

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – NOVEMBER 7 EDITION

Pastors find rest and renewal at Green Bough House of Prayer

By Rev. Stephanie Smith

Every pastor needs an opportunity to find rest and renewal to cope with the stress and strain of ministry. For several South Georgia United Methodist pastors, Green Bough House of Prayer, an ecumenical retreat center tucked away in the heart of Georgia, offers them space to find it.

[According to new Barna research](#), two in five pastors (41%) say they've considered quitting full-time ministry in the last 12 months. In 2015, 72% of pastors said they felt "very satisfied" with their job as pastors. In late 2022, just 52% of pastors were "very satisfied with their jobs." Barna has continued to report on this sharp increase in pastoral burnout, and it confirms the growing number of pastors who are considering resignation.

One of the underlying reasons this percentage is so high is the "immense stress of the job." While stress and the varying demands of ministry seem to be continuous, the words of Christ found in Matthew 11:28-30 call loud and clear, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest."

It is the act of coming or leaving behind the stress and entering into the holy presence of God that draws both clergy and laity alike to a renewal retreat like Green Bough House of Prayer in Adrien, Ga.

For 22 years, Rev. Teresa Edwards, associate pastor at Vineville United Methodist Church in Macon, Ga., has found her way to Green Bough House of Prayer again and again.

"Walking around the field on my first visit, I knew God had brought me to a sacred place of rest, renewal, and deep prayer," said Rev. Edwards. "When I pull in to park my car, my breathing slows. The pace of prayer invites me to slow down, listen, and notice all the little moments. The grounds, the rooms, the chapel, and the dinner table all glimmer with grace for me.

"What I have learned over the years is that place matters. Green Bough is my spiritual home and place of deep, holy rest," said Rev. Edwards.

Green Bough House of Prayer offers space for individual reflection and also offers guided retreats and conversations that bring about a time of renewal through spiritual direction.

The Rev. Dr. Scott Hagan, Coastal and Northeast District Superintendent, began visiting Green Bough to spend time with Rev. Steve Bullington, a South Georgia clergy and one of the spiritual directors at Green Bough House of Prayer.

"Going to Green Bough remains so good for my soul," said Dr. Hagan. "I have come to appreciate the additional blessing of spending time with others who travel there for similar times of retreat. Over meals and conversations, I have met laypersons and clergy from across the state and region. Each encounter reminds me that I am not alone in responding to the call of God to submit to the rhythm of renewal."

The rhythm of renewal can certainly help transform the pace of everyday life. For the Rev. Ted Goshorn, senior pastor at Mulberry Street United Methodist Church in Macon, transformation happens in stillness.

“Life moves quickly, and I naturally keep an even faster pace,” said Dr. Goshorn. “In doing so, I run the risk of outrunning God.”

Thankfully, Green Bough has taught him the importance of stillness in staying grounded in God.

“At Green Bough, I pause life and enter into the shared, quiet, peaceful rhythms of life that Fay, Steve, and Oliver (spiritual directors at Green Bough) carefully cultivate,” said Dr. Goshorn. “I am renewed and prepared to give in ministry from the overflow of what God is doing in my life. Transformation happens in stillness, and Green Bough fosters my own practice of stillness.”

As pastors seek to find rest and renewal, sacred spaces like Green Bough have a twofold calling, according to Rev. Bullington: to live a life of prayer in the world and to provide a place for people to come for prayer and renewal.

“For people to find renewal at Green Bough, they have to be ready to come, to be open to God, and hungry for God’s presence,” said Rev. Bullington. “Green Bough is where they can step into that space of rhythm and prayer, allowing God to work in simplicity.”

If you would like to know more about Green Bough House of Prayer or more about spiritual direction and rest, contact [Rev. Steve Bullington](#).

Rev. Stephanie Smith is the associate pastor at Pittman Park UMC in Statesboro and is working with district and conference communications.



Andrew College and LaGrange College announce new sports programs

Submitted by Andrew College staff and LaGrange College staff

Andrew College Adds Intercollegiate Football Starting in 2024

Andrew College President Dr. William R. Kennedy has announced the addition of an intercollegiate football program at Andrew College. Andrew College will begin play in Fall 2024 at the NJCAA level.

"We are excited to add football to our growing list of athletic offerings at Andrew College," said Dr. Kennedy. "Fighting Tiger Football will increase campus vibrancy and allow many students to gain a quality education while continuing to participate in the sport they love right here in southwest Georgia."

Dr. Nicholas Garrett, a veteran coach with extensive ties from coast to coast, will lead the charge for the football program’s inaugural season.

"We had an impressive pool of applicants for our position, but Dr. Garrett stood out and impressed us with his vision, passion, and commitment to being a part of something special here at Andrew College," said President Kennedy.

Before arriving at Andrew College, Garrett spent six plus years at Riverside Military Academy in Gainesville, Georgia where he led the program to its first playoff appearance and victory in GHSA school history and was named Coach of the Year in 2019. Garrett was also the head coach at Santa Clara High School in Oxnard, California. He also spent time at the college level at Bethel College, Western New Mexico University, East Los Angeles College, and Kansas Wesleyan University.

"My family and I are thrilled to join the Andrew College community," said Garrett on becoming the new Head Coach of the Fighting Tigers. "This is a destination job at a program in the grassroots stages of something truly special. I am in total alignment with Dr. Kennedy's vision and mission for all things Andrew College and the future of the football program. I can't wait to continue to build upon a tremendous foundation of rich historical culture. This is a world-class institution of higher education and the entire community of exceptional like-minded professionals at Andrew College."

Coach Garrett is a California native who received his Bachelor's from Graceland University in Iowa. He earned his Master's degree from Concordia University in Coaching, Athletic Administration, and Exercise Science and his Ph.D. from North Central University in Higher Education Leadership.

Interested student-athletes can reach out to Coach Garrett at nickgarrett@andrewcollege.edu.

LaGrange College to offer two new women's sports

LaGrange College Athletics will increase its program from 16 to 18 teams with the addition of women's golf and women's flag football. The college's Board of Trustees approved the two sports during its October meeting.

"These new programs will help enhance LaGrange College's efforts in recruiting high school athletes," said LaGrange College President Susanna Baxter. "We will be able to showcase the college's academic offerings and outstanding outcomes to a new population of prospective students."

The women's golf and flag football teams are set to begin competition in fall 2024 and spring 2025, respectively.

"These two sports are historic additions that will bring excitement and energy to campus," said Terlynn Olds, LaGrange College Vice President for Athletics and Recreation. "We will be able to broaden our domestic and international base of student-athletes and allow more women to enjoy the Panther experience."

The golf program, which began at LaGrange College in 1993, will see the women's team compete in the USA South Conference, where seven other institutions have women's golf programs.

Shannon Lipham, LaGrange College Head Coach for Men's Golf, will assume both coaching and recruiting responsibilities for the men's and women's teams. The program recently acquired an indoor practice room with a simulator thanks to donor funds.

To oversee the women's flag football program a national search will begin immediately for a head coach. LaGrange will be the second institution to add flag football in the Collegiate Conference of the South, with other competitors located within a two-hour drive from LaGrange.

"In Georgia, there are 7,000 girls participating in high school flag football," Olds said. "These athletes in Troup County and throughout the state will have an additional option to continue the sport at the collegiate level."

Recruiting will begin for the new teams in November.



Conference Nominations Committee seeks leaders for 2025-2028 quadrennium

The South Georgia Annual Conference Committee on Nominations has begun a process to identify laity and clergy interested in serving on Conference and District boards, committees, and teams for the 2025-2028 quadrennium.

Between now and November 30, you are invited to indicate your willingness to serve or to encourage possible leaders to complete an [online Interest Form](#).

Each quadrennium, the United Methodist Church seeks new leaders for open positions on conference boards and committees to serve for four years. The current quadrennium draws to a close in December 2024, and a new one launches on January 1, 2025. However, service on conference boards and committees for the new quadrennium begins at the conclusion of the 2024 South Georgia Annual Conference session. The six districts are also seeking nominees to fill vacancies to prepare for spring district conferences.

The Conference Nominations Committee is looking for resourceful and committed leaders who have vision, leadership skills, and a passion for the work of the particular board or committee on which they are interested.

“I would like to invite lay and clergy of South Georgia to join the nominations committee in prayer that God will speak to those who we need in leadership,” said Mrs. Meredyth Earnest, Conference Secretary who stewards the nominations process along with Bishop David Graves, chair of the nominations committee. “The 2025-28 quadrennium will be an opportunity for us to reset our commitment to the power of the connection. As we remember our membership vows of prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness, may we each seek to be in connectional ministry in the South Georgia Annual Conference.”

Persons interested in serving on the conference or district level should complete this [online Interest Form](#). This comprehensive form allows individuals to indicate their spiritual gifts, share their professional experience(s) and identify which board(s) or committee(s) they feel best align with their gifts and talents. Please note that self-nominations are kept on file in our database for up to four years. Because our districts must begin their work soon, the deadline for this form is November 30, 2023.

The annual conference will elect the leadership team for the 2025-2028 Quadrennium at the June 2024 annual conference session. The newly elected conference leaders will begin July 1, 2024.

Pastors, district superintendents, district nominating committees, and laity can help with the process by recruiting and identifying persons in local churches who should submit an interest form.

“I strongly encourage every clergy person to serve their district or conference in some capacity as well as at least one lay person from each local church,” said Earnest. “This process will help the Conference and District nominations committees match people and their interests, gifts, and graces with the various opportunities to serve on the district and conference level.”

Steps in the leadership selection process are:

- IDENTIFICATION — Indicate your interest(s) by completing and submitting the [online Interest Form](#). Note that this is the sole means available to indicate interest in serving. Nov. 30, 2023, is the deadline for submitting Interest Forms.
- NOMINATION — The District Committee on Nominations and the District Leadership Team will receive and evaluate Interest Forms and coordinate the nominations process with the Conference Committee on Nominations. The Conference Committee on Nominations will submit a slate of nominees (committee and board chairs and members) to the 2024 Annual Conference.

- ELECTION — The annual conference will elect the leadership team for the 2025-2028 Quadrennium at the annual conference in June 2024.
- SERVING — The newly elected conference leaders will begin July 1, 2024.

Questions or in need of help? Contact Mrs. Meredyth Earnest, Conference Secretary, at meredyth@sgaumc.com.



Encounter Youth Retreat set for Nov. 17-19

The South Georgia Conference’s annual weekend retreat for youth, Encounter, will be November 17-19, 2023, at Epworth By The Sea. Through high-quality preaching and worship, youth have the opportunity to encounter God in a new setting, deepen their faith, and learn what it means to put their faith into action at school, with their friends, and in their community.

The theme this year is “Stories.” Students will be invited into a better understanding of how God’s story becomes our story, and what that means in their daily lives.

Albert Williams, campus pastor at Georgia Southern’s Wesley Foundation, will be speaking throughout the weekend, and music will be led by Georgia College & State University’s Wesley Foundation worship band.

Encounter is a great opportunity for churches of all sizes to have a big experience together.

Churches will register as a group and payment is due within seven days. Registration is \$165 per person and includes programming, insurance, food, lodging, and a t-shirt. The deadline to register, edit, or cancel a registration is November 8.

Find out more and register your group today at www.sgaumc.org/encounter.



Celebrating South Georgia UMC Lay Planters

By Rev. Stephanie Smith

Why Jesus? Why New Disciples? Why New Places?

Eight South Georgia United Methodist lay persons took a leap of faith and began to answer those three questions during the inaugural Lay Planters Academy facilitated by the South Georgia Conference Congregational Development Team.

Laurie Cigal, Mary Fletcher, Michelle Reeves, Roger Presnell, Steven Rowe, Chris Cigal, Diane James, and Margaret Wheeler committed to a 10-week online training and mentoring course through Path 1, a division of Discipleship Ministries. The course offered a time of intentional discernment, visioning, strategy planning, and implementation. Anne Bosarge, Director of Leadership Strategies and Local Church Resources for the annual conference, and Revs. Stephanie Smith and Jeremy Alexander, conference cultivators, helped facilitate the curriculum.

Participation in the Lay Planters Academy is a way to train and equip South Georgia laity to return to their settings to do new things.

“Here in South Georgia, we are seizing the opportunity to start new things for new people in new places,” said Bosarge. “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.”

The lay planters finished their course assignments, read additional books, met with their mentors, and began the process of developing ministries they felt led to start. To round out the 10 weeks, these 8 individuals joined representatives from the Congregational Development Team on Saturday, October 21, 2023, at the Methodist Home for Children and Youth in Macon to celebrate all of their accomplishments. They also shared the vision God has placed upon their hearts.

Some of the visions that God has been pouring into these lay planters are:

- Committing to local church revitalization,
- Starting a home church for those who feel left out of the traditional church,
- Sports ministries for kids in urban areas with care and support from local church leaders,
- Outreach, worship, and discipleship for lower income neighborhoods,
- Developing a new and welcoming ESOL program to help facilitate life in an English-speaking community, and
- Creating a network of resources for victims of abuse, with counseling, classes, meals together, and intentional partnership with area churches for support.

“We continue to pray for the ministries to which these Lay Planters are called and join in celebrating the work of God in South Georgia,” said Rev. Smith.

For more information on how you can be part of what God is doing in South Georgia, contact Anne Bosarge (abosarge@sgaumc.com), Rev. Stephanie Smith (ssmith@sgaumc.com) or Rev. Jeremy Alexander (jalexander@sgaumc.com).

Rev. Stephanie Smith is the associate pastor at Pittman Park UMC in Statesboro and is working with district and conference communications.



2023 prayer emphasis: November prayer guide

The South Georgia Conference is centering itself around prayer in 2023. November’s prayer guide, written by UM Commission on Higher Education and Collegiate Ministry leaders – Jonathan Smith, Linda Buchanan, Albert Williams III, and Michael McCord – is now available at www.sgaumc.org/year-of-prayer.



November 12 Lesson: Freedom to Love

Fall Quarter 2023: God's Law Is Love
Unit 3: Christ Frees, Law Enslaves
Lesson 11

Sunday School Lesson for the week of November 12, 2023
By Craig Rikard

Devotional Reading: Matthew 22:34-40
Background Scripture: Romans 13:8-10; I Cor. 13:8-13
Key Text: Romans 13:9

Lesson Aims

1. To comprehend how the entire Mosaic Law is fulfilled and kept by keeping the Shema (Deut. 6:4).
2. To recognize the great debt of love we owe as a response to the gift of God's love in Christ.
3. To understand we are engaged in a journey of Christian love that leads us into even greater clarity and depths of love.
4. To embrace the three great foundations of living the Christian life: faith, hope, and love.
5. To understand the difference between the three foundations and why love is the greatest.

Supplement to Teacher's Guide

Historical/Theological Background

The Shema

On the gate posts and the doorways in the old city of Jerusalem are canisters. Within the canisters is a scroll. Upon those scrolls is inscribed the Shema: Hear O Israel, the Lord thy God is one. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, soul, mind, and strength." The canisters proclaim that the children of God enter a city and home of love and go forth with that love into the world. The Israelites incorrectly misunderstood the true meaning of the Shema. The religious leaders concluded that one loved God and others by obeying all of the Mosaic Law. In other words, if one loves God they will keep all the Laws and gain God's blessing and favor. Furthermore, if one loves their neighbor, they will obey the commands of the law regarding how we are to treat others. This understanding of the Shema was concerned with the outer life alone. Keeping the Shema was about what one did and how we behaved.

Jesus fulfilled the Shema and Law by giving the Shema its original and real purpose. The Shema was to be written on the heart of each individual. The Shema was to be our motivation for the kind, loving works and thoughts in which we engage. In Jeremiah 31, he foretold of a coming day when a "new covenant" would be written, not on stone or scrolls, but on the human heart. This new covenant was the internalization of the Shema. When we accept the love of God in Christ, we enter a covenant relationship with God. The Lord is our God, and we are his people. We live within this covenant by living in Godly love because God loved us first.

Consequently, when Jesus said, "I have not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it," he was referring to the fact that he would become the embodiment of God's holy love. We would witness that love in action and hear it in Jesus' words. There was no greater act of the Shema than when Jesus died on the cross. The cross represented God's greatest and purest act of love. The motivation for the cross represented the highest expression of God's love for humankind. The resurrection proclaimed this love is indestructible and eternal. Remember, the Bible not only clearly states that God loves, it says: "*God is love!*" God doesn't just act in love, God is love. Therefore, whenever we witness selfless, authentic love in life, we are witnessing the presence of God moving in the world.

Can you grasp the difference between the religious leader's "outer" understanding of the Shema in contrast with Jesus' teaching of the internalization of Shema in the human heart? How do you see the difference as it relates to your own life and Christian walk? When the Bible states "God is love," how do you think that compliments yet differs from stating "God acts in love"?

Rome and Corinth

As noted in previous lessons, the epistle to the Romans was Paul's great theological/doctrinal masterpiece. In the book of Romans, Paul proclaims the necessity and purpose of God's love in Christ. He addresses "how" Jesus was love and "why" we needed that love for redemption. Paul applied the Old Testament sacrificial system to the death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus was the "lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world." I Corinthians is less theological and more pastoral. That doesn't mean it is not theological or doctrinal. However, Paul is the pastor, writing his children regarding their destructive behavior. Paul reminds them of just how important they are to God, his holy church, and each other. They are blessed and gifted, yet their sinful behavior is an impediment to fulfilling their purpose in life. Paul beautifully explains to them that they need to embrace God's love anew and live in that love. If they walk in the love of God, as revealed in Jesus, they will abandon their unloving behaviors and treat each other with respect, kindness. They will become responsible for one another as a loving family.

Walking Through the Text

Living in Debt

All debt is incurred because someone has lent us something we must repay. We receive their generosity because we need it; we do not have what we need. We borrow money to purchase a house because we do not have the monies on hand to buy it. However, we must repay those monies and clear the debt before the house is truly ours. Paul uses a lot of metaphors. In this case, he uses the metaphor of the lender and the debtor in addressing God's gift of Jesus.

Yet, even the best metaphors fall short in adequately and fully articulating eternal truth. Within this metaphor there is a giver and a recipient. However, the debt owed doesn't diminish our assets, it increases them! God's great gift of Jesus Christ, love personified and freely given to all humanity, was a gift we needed. We could not manufacture or create it! There is no quality of life without love. Before we can deeply and selflessly love another we must first know that we are loved. One of the reasons we experience difficulty in living in love is because we feel we are not worthy of God's love in Christ. We easily fall into the destructive trap with which the Pharisees ensnared the Jewish masses. I want to be careful in speaking of the "snare of the Pharisees." Many were well-intended, but when rejecting the teaching of Jesus, they were actually teaching a form of bondage. That is, we need to "do something to merit God's love." The power and magnificence of the Gospel is that God loved us first. Even at our worst, God's love never changed. We were spiritually bankrupt and have no ability to "purchase God's love and the gift of Jesus." Who can be good enough to merit the gift of Jesus? Out of God's great love for us he revealed the divine affection and love for every one of us in Jesus. Our only response was and is to accept it by faith. Once we embrace the reality of God's gift, we are liberated to love others, not just to please God, but because we want others to know that same love is for them.

We need love and redemption. We could only receive them "outside ourselves," from someone who could truly love us as we are. In response to our need, "God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son." This is a gift and debt we could never repay. We can never out-love God! Receiving God's love added to our life and continues to do so. This is the abundant life of which we read in John's Gospel. We do not love God and others to repay; we love because we are transformed and grateful.

I lost my 46-year-old mother when I was in my early 20s. I lost my dad years later. Now that I am 69, I fully comprehend the depth of love I received from them. Prior to my dad's death there was nothing I wouldn't do

for him. I never remember thinking, “I need to help Dad because he helped and loved me.” I helped my dad because he loved me, and I loved him in return out of gratitude and love alone. Repaying him would have been futile. I could never repay him. Loving and caring for him was a joy and blessing.

Even though Paul uses the statement that we repay the debt of God’s love by loving others, his writings clearly indicate it was an unpayable debt. Paul was saying, “Since God has loved us in Christ, we are forever in God’s debt, and the only thing we can do is to love others with the love of Jesus.” When a debt can never be repaid, we are not “paying it off.” We are passing on that love as an act of thanksgiving. Paul used adages, phrases, and tongue in cheek statements just as we do. How often have we said, “I can never repay you!” We were not speaking of a literal debt. We were simply expressing just how great their gift was.

What do you think is meant when we say we can never repay God? Do you think we have anything within us that can come close to repaying God for the gift of Jesus? If we could repay God for the Lord’s love, would that not diminish the gift of Jesus Christ? To love others as a response to God’s love in Christ means that God’s love is so transforming, we cannot simply offer a thank you and go on with life; our heart longs to share that love. What do you think it means to walk in love? What do you think John Wesley meant when he desired that we become perfect in love? Since we grow in love, can you note a difference in your ability to love others as you’ve grown in Christ? Can you observe a difference between your ability to love today in contrast to years earlier?

Paul’s Understanding of the Shema as it Relates to the Death and Resurrection of Jesus

Paul understood clearly what Jesus meant when the Lord claimed the Shema fulfilled all the Law. If we love God with our entire being and love one another with that same love, we will not worship idols, take the Lord’s name in vain, kill, steal, covet, act in jealousy, mistreat widows and orphans, ignore those in need, etc. There is not one law that cannot be fulfilled by loving God and another with selfless love. Therefore, instead of attempting to keep 600+ laws, we keep the one: the Shema. Attempting to keep the enormous canon of law was futile and frustrating, especially when one believed that only in keeping those laws could they gain God’s favor. This was the heavy yoke of which Jesus spoke. In turn, Jesus spoke of the Shema when he said, “My yoke is easy and my burden light.” When Paul proclaimed the Spirit of the Lord liberated us, he meant from the need to obey all the Law in order to have a blessed life. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are empowered to live in the very love that forgave us and gave us our self-worth. One of John Wesley’s favorite texts was, “The love of God has been spread abroad in hearts through the Holy Spirit.” From past lessons, remember Paul believed the Law had value prior to the coming of Jesus. It revealed the high moral life we are called to live. It gave social order and pointed ancient Israel toward the one God who was and is holy.

Can you imagine how difficult life would be if you felt you must keep 612 Laws without copies of the Law in your home and only hearing them in the synagogue and temple worship? In honesty, can we not confess that we violate these laws every day of our life? In contrast to earning God’s favor through the Law, how liberating do you believe it is to be offered forgiveness for our failures, loved as we are, and filled with a desire to love others in kind? Why do you believe some find it easy to revert to works-righteousness (earning our salvation through our good works)? How does a belief in works-righteousness diminish or even negate the gift of salvation in Christ through his cross and resurrection? Does becoming a Christian negate the Old Testament Law? In what way does the Mosaic Law still help our spiritual growth in Christ?

The Journey in Love (Loving God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength)

As we examine the doctrinal letters of Paul, we are exposed to Paul’s thinking, his theological understanding of the benefits of the Gospel, and his call to live out that theology in the world. In the Corinthian letter we have a more practical application of how we live the Gospel together as the church and as individuals in the world. The Shema helps us understand the connection of Paul’s writings in Romans and Galatians and his

exhortation to the Corinthian church. Romans and Galatians help us to love God with our minds. How easily we overlook the importance of loving God with the mind. Intellectual inquiry and searching are not impediments in grasping God's truth. Even when we cannot grasp a theological truth, we are driven to our knees in humble prayer. In the lessons on Romans and Galatians we realize we are reading about Paul's loving God with his mind. For Paul, his faith was not just an emotional experience. There was a reason behind God's gift of Jesus, and there is a divine will moving through humanity.

Paul loves God with his strength. Paul's determination to share the Gospel regardless of the dangers and conflict reveals his loving God with his strength. Strength is about power. We have the power to think, to stand strong, to be determined in spreading the Gospel, and to love others even in difficult circumstances.

Paul loves God with his soul. The Gospel, and his theological understanding of the Gospel, are not simply magnificent expressions of truth for Paul's mind. Paul has deeply placed his faith in Christ, has deeply embraced the Gospel and its implications with his very soul. Paul's theology anchors his soul in God and the Gospel. The soul is one of the great facets of what it means to be made in the image of God. Our soul distinguishes us from all other creatures. A soul that is unanchored in God wanders through life, seeking a source of serenity, love and purpose. Church father, St. Augustine, wrote, "My heart shall never rest till it rests in thee." An unanchored soul and heart will be forever seeking and never satisfied. However, when anchored in Jesus it has found its home.

Finally, Paul well understood that theology must dwell at all times in his heart. The heart is the seat of our motivation, that part of our being that holds the key to understanding, "Why we do what we do, and believe what we believe." There is often an emotional component to the spiritual heart. On occasions we "feel" the presence of God and are inspired and moved. However, our faith does not depend upon emotions, for emotions are too transient and changeable. Still, they are a special part of our faith. As Christians, Paul expressed that we do not just love when we feel like loving. We love as a choice, out of gratitude for God's love for us in Jesus Christ.

Have you considered what it means to love God with your entire being? In what ways can you love God with your heart? Your soul? Your mind? Your strength? Can you express what it means to you to love your neighbor as yourself? First, who is your neighbor? What are some things you can do to always be mindful to love a person as your own self?

From Romans and Galatians to I Corinthians

In I Corinthians, we hear Paul poetically describing the manner in which the doctrine and theology of the Gospel speak to life within the church. Corinthians is by far the most poetic writing of Paul. Few passages resonate with such beautiful prose. What makes this chapter so dear is not only its poetic beauty, it is the fact that it speaks of unmistakable eternal truth. Notice, this passage opens with Paul claiming love is the "most excellent way." Then, he opens his poetic expression of God's love with the powerful words, "Love never fails." When Paul writes that love is the most excellent way, he is referring to the Shema, the Law above all other Laws. All doctrine and theology must be rooted in the Shema as embodied by Jesus. Our understanding of Jesus as Messiah is anchored in the Shema. Jesus was and is the incarnation of the purest, selfless, holy love. Jesus loved with his entire being: heart, soul, mind, and strength. Jesus is to be loved with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbors are to be loved as deeply as we love our own selves. Such love is possible only after giving one's heart to Christ and by faith, walking in that love at all times.

Jesus said the Shema is perfectly and totally fulfilled in him. Thus, "love never fails." The love of Jesus and the actions that emanate from that love will always be present in the believer's life. Just as the redemption of Jesus never fails, so love never fails in our life. Just as we can say love never fails, we can say with even greater confidence that Jesus never fails. Yes, we can make mistakes in love. In love we can say the wrong words at the wrong time. We can act without considering the way our actions affect everyone. However,

such mistakes are forgiven, and God uses our loving intent in our life for spiritual growth. Our love can make mistakes because we are not perfect in this life. We are on a journey of love in Jesus. However, Jesus was perfect love, and every word and action on his part never failed to restore, redeem, and renew.

In the verses that follow I Cor. 13:8, Paul reminds us that there will come a day when the manifestations of such love in the Corinthian Church will cease. A day is coming when the Kingdom of God arrives in all its fullness, and various expressions of love will no longer be needed. All of life has been moving toward that day when the reign of God is established and there will be a new heaven and new earth. Though various expressions of love such as “wiping the tears from our eyes,” mourning the death of lost loved ones, enduring and persevering through pain will one day cease, the very foundation of all loving actions remains. That foundation is love itself, as perfectly revealed in Jesus. This perfect love, of pure motivation, is the love of God. Living in the reign of God and God’s kingdom means God’s love will reign over all. It is eternal. God doesn’t just love, God is love! When God is over all, love is over all.

Paul then expresses the eternal nature of love. As long as people and the church are imperfect, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are greatly needed. When we lack the power in our humanity to truly minister to another, the Holy Spirit uses our gifts and graces to empower us. However, there is coming a day when the need of our gifts will diminish. As love grows injury lessens. As love grows the need for admonition lessens. Love suffices for every need, and it never fails. When the Kingdom of God comes in its glorious fullness, love reigns. The need for our spiritual gifts ceases.

I love Paul’s reference to being a child. A child makes mistakes because they have yet to grow in experiences. There are certain things they cannot understand. Still, they are innocent. As new Christians, we are much like children. Remember, Jesus told Nicodemus he “must be born again.” Jesus was implying that we begin our Christian walk as children. We will grow in experiences and understanding. Above all, we will grow in love. Paul seems to specifically be speaking to Christians who have not taken seriously their need to walk in Christ and his love. They have become static. Some claim there is no “static” position in our walk. If we are not moving forward, we are moving backward. I do know that if we neglect our Christian growth, we are missing great moments of growth that are available. We could learn and know so much more. For Paul such neglect is like clinging to childhood when we are adults. It makes no sense! Paul is inspired to remind us there is an “adulthood” in our faith. Truth becomes more clear and more knowable. Our love becomes more Christ-like and fulfilling. The Kingdom of God is that moment when perfect adulthood has arrived! The dim glass is cleared and we see clearly! Our fallen humanity no longer impedes our ability to see, know, experience, and understand. We see ourselves for who God made us to be, and we see the glory of God in Christ with clear eyes. Any attempt to describe this moment of adulthood fails. Again, we are left to describe eternity with human words. Thank God for Paul’s beautiful expression of what is coming!

Paul closes this great passage of love with, “And now abide these three, faith, hope and love; but, the greatest of these is love.” Paul in no way is diminishing the power, necessity, and beauty of faith and hope. He is instead stating that it is love that makes every facet of our faith powerful and redeeming. When we have faith in God and faith in people we love and trust, how great is that faith when grounded in godly love. Hope is the belief that God is present in every moment, at all times, anywhere, wasting not one single moment, instead moving all things toward God’s good. Our hope is rooted in God’s love for us and our love for God. We trust God more deeply because we know God loves us. We have hope and believe all things work for the good because we know God is love. Thus, Paul ends with: “But the greatest of these is love.”

In your walk of faith and love can you recognize the distinction between your “childlike” years and your ever-growing adult years? Can you share how our spiritual immaturity impedes are best intentions? What do you think Paul means when he said, “Now we see in a mirror but then we shall see face to face”? How does the reality that each of us in on our personal journey with Jesus relate to judging others? Are any two people at the same spiritual place in your experience? If someone has lost

a loved one and walked painfully through it with faith and love and we have not, are we not in a different place in our faith journey? Can you share how love enriches every good thing you think, see, speak, and do?

Prayer

Almighty God, what you have done for us in Christ transcends our ability to perfectly grasp it with our minds. Our imperfect hearts still long to embrace the fullness of what you have done in a manner that leads to love beyond ourselves. Our human weakness has often diminished our spiritual strength. On our journey of faith our soul at times wanders, though you always call us to return. Forgive us our sins and mistakes. Forgive us for neglecting our walk with Jesus. Indeed, our eyes have not seen, our minds have not yet considered, and our hearts have yet to envision what you desire for us. Empower us to be loving and forever keep us moving toward that day when your blessed Kingdom comes in all of its glory. In Jesus name, Amen.

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



Flip the way you lead volunteers

By Anne Bosarge

Let’s talk volunteers. Think about Sunday service teams like: ushers, greeters, parking lot people, coffee shop servers, Children’s ministry workers, etc.

Would you describe your volunteer teams as a passionate army of fully equipped and deeply committed soldiers? Are people lining up to sign up to come aboard the battleship? Or does your volunteer system seem more like a sinking ship people can’t get off of quick enough?

I’d like to explore six crucial flips in thinking that will help your volunteer ship set sail for smoother waters and gather a lot more passengers along the way. These subtle but significant flips will result in an army of servants to develop and deploy for effective ministry. And guess what else? They will love and appreciate the fact that you are helping them use their gifts in the area they’ve been called to serve.

1. **Thought:** Leading volunteers means managing schedules.
Flip: Leading volunteers means shepherding people.
If all you’re doing is filling people’s names into a schedule and sending them a reminder of when they’re supposed to serve, you’re managing, not leading.
New Behavior: A volunteer leader checks on people regularly – encouraging them, appreciating them, equipping them, praying for them, and caring about their spiritual development.

2. **Thought:** Volunteering is about doing.
Flip: Volunteering is about becoming.
If volunteers think all they are expected to do is a set of tasks, it’s easy for them to choose to not show up because they don’t see the eternal value in what they’re doing.
New Behavior: Develop a culture where volunteers see themselves as part of the vision and ministry of the church. Help them realize they can grow spiritually and learn to become the people God created them to be as they serve and invest in others. Encourage your volunteers’ spiritual growth with devotionals. Make sure they attend worship on a regular basis. Pray for each other. Check on them regularly.

3. **Thought:** Volunteering is something we want from people.
Flip: Volunteering is something we want for people.
When we are constantly communicating our wants and needs to people, we show that we care more about our needs than how they were created to serve.
New Behavior: Communicate the opportunity for the person not your need.
“I see the way you are with babies! You have a gift! Serving in the nursery might be a great way for you to use that gift to serve the babies and parents in this church. It’s an incredible opportunity, and I think you’d love it!”
4. **Thought:** If I advertise for a position, people should respond.
Flip: If I ask in-person and build a relationship, I’ll know where to help them get plugged in.
Newsletters, bulletins, videos, and posters are not effective ways to invite people to serve. These generic ads fail to recognize an individual’s gifting.
New Behavior: Constantly develop relationships with people in your church. Spend time initiating conversation so you get to know them personally and where they are called to serve. If you ask someone to serve in an area without taking the time to get to know them, you’re not going to be able to figure out where they are uniquely gifted to serve. Developing relationships takes longer, but volunteers who are serving in their sweet spot are much more productive, effective, and stick around longer than those who aren’t, and, in the end, that saves you time and effort.
5. **Thought:** A warm body is better than no body.
Flip: No body is better than just a warm body.
We need to stop filling the schedule with warm bodies who are not called to serve. Filling volunteer roles with people who are not happy, called, or effective in their ministry role does more harm than good.
Consider the couple who has been recruited to serve on the Greeters team. They aren’t comfortable talking to others, but they didn’t want to say no, so they said yes. They stand at the door handing out bulletins and because they feel awkward talking to strangers, they don’t. Because they aren’t serving where they are called, they’re in a bad mood – they don’t enjoy what they’re doing or see the purpose behind it. As guests walk into the church, they pick up on the attitude of your uncomfortable greeters, and their first impression is not a positive one. In addition, the attitude of these unhappy volunteers rubs off on the others serving on the team.
New Behavior: Wait till you have the right person for role. If you don’t have the volunteers to do the ministries you are trying to do, stop the ministries until you have the right people in the right place. Having no greeters at the door is better than having the wrong greeters at the door. If you can’t find just the right person, leave that space blank on the schedule and continue looking and praying for the person God has in mind to fill that role.
6. **Thought:** It’s just easier to do it myself.
Flip: It’s worth the extra time to train a volunteer.
Too often leaders take too much ownership of their ministries – so much that they squeeze out any possibility for volunteers to plug in.
When you do that, you’re taking away an opportunity for someone else to use their gifts in His service. It may seem “easier” to you to just do it yourself, but in reality, it’s selfish and controlling. It’s always worth the time to develop a volunteer to do a job.
New Behavior: Think about the things you can turn over to someone else and allow them to use their gifts to accomplish the task. Reverse the trend of companies who “down-size” and instead make every opportunity to “up-size” and provide additional opportunities for people to serve in your ministry.

By getting rid of old, ineffective thought patterns, you'll be able to provide opportunities for volunteers to become the people God is calling them to be.

Looking for more resources on how to best lead volunteers? Check out our training videos here:

- VIDEO: High Five: 5 Important Things Your Volunteers Need to Know
- VIDEO: Becoming a Volunteer Magnet

Looking for a way to integrate these concepts into your volunteer culture? Stay tuned to how you can access resources you can use to take your team through a 3-week volunteer leadership course and create an action plan for improving the volunteer culture within your church!

Anne Bosarge serves as the Director of Leadership Strategies and Local Church Resources for the South Georgia Conference. Email her at abosarge@sgaumc.com.



Simplified Isn't Simple

What's Old Is New Again
By Anne Packard

“On March 2, 1972 at a special session of the SGA Conference held at the historic Wesleyan College, this committee presented a resolution for merger and a simplified plan of agreement. After much discussion a simplified resolution was approved 372 to 273.” (History of the South Georgia Conference, p. 88)

The agreement may have been simplified and the resolution may have been simplified, but I can assure you that the journey to this vote was anything but simple. Some historians may point to the 1964 General Conference of the Methodist Church, which adopted a plan of action for the elimination of Central Jurisdiction, as the beginning of this journey. But I believe one must go back twenty more years to World War II.

During World War I, the armed services followed the precedent set forth in the Supreme Court ruling of 1896 Plessey versus Ferguson stating that equal but separate accommodations based on race were constitutional. Despite a much larger percentage of black soldiers involved in the Civil War, African-Americans made up only 1-2% of the military during World War I. The few black soldiers who participated were forced to stay stateside and barred from combat positions.

However, during World War II the double V campaign was adopted signifying both victory abroad and victory at home for racial equality. During this second world war, one million black men and women served in the military and six million African-Americans worked in the defense industry. Combat units such as the 332nd Fighter Group, also known as the Tuskegee Airmen, flew 15,000 sorties, destroyed 261 enemy aircraft, and earned 850 medals. The 761st Tank Battalion, known as the “Black Panthers,” served 183 days of continuous combat fighting under General George Patton in both the Battle of the Bulge and the Battle of the Rhine. These feats of bravery and strength didn't change segregation in the United States immediately but moved the country in the right direction for racial equality.

The next step on this journey came in 1954 when the United States Supreme Court ruled unanimously to overturn the principal of separate but equal that had been legal since 1896. In *Brown vs Board of Education*, the court ruled that state sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the 14th amendment and

unconstitutional. This ruling led to other organizations, including the Methodist Church, questioning their stance on separate but equal.

During the 1964 Methodist Church General Conference, the State of the Church report read, “We recommend that discrimination or segregation by any method or practice, whether by conference structure or otherwise in the Methodist Church, be abolished with reasonable speed.” It was adopted but only after many days of discussions and with the agreement that the report was only recommended and not required.

Two years later, while in special session, the Methodist Church General Conference reiterated its determination to bring about not only the elimination of Central Jurisdiction but also the merger of the separate Negro Annual Conference based with their geographic counterparts. The deadline of 1972 was accepted, and it was this that led to action in the annual conferences, even in the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

In the South Georgia Conference, these decisions were not made quickly or easily. A committee was formed with members representing the North Georgia Conference, the South Georgia Conference and the Georgia Conference. Detailed resolutions were presented at both the 1969 and 1970 South Georgia annual conference meetings but were voted down each time. After the North Georgia Conference voted to adopt a resolution in 1971, even more pressure was put on the South Georgia Conference to find a plan to integrate. At this time, another committee was formed, and “on March 2, 1972, at a special session of the South Georgia Conference, meeting at the historic Wesleyan College, this committee presented a resolution for merger and a simplified plan of agreement. After much discussion a simplified resolution was approved 372 to 273.”

Simplifying resolutions did not simplify the journey. It took the words, actions, and prayers of thousands of people to integrate the South. Rev. Joseph Lowery, a Methodist minister, beloved Georgian and Civil Rights icon, was one of those who prayed integration into existence. Of the many prayers he offered to God, here is the one he delivered at President Barack Obama’s inauguration in 2009.

*God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou, who has brought us thus far along the way,
Thou, who has by thy might led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path we pray,
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee,
Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee.
Shadowed beneath thy hand,
May we forever stand true to thee, oh God,
And true to our native land.
We truly give thanks for the glorious experience we’ve shared this day.*

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



Conference Updates & Happenings

HealthFlex Annual Enrollment - November 1-16: Annual Enrollment for HealthFlex Participants is open November 1-16, 2023.

Creating Hope: Nurturing Christian Community Through Dementia Care - Nov. 14-16: Have you or your church been inspired by respite ministries and caring for those with dementia? Make plans now to join

this first-time gathering at Lake Junaluska, November 14-16, for "Creating Hope: Nurturing Christian Community Through Dementia Care." This collaborative gathering of practitioners and caring ministry leaders will focus on designing and supporting a growing and vibrant network of caring ministry leaders who connect the dots between discipleship and dementia ministry through caring community. [Learn more](#)

Encounter Youth Retreat - Nov. 17-19: The South Georgia Conference's annual weekend retreat for youth, Encounter, will be November 17-19, 2023, at Epworth By The Sea. Through high-quality preaching and worship, youth have the opportunity to encounter God in a new setting, deepen their faith, and learn what it means to put their faith into action at school, with their friends, and in their community. The theme this year is "Stories." Students will be invited into a better understanding of how God's story becomes our story, and what that means in their daily lives. Albert Williams, campus pastor at Georgia Southern's Wesley Foundation, will be speaking throughout the weekend, and music will be led by Georgia College & State University's Wesley Foundation worship band. Encounter is a great opportunity for churches of all sizes to have a big experience together. Find out more and register your group today at www.sgaumc.org/encounter.

3Practice Circle Conversations - Nov. 30 & Jan. 25: There are 3 practices that - when named - help us cross the "difference divide" and create space for real conversation. These 3 practices help and inform our interactions with others, ourselves, and God. Revs. Teresa Edwards, Meg Procopio, and Jared Wilson are going to set the stage for us on how to use 3Practice Circles. Learn more: www.sgaumc.org/3practice-circles.

Lay Servant Ministry: [Lay Servant Ministries & Certified Lay Ministry dates & registration](#)

Leading Through Trauma - March 21, 2024: This one-day retreat for South Georgia clergy will be held at Camp Tygart Pipkin Center in Ray City on March 21, 2024, from 9 am - 3 pm. Led by Cameron Bishop, we will talk about the trauma pastors experience in ministry and learn strategies for processing it so we can continue to lead well and thrive personally. The cost for this event is \$25 (lunch is included). [Click here to learn more and register.](#)

[View Full Conference Calendar](#)



Resource Roundup – November 2023

2024 Revised Common Lectionary Sundays & Special Days Calendar

Discipleship Ministries' most popular resource is now available! Visit UMCDiscipleship.org to download the [2024 Revised Common Lectionary Sundays & Special Days](#) calendar. The Revised Common Lectionary is a three-year cycle of scripture texts following the liturgical year and is designed to be used in worship week by week. For churches and worship teams who follow the lectionary, this resource gathers all those readings for the calendar year 2024 into one handy two-page document for weekly and longer-term worship planning. Even those worshipping communities that only occasionally use the lectionary, the calendar can help with ordering of days and seasons as well as provide suggestions for preaching series and high holy day celebrations.

Moving from passive to active discipleship

Personal discipleship is more than attending Sunday school and reading the Bible. On a new "Get Your Spirit in Shape" podcast, the Rev. Stacey Harwell-Dye shares her thoughts on how following Jesus can move United Methodists into action in their churches and communities. [Listen to podcast](#)

4 tips for church social-media effectiveness

For most churches (even low-tech churches), the key to increasing your effectiveness with social media is the people sitting in your pews. This article offers four ways churches can leverage people to increase impact.

[Read story](#)

Extra! Extra! How to get the best media coverage possible

It's time to write your success story with ink that won't fade. No more hiding in the shadows! It's your time to step into the limelight and get your story told in all the right places. [Read more](#)

New tools for your digital toolbelt

This article looks at some of the best digital tools, including email management apps, social media platforms and other tools that can help you stay organized and connected. It also provides tips on how to use these tools effectively. So, whether you're a seasoned church leader or you're just getting started, this is for you! [Read more](#)

10 policies church leaders should consider

Do you know what your church expects of you? Or what you should expect from the church in return? One way to make everything clear is through written policies. Ken Sloane, director of stewardship and generosity at United Methodist Discipleship Ministries, outlines 10 policies churches should consider. The list includes items on building use, gifts and communication.

[Learn more](#)

Grants available to rural churches

Five \$500 grants are available for rural churches that wish to start or continue an outreach program to attract young people. The deadline to submit applications for the grants from United Methodist Rural Advocates is Jan. 10. Winners will be notified by Feb. 1. [Read press release](#)

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Retired Clergy Birthdays – November 2023

- 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
- 11/07 – Eve Tomberlin: 137 Aston Hall; Macon, GA 31078
- 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 – John Mitchell: 123 Lundy Court; Macon, GA 31210
- 11/13 – Kevin Baker: 501 Carson Ct; Bonaire, GA 31005
- 11/14 – Donald Youmans: 287 Pacolet Ridge Lane; Tryon, NC 28782
- 11/14 – Gordon Roberts: 1259 Hwy 36 East; Barnesville, GA 30204
- 11/21 – Robert Hall: 4221 Stone Mill Ct.; Martinez, GA 30907
- 11/21 – Kitty Newton: 187 Newbridge Rd.; Sylvania, GA 30467
- 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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Obituary: Sheila Bennett

Paschal Memorial Funeral Home of 181 North Church St. Jeffersonville, Ga announces the death of Mrs. Sheila J. Bennett, age 70 of Jeffersonville, who was called into eternal rest Tuesday September 26, 2023. Funeral services will be private.

Mrs. Sheila Gail Jordan Bennett, of Jeffersonville, passed away on Tuesday September 26th, after a battle with Dementia. She was surrounded by her loved ones at the time she passed.

She was born on April 18th, 1953 to Emily and William Jordan in Macon, Georgia and lived in Central Georgia her entire life. Cosmetology was her passion since she was a teenager, and she continued this passion until she retired, after the untimely passing of her beloved husband, Reverend Clarence Lee Bennett.

She and Lee met and married later in life but their love could be seen from miles away. They were just like teenagers in love. They traveled and visited churches Lee had been the pastor/minister of over his time serving the lord through the Methodist church.

Sheila was an amazing mother and 'Em', loving and devoted wife, beloved friend, servant of the Lord. To have known her was to experience the purest of love and happiness. The last few years of her life were not easy as she lost the love of her life and then her long battle with Dementia, but she remained the beautiful, sweet, and loving soul she had always been. She brought sunshine on the cloudiest day and love in the darkest of times even at the end (that's my blue hand).

She may have left us here in this world but she will never be forgotten. She left so many people with so much love and wonderful memories of kindness, compassion, Christmas parties, the most amazing cookies, Halloween parties, daily prayers in the local newspaper (AKA: The prayer Lady), and Sunday dinners. Her door and table were always open for all of those who knew her as Mom.

In her last year on this earth she was blessed to have her Caregiver, Tara. She treated her just as though Sheila was her own parent and brought so much happiness and joy to Mrs. Bennett. Tara was so very loving and kind even after Mrs. Bennett passed as she remained with the children as the final preparations had to be made. Sheila loved her so very much and it was apparent.

She was preceded in death by her wonderful parents, William Joseph Jordan and Emily Shirley Jordan; her sisters: Martha Jo Jordan Smith and Betty Mae Wood; and her loving and devoted husband Reverend Clarence Lee Bennett.

She is survived by her children April (Travis) Thompson, Rex Cooper, and her grandson Joseph Hayes Cooper; sisters Lavonia Kay French (Doug) and Mary Ellen Moore; and so many nieces, nephews, and extended family.

There will be a private burial.

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Obituary: Rev. William (Bill) G. Brown

Rev. William (Bill) G. Brown passed away in Statesboro, Georgia, at the age of 90 on October 27, 2023. Mr. Bill Brown was born in Wilkes County, Georgia, son of the late George Fanning Brown and the late Ruth Taylor Brown.

He attended Georgia Southern College and graduated with his bachelor's degree in education before attending Emory University where he completed his Master of Divinity degree. He devoted his life to the mission of bringing people to know Christ as a United Methodist Minister in the South Georgia Conference for over 40 years.

Bill was married to his sweetheart, Ruth Bray Brown, for more than 67 years before her passing in 2019. When Bill would remind her of how long they were married, Ruth would say "but not long enough," and Bill agreed.

Bill was an active member of Pittman Park United Methodist Church (UMC) where he had been the Senior pastor from 1991 to 1995 until he retired in Statesboro, Georgia.

Bill is survived by his daughter, Agnes Brown of Sylvania, Georgia; son, Steve Brown (Sara) of Double Oak, Texas; grandchildren, Andrew Brown (Leslie) of Roanoke, Texas; Abbie Schlatter (Chris), great-grandsons Owen & Dean Schlatter and great-granddaughter Nora Schlatter of Flower Mound, Texas. Bill and Ruth enjoyed living in their home in Statesboro for over 24 years. After Ruth's passing, Bill continued in their home.

The family will receive visitors on Saturday, November 4, 2023, from 10:00 AM until the funeral hour in the parlor of Pittman Park UMC.

The funeral service will follow the visitation at 11:00 AM at Pittman Park UMC with Rev. Dr. Jonathan Smith and Rev. Bill Bagwell officiating.

The graveside service and burial will be Saturday, November 4, 2023, at 2:30 PM at Westview Cemetery in Wrightsville, Georgia.

The family requests, in lieu of flowers, that any memorial contributions be made to "The Open Table" at Pittman Park UMC, 1102 Fair Road, Statesboro, Georgia 30458 or The United Methodist Home for Children & Youth, 304 Pierce Ave. Macon, Georgia 31204.



Obituary: Martha Rebecca "Becky" Davis

Becky Davis entered into eternal rest in the presence of her LORD during the early morning of October 28, 2023, at her residence, Madison Heights at the Prado in Macon, Georgia. She died peacefully in her sleep. Becky was the oldest child of Addis J. Hill and Lela Mae Corbett Hill. She was born and reared in Chattahoochee, Florida.

Becky's warm smile, contagious, gracious personality and her spiritual, leadership qualities were well known. She was a leader in her youth group at Chattahoochee Presbyterian Church, first chair clarinet in her High School Band and the 1958 Homecoming Queen (Chattahoochee High School). She attended Montreat College in Black Mountain, N.C. and Chipola Junior College in Marianna, Florida. Becky graduated from Florida State University in 1962 with a BS in Education. Becky received her master's degree in Early Childhood Education in 1986 (GA Southwestern University). Becky was the U.S. Army ROTC Queen in 1962 and the French Club Spring Princess (Montreat, 1959).

Becky and Hugh met at FSU and they were married on November 24, 1962. They spent seven years in the U.S. Army as Hugh was a Nike Hercules Missile Officer during the Cold War. Tours included Warner Robins, GA; Ft. Rucker, AL; Athens, Greece; and El Paso (Ft. Bliss), TX. After a call to ordained ministry, Hugh and Becky went to Emory University in Atlanta (Candler School of Theology; 1969-1972).

Becky was an outstanding Christian leader who served with her husband for the eight appointments they shared in the South Georgia Annual Conference, United Methodist Church (41 years.) She was active in the United Methodist Women, handbells, choir, and taught Children's Sunday School.

Becky's wonderful reputation as an excellent kindergarten teacher was well known. She offered her educational expertise for thirty-eight years, retiring from Bibb County School System in 2002.

Becky loved to garden, especially flowers, cook, sew, knit, solve picture puzzles and host at special family events. She left her family with a tremendous legacy for magnificent parenting, loyalty to God and His church, and spiritual daily growth. Her strong Christian demeanor, staunch love of Jesus, and warm, inviting personality will abound in the memories of our hearts for years to come.

She is survived by her beloved family members: Her husband of 60 years, Dr. Hugh L. Davis; daughter, Deborah (Shawn) Storie; daughter, Karen (Terry) Stewart; son, Dr. Hugh H. (Amy) Davis; daughter, LeClaire (Jim) Lawless; sister, Jean (James) Lawrence; sister, Carol (Richard) Moorefield; brother, Jerry (Marcia) Hill. Her grandchildren: Ryan, Adam, and Michael Akin; Joshua and Janelle Stewart; Hugh MacGregor and Mary Claire Davis; Rebecca and John Lawless; Brett, Bryan, Carson, and Carly Storie. Becky is also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Becky blessed us daily with her loving personality, beautiful and sincere hospitality, and her devoted life's witness for Jesus. We praise God for these fond memories of Becky, through whom God blessed us deeply.

Visitation with friends and family will be held on Thursday, November 2, 2023, from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. at Trinity United Methodist Church. A funeral service honoring Becky's life will immediately follow at 11:00 a.m. Martha Rebecca "Becky" Davis will then be laid to rest on Friday, November 3, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. in Dykes Cemetery, located in Sneads, Florida.



Obituary: Rev. Earl E. Seckinger

The Reverend Earl E. Seckinger, 92, passed away October 30, 2023 at his residence.

The Effingham County native attended Ebenezer Elementary School, graduated from Savannah High in 1949, Brevard College in 1951, from High Point University in 1953, and from Candler School of Theology at Emory in 1958 with his Masters in Theology. He received the call in the ministry at age 16 while attending campmeeting at the Effingham County Methodist Campground. He was a member of the North Georgia and South Georgia United Methodist Conference having been a Minister for 75 years and serving numerous churches throughout North Carolina and Georgia including, churches in North Carolina during college, Marietta, Lexington, Tucson, Commerce, Hapeville, Guyton Christian Church, Woodlawn UMC, Thomasville, Columbus, Oglethorpe, Wrightsville, Soperton, Turkey Branch UMC, and an associate at Springfield UMC for 15 years before retiring. He also briefly taught English and History at ECHS where he met the love of his life, Carolyn, whom he was married for over 48 years.

Living throughout the Southeast in the 20th and 21st centuries provided many challenges, opportunities, and, of course, stories for Earl. He loved to recount the mischief he and his older brother, George encountered growing up in Savannah during the 1930s and '40s: boxing matches were won, children's bets over fountain pens were made, and many, many books were read. It was Earl's love of books, in part, that attracted him to study theology.

Working in the Methodist ministry meant that Earl and his family moved every four years to a new church. He was a natural leader whose congregations quickly grew to love him (and vice versa) as he worked tirelessly for his communities.

When not working, Earl had a keen sense of adventure; he had both his boat and pilot's licenses and enjoyed taking his family out on boat trips and in his small plane. After his retirement, he ventured even farther—taking vast road trips across the United States and with Carolyn and to visit his daughter Vicki and his grandchildren in California. He also traveled on mission trips to Mexico.

In later years, Earl and Carolyn settled in Springfield, Georgia, not far from Earl's childhood home. They spent time with their families, spoiled their dog, Cocoa, and savored life in the cozy town with so many loved ones nearby.

Earl will be remembered for his generous heart, his wry sense of humor, and above all his tremendous compassion for everyone he encountered. He may no longer be with us, but his loving influence on so many lives continues on.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Charles Moore Seckinger and Mae Viola Rahn Seckinger; his wife, Carolyn Neidlinger Exley Seckinger; his brother, George A. Seckinger; and an infant sister.

Survivors include his, daughters, Vicki Seckinger Ellingson (Mike) and Sherry Thomas (Ron); sons, James William "Bill" Exley, III (Sue) and Donald Carlyle Exley, Sr. (Suellen); grandchildren, Olivia Hosken (Chris), Cheril Ellingson, Tim Ellingson (Kate), Stephanie Davis (Zak), Patrick Thomas (Kate), Jim Exley (Becky), Rhett Exley (Nichole), Chip Exley (Hunter), Emmaline Buckley (Matt), Miles Exley (Amanda); great-grandchildren, Natalie, Ally, Emery, Briggs, Lawton, Hudson, Wyatt, Jameson, Declan, Mason, Evelyn, Sophie, Eleanor, Willa June, Jack, and James; a number of nieces and nephews; and his special loving caregiver, Eva Goldwire.

Visitation will be 10:00 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. Thursday, November 2, 2023 at Springfield Oaks Church followed by funeral services at 11:00 a.m. Interment will follow in Springfield Cemetery.



Scripture Readings – November 7 edition

November 12

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost, Year A

- [Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25](#)
- [Psalm 78:1-7](#)
- [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](#)
- [Matthew 25:1-13](#)

November 19

Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Year A

- [Judges 4:1-7](#)
- [Psalm 123](#)
- [1 Thessalonians 5:1-11](#)
- [Matthew 25:14-30](#)