery in Omega.

Born on December 9, 1942, in Adel, Georgia, she was the daughter of the late V.R. Wilder and Nina Vye Dunn Wilder. She was an accountant for Colquitt EMC and served as a pastor at Tyson Memorial United Methodist Church, Clyattville United Methodist Church, Metcalf United Methodist Church, Pavo United Methodist Church, and several other churches over 25 years.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her brother, William Wilder and her son in law, Terry Harris.

Mrs. Danner is survived by her husband, Frank W. Danner IV of Moultrie; daughters, Ruth Tompkins Rigby and husband Kenny of Jacksonville, and Vanessa Tompkins Harris of Moultrie; sisters, Emily Weeks and husband Starlyn of Jonesboro, and Patti Dematteo of Jacksonville; grandchildren, TJ Harris, Justin Harris and wife Nikki, Vash Harris, Tiffany Tabachi-Vega and husband Grey, Felicia Tommasi and husband Eric, Monica Quinn and husband BJ, Mandy Sutton and husband Joe, and Allen Freeman and wife Ashley; great-grandchildren, Riley, Slayde, Tyler, Tanner, Nathan, Wyatt, Skyler, Luke, Levi, and Lance. Visitation will be held one hour prior to the service on Saturday, August 26, 2023, in the chapel of Baker Funeral Home.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to The Methodist Home for Children and Youth in Macon 304 Pierce Ave Macon, Georgia 31204, or to St. Jude Children Hospital 4950 W Kennedy Blvd #605, Tampa, FL 33609.



Scripture Readings – September 5 edition

September 10

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Year A

- [Exodus 12:1-14](#)
- [Psalm 149](#)
- [Romans 13:8-14](#)
- [Matthew 18:15-20](#)

September 17

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost, Year A

- [Exodus 14:19-31](#)
- [Psalm 114](#)
- [Romans 14:1-12](#)
- [Matthew 18:21-35](#)