

## **SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – FEBRUARY 15 EDITION**

### **South Georgia apportionment giving remains steady**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

The 2021 financial books have closed, and the story is much the same as last year.

United Methodist churches in the South Georgia Conference paid 85.16 percent for total 2021 giving, compared to 2020's 84.21 percent, according to the unaudited figures.

The amount collected was, however, a \$319,006 decrease from the amount collected in 2020 because last year's budget was \$735,096 lower than 2020's budget.

That translates to \$7.5 million of the Conference's \$8.8 million total budget for the year for church ministries, missions, and programming across the conference's six districts. The Conference spent nearly 78.5 percent, or \$6,912,970.

The apportionments collection rate in 2019 was 87 percent and in 2018 was 89.5 percent.

Of the 567 local churches in the Conference, 350 paid 100 percent of their apportionments and an additional 74 churches paid more than 100 percent of their apportionments.

The Southwest District saw the highest percentage of apportionments paid, with a collection percentage of 96.39 percent. The Northeast District came in second at 91.90 percent.

"I am incredibly grateful for the faithfulness of the Southwest District," said Rev. Doreen Smalls, dean of the Cabinet and superintendent of the Southwest District. "Even in the midst of uncertainty, they remain committed to our connection and missions of the church."

Dr. Derek McAleer, Director of Administrative Services and Conference Treasurer, is grateful for South Georgia's continued faithful response.

"The strength of our connection continues to be high," he said. "In the midst of the stress in the denomination, the fact that churches are continuing to support our shared ministry is pretty encouraging."

Apportionment monies support conference, district, and global efforts to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Clergy salaries and retirement benefits, congregational development efforts, campus ministries, missionaries, and the Africa University fund all receive apportionment funds.

Dr. McAleer recognizes that, while worship attendance has suffered because of the ongoing pandemic, most South Georgia United Methodists continue to give faithfully.

“People are still very connected to their congregations,” he said. “It does appear that people who are not physically attending still feel a connection and are still supporting (their local church), for which we give thanks.”

In addition to apportionment giving, South Georgia United Methodists gave \$225,000 in disaster relief, including conference disaster relief, disaster response outside the South Georgia Conference, and giving to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). This amount is in addition to missional giving on the local church and community level.

The 2022 budget of \$8,437,218 is \$735,096 lower than the 2021 budget - an 8 percent decrease - which follows a 6 percent decrease the previous year. Since 2010, the Conference budget has dropped 32 percent.

“The Council on Finance and Administration is mindful of where local churches are,” Dr. McAleer said. “We are having the same conversations that are being had in the local church. Local churches are where ministry happens. We hope we help enable some ministry jointly that couldn’t be done singly, but local churches are where disciples are made and where hearts are warmed to Christ, and our goal is to be supportive of those missions.”

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## **Brunswick First UMC continues ministry despite fire**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

After a Feb. 1 fire destroyed Brunswick First United Methodist Church’s electrical system, the congregation will worship in a warehouse for the next several months, said senior pastor Dr. Wright Culpepper.

The fire, which started outside, did little actual physical damage other than breaking windows and melting blinds, but critically damaged the church’s power supply.

The fire filled the entire church with smoke. Carpets, ceiling tiles, pews – anything with a soft surface – has to be replaced.

Due to ongoing supply-chain issues it will take months for parts to come in, said Dr. Culpepper, so church leaders had to come up with an alternative location for worship services, Sunday school classes, and other small group meetings.

“In normal circumstances it would be a fairly easy fix,” he said of the repairs. “It’s not the scale of the disaster, it’s an availability issue.”

While they wait, the congregation will relocate to an adjacent building on the church's property. But in order to use the building, called the Annex, numerous repairs and safety issues there must first be addressed.

The church's insurance policy is great, Dr. Culpepper said, and will cover all of the fire-related repairs minus the \$1,000 deductible. It won't, however, cover all that's needed to get the Annex up and running.

The Annex's repairs, while necessary for safety and use, are costly. The air conditioning unit alone will cost about \$15,000.

The South Georgia Conference's Disaster Response Team, in partnership with the Conference Outreach Team, has responded with a \$10,000 disaster response emergency grant to help with repairs to the Annex so the congregation can worship in the space.

"I'm thankful for the churches and individuals in South Georgia who have graciously given to disaster response over the years so that we can respond immediately to a church in need," said Kelly Roberson, Connectional Ministries Team Leader and Director of Communications.

Church leaders looked for other venues in which to worship and meet, Dr. Culpepper said, but there's little availability that fits the congregation's needs.

In addition to weekly worship services, the church regularly hosts several community groups, from Cub Scouts to the local Penguin Project children's special needs musical theater production to Red Cross blood drives.

"We want to try to figure out how to continue to meet the needs of those populations," he said. "We will do all we can do to make a place for them and their activities."

Dr. Culpepper hopes to have the Annex cleaned and the safety issues addressed in time for Sunday, Feb. 20's worship services. In the couple of weeks since the fire they've gathered at Brunswick High School.

He's grateful for the way in which the congregation and the Brunswick First UMC staff have responded to the disaster.

"I'm really appreciative of the attitude they've got, and I really feel like once this is all said and done we'll be better and stronger."

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## **United Methodists extend BSA charters through June 2022**

(UMCom) United Methodist leaders have reached an agreement with the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) to extend existing UMC-sponsored Scouting charters through June 30, 2022 to provide

for uninterrupted ministry with young people through Scouting. The charters were previously extended to March 31, 2022 as legal proceedings continue in the BSA's bankruptcy case, particularly as the trial for confirmation has now been postponed until March 9, 2022. Churches do not need to take any action to extend their current organizational relationship with the BSA until June 30, 2022.

Organizational leaders are working together to develop a long-term solution regarding the church's relationship with Scouting as they plan for new relationship agreements that will help to improve the program and safety of Scouting for future generations of young people. The United Methodist Church and the Boy Scouts of America have worked together to develop the character and values of youth through Scouting for more than a hundred years.

While no action is required at this time regarding charter renewal, churches are to move forward with the annual membership renewal process for all youth and adults who participate in Scouting programs. Charter renewal and membership renewal are distinct processes. Charter renewal focuses on the organization-to-organization relationship, while membership renewal involves the relationship between individual Scouts and volunteers and the BSA.

Annual membership renewal is a vital step in allowing Scouting to continue, as maintaining active membership registrations for all Scouts and volunteers is critical to ensuring that Scouts and volunteers are covered by BSA's insurance, that volunteers meet training and safety standards, and that both youth and volunteers continue to receive communications.

All Scout units and local councils should complete membership renewals by February 20 if possible, and no later than February 28. Local council representatives are available to support the process so that Scouting activities can continue without interruption.

For questions or further information, please contact your local council representative. You may also contact Steven Scheid, Director of the Center for Scouting Ministries at [sscheid@gcummm.org](mailto:sscheid@gcummm.org).

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### **Jurisdiction mourns the death of Rev. Dr. Brad Brady**

The Southeastern Jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church mourns the death of SEJ Conference Secretary and retired South Georgia Conference clergyperson Rev. Dr. Brad Brady.

Dr. Brady was a pillar of SEJ Methodism and a trusted and gifted leader known and respected throughout our Jurisdiction.

“I knew Dr. Brady as a wise and dedicated servant leader,” said Bishop David Graves, episcopal leader of the South Georgia and Alabama-West Florida Annual Conferences. “He loved the Lord, loved people, and loved The United Methodist Church.”

Brady was named SEJ Conference Secretary in August 2021 effective September 1, 2021, for the second time in his career. In 2008, he was elected to serve as the 2009-2012 Jurisdictional Conference Secretary, with primary responsibilities being the planning and implementation of the 2012 Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference Session. He offered assistance during the 2016 session and the 2021 virtual SEJ Conference session.

“Brad Brady was my mentor as a Director of Connectional Ministries and, beginning in 2012, as SEJ Conference Secretary. His leadership skills were widely known throughout SEJ, and I could not have had a better mentor and instructor,” said Anne Travis, former SEJ Conference Secretary. “His organizational skills as jurisdictional secretary set an example for all conference secretaries, as well. I will miss him tremendously, both personally and in the life of our beloved UMC.”

In addition to serving in the Jurisdiction, he was a delegate to multiple General and Jurisdictional Conferences, and held leadership roles on a number of denominational-level boards and committees.

Dr. Brady died on February 7, 2022. Find the obituary, including funeral arrangements, at [dealfuneraldirectors.com/obituary/Remer-BradyIII](http://dealfuneraldirectors.com/obituary/Remer-BradyIII). The whole of our Jurisdiction mourns this loss.

College of Bishops  
Southeastern Jurisdiction  
The United Methodist Church

[Read Connectional Table tribute](#)

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## **Historically Black churches, their clergy, and members**

**By Anne Packard, *Conference Historian***

While the Moore Methodist Museum was closed to the public in 2020 and 2021, exciting exhibits were created to better tell the story of the Methodist movement in the South Georgia Conference. One of these wonderful collections includes an entire room in the Strickland Wing dedicated to historically Black churches, their clergy, and members. This new display shows the strong ties that bind in families and communities and both the struggles and successes of these dynamic congregations.

We may all know the story of Harry Hoosier riding with Francis Asbury and enthraling people with his sermons, but do we know the story of Richard Allen founding the African Methodist Episcopal Church or Richard Varick and the creation of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion

Church? Susan Angeline Collins, the first African-American student to attend the Upper Iowa University Normal Training school, ministered to the Congolese for 31 years starting in 1887 as a missionary teacher for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Francis Burns, who served the Liberian conference as presiding elder, editor of the conference journal, conference secretary, and seminary professor, was elected bishop of the Liberian conference in 1856 where his first act was to administer communion to the same men who had made their fortunes in the slave trade.

This rich history continues in the South Georgia Conference with the founding of Paine College in Augusta in 1882 and the Haven Home School in Savannah in 1885. The truly historical family history of the Simmons/Lewis family is detailed beginning with Rev. Vanderbilt Benjamin Simmons being received on trial in the Savannah Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South in 1931, ordained deacon in 1934, and ordained elder into the newly formed Methodist Church in 1939. His daughter, Rev. Essie Simmons, was admitted to the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church as a lay preacher in 1972 and served the Leet's Chapel-Oak Grove circuit. Nannie B. Williams was added to the circuit in 1974 and the circuit was renamed the Simmons Circuit in 1977 in her honor. Rev. Simmons completed a Course of Study degree from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in 1993 and was admitted into the South Georgia Conference as the first female, African-American elder. Rev. Essie Simmons' niece, Sharma Lewis, who often traveled with her aunt while ministering to the members of the Simmons Circuit, went on to become an ordained elder in the North Georgia Conference in 1999. She served cross-racial assignments before being elected to the episcopacy in 2016 becoming the first female, African-American elected bishop in the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

No story of historically Black churches, their clergy and members could be complete without highlighting the ministry of our own Bishop James R. King, Jr. Born in Alabama and educated at the Interdenominational Theological Center, King was ordained deacon and elder by Bishop W. Kenneth Goodson before ministering to members in Alabama and California. He served as the Director of the Wesley Foundation at Tennessee State before fulfilling the position of Associate Director and Director of the Tennessee Conference Council on Ministries. Following his service as an evangelist on a mission team to Grenada, West Indies, Bishop King served as pastor of Clark Memorial UMC in Nashville, Tenn. from 1985-1995. In 1996, he was appointed District Superintendent of the Murfreesboro District and, in 1999, King was appointed to the 4,500-member Brentwood Church. James R. King, Jr. was elected to the episcopacy by the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference in 2000 and served the Louisville Area until 2008 when he was appointed to the South Georgia Conference where he served until his retirement in 2016.

We look forward to welcoming you to the Moore Methodist Museum soon to showcase this exhibit and all of the exhibits which highlight the good works of the Methodist movement in the South Georgia Conference.



## **Register today for Camp Connect summer camps!**

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

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## **Camp Connect is hiring college summer staff**

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

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## **Bildad Misspeaks/God's Justice**

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

**Unit 3: Justice and Adversity**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of February 20, 2022**

**By Dr. D. Craig Rikard**

**Background Scripture: Job 8**

**Key Scripture (NIV):** "Bildad the Shuhite replied: 'How long will you say such things? Your words are a blustering wind.'" Job 8:1-2

### **Lesson Aims**

1. To better understand the background of Job and the book of Job.
2. To recognize the theological issue being debated: the Retribution Principle.
3. To relate as much as possible to Bildad's reason for arguing and Job's reason for defending.
4. To recognize the importance of the question, "Why do good people suffer?"
5. To embrace the need for humility and the acceptance of mystery as a part of our faith and trust in God.

### **Introduction**

*The Theological Premise of Job*

Once again, we encounter the “Retribution Principle” of the Old Testament. This one principle reveals the manner in which the Old Testament and New Testament Jewish people understood God’s dealings with men and women. The principle is rather easy to understand. If one lived in obedience to God, their life was blessed. Thus, people who were healthy, wealthy, and fortunate were perceived as blessed by God. However, those who suffered from poor health, poverty, and calamity were cursed. This belief served as a theological principle from the earliest people in the Old Testament and into Jesus’ day.

Jesus encountered this belief constantly in his ministry. Some of the major proponents of this belief were his own disciples. We might recall in John 9:1-12 that the disciples questioned Jesus, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” In Mark 10:17-27, the rich young ruler interacts with Jesus. He asks Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asks him to sell his possessions and give them to the poor. The young man leaves Jesus grieving. However, it is the question of the disciples in Mark’s narrative that proves most interesting regarding the Retribution Principle: “Then who can be saved?” In the eyes of the disciples this man is rich because he has the favor of God. Yet, Jesus does not recognize this belief and the disciples are stunned. Jesus’ entire ministry unraveled this principle. One of the major reasons the disciples, especially Peter, struggled to accept Jesus’ death on a cross is because Jesus was good, and good people are blessed of God. They do not die on crosses! This principle was embraced in early biblical history and continued until Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection revealed its falsehood. This is the belief we encounter in the ancient book of Job.

In the judgment of his friends, Job’s suffering had to be the consequence of his sin against God. The book of Job opens with the assertion that Job was a good and righteous man. The book even introduces Job as a blessed man of great wealth with a large family. In the introduction he is indeed a blessed man. However, his ensuing suffering calls into question the validity of the Retribution Principle as it applies to Job. It also interrogates us with the question, “Are we knowledgeable and wise enough to state with certainty how God always acts?”

### *The Style and Substance of the Book of Job as Biblical Literature*

Many interpret Job as a historical account of a real character. Many believe Job was an early prophet. Some scholars believe he lived in the patriarchal period of Abraham. In other words, it is the story of a real man named Job. We are even presented with a genealogy of Job. However, difficulty is encountered as we read of God’s agreement with Satan. It is a theological struggle for us to read of God placing a man like Job at risk to prove a point to Satan. After all, God is God, and doesn’t have to prove anything to anyone! Since a theological question is presented in the opening of the book and continues throughout, we cannot say it is intended to be a strictly historical book. It is an *interpreted history*; in particular, it is the theologically interpreted history of a real man named Job.



Many fail to realize that in Old Testament literature, when the author desired to reveal an inspired truth about God and God's dealing with humankind, they would use allegories. In the allegories they often used very real, historical people. Job was most likely a real man who suffered tremendous difficulties. However, in the end he endured and flourished. His life serves as an allegory for the author to relay an important truth to coming generations. Consequently, Job is a Spirit-inspired prosaic saga about a real man whose life is employed to create a teachable lesson on suffering and blessing.

Job's location in the Old Testament canon is also an important factor in understanding the nature of the book. This book was placed by our ancestors in the faith in the section of "poetry and prose." The book of Job opens the section containing the books of Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs. The ensuing three books were never intended to be "historical books." They were books of Spirit-inspired songs, poems, and prose. Job is located within this genre.

Whatever our understanding of the type of book Job is, we cannot escape the reality of its inspiration and the theological question it addresses. Job is an ancient book that deals with an existential question with which we continue to wrestle to this day. Why do good people suffer? For the faith community in particular it asks, "Why do godly people suffer?"

### *The Date of the Book*

We do not have an exact date for the writing of this book, nor are we allowed to know its author. However, there is strong indication that Job is among the oldest books in the Bible. Some believe it is the oldest. As a character, Job would predate the Mosaic Law. That is, he, like Abraham, was a man who feared God. He possessed a well-developed sense of righteousness. Had Job not been a man of strong moral character, we would have no book of Job. After all, this is the story of Job's determined refusal to blame God for his suffering. Job also refuses to lay the blame at his own feet, believing he had done nothing wrong to merit such suffering. The book of Job, like Genesis, reveals that God indeed has a relationship with humankind. The sin that drove us from Eden could not hinder or stop God's concern and love for us. Consequently, God is interacting with Job and the people of Job's day.

Our text is best understood as a theological debate between Bildad and Job. We will examine the context of the conversation; that is, to understand the issues leading to their conversation. Secondly, we will examine the debate itself. However, we are only given Bildad's argument in this lesson. However, we know Job's state of mind as he's listening to Bildad from Job's statements in other sections of the book.

*How do you handle the tension between faith and doubt in a healthy manner? What do you perceive as the danger in holding tightly to a belief that has genuinely been called into question? Did Jesus call into question the belief that righteous people are always blessed and unrighteous people always cursed? Can you offer examples from Jesus in the Gospels? What is the danger in*

*having little or no certainty? What is the danger in believing with such certainty that there is no entertaining a different view? What do you believe is a healthy, Christ-like response to those moments in life which call our belief into question?*

## **The Text**

### *The Theological Context of Bildad and Job's Conversation*

As mentioned above, this book was written to express humanity's struggle with one of the great questions of life: Why do good people suffer? Naturally, the question of why those perceived as bad prosper in life arises. Job not only possessed an understanding of righteousness, Bildad did as well, along with Job's other two friends. How could they accuse Job of sinning if there existed no understanding of sin prior to Mosaic Law? As stated in other lessons, the Hebrew people were not lawless prior to the Ten Commandments and Mosaic Law. Societal and cultural laws existed. However, there also existed a person's inner, moral life. From the beginning we had a conscience. Remember, right action versus wrong action existed in the story of Adam and Eve. Job and his friends knew the essence of a righteous life.

The struggle in the book arises when Job's friends are convinced his personal sin has led to the destructive and painful events in his life. This, again, is an early expression of the Retribution Principle. The book consists of a theological debate over this principle. Job most likely believes God blesses those who are good and those who are disobedient are cursed, as did his friends. However, Job cannot determine the nature of his sin. In his mind, he had done nothing wrong to merit his painful existence.

If Job indeed had done nothing to suffer his calamities, then the theology of Job and his friends begins to teeter and quake. An innocent Job means that a good man is actually suffering and they can offer no good reason for it! In other words, if a good man is suffering, how are they to understand the issues of righteousness and sin, reward and punishment? Many of us have met individuals who cling mightily to questionable theological beliefs. Perhaps we have done so as well. One of the reasons we might fight for our belief is because, in our understanding of Scripture, it is true. However, some fight for a belief because if it proves untrue, their theological structure is shaken. Questions arise when our "certainty" quakes for which we have no answers.

Certainly, faith means trusting and clinging to what we know is true. However, we must remember we are always seekers of truth, both secular and spiritual truth. Should a belief come into question, we must be unafraid to prayerfully entertain the need for change. If change isn't needed, we will believe even more strongly and understand more deeply why we believe something to be true. If our belief was unfounded, we can grow in greater faith and understanding.

In the earliest years of my Christian faith, I belonged to a renewal movement that believed in faith healing. If one had enough faith, God would heal all of our illnesses. One of our most

respected members died of cancer. Prayers of faith had been offered, along with the expectation that God would therefore certainly heal him. Again, he died. When I attended the next meeting, I was eager for an explanation. We never received one. Instead, the group continued to believe real faith always resulted in healing. Life had called this belief into question. We faced two choices. First, we could believe our dear brother just didn't have enough faith, leaving our belief system intact. I personally could not adhere to this explanation. He was as good and faithful a man as I had known. Secondly, we could accept that what was believed may not have been exactly correct. Does God heal? Certainly! On every occasion? No. From that moment onward I began a search for light and understanding. I am certain others did as well. Today, 50 years later, I stand at a much different place theologically.

I can imagine myself in that meeting again. However, instead of faith healing, the belief is: Good people are blessed and do not suffer. My good brother Job has suffered terribly. I am seeking an answer as to what happened. Either something is wrong with Job or with our belief in reward and punishment. In the book of Job, we are sitting in on such a meeting. We are listening to the dialogue and debate. On one side of the debate are Job's three friends. They believe so strongly in the Retribution Principle that they can only conclude Job isn't perfectly righteous at all or he would not suffer; he has sinned! And, they believe this with certainty. On the other side is Job, who is arguing that there has to be another explanation, for he's done nothing wrong. Again, our text only includes Bildad's argument. Still, we know Job's theological state of mind while listening to Bildad from the preceding and ensuing chapters.

*Can you share a belief or beliefs that were shaken in your life? Were you able to embrace them more strongly after walking through the shaking? Did you alter your belief? What did you learn from the struggle? Read Mark 8:31-33. Jesus and Peter are in conversation about his coming crucifixion. What is Peter's belief, and how strongly does he believe it? How is Jesus calling that belief into question? What does this particular interaction between Peter and Jesus teach us about certainty and openness?*

### *The Conversation*

In chapters 6-7, Job has offered a defense against the accusation of his friends. Job admits his suffering. He even expresses the anguish and pain the suffering inflicts. Job admits he cannot help himself to rise from the pain. He is obviously overwhelmed. However, he refuses to relinquish his faith in God and his own righteousness. Job's belief in his own righteousness in this case is not arrogance. His behaviors do not violate the moral code in which he believes. Therefore, to accept that he has done something wrong when his experiences tells him he hasn't is confusing to Job. Even when Job *feels* God has abandoned him, he refuses to lose faith. He has looked to his friends in futility to help him in his seemingly helpless plight. In Job 6:14 we read:

“A despairing man should have the devotion of his friends, even though he forsakes the fear of the Almighty. But my brothers are as undependable as intermittent streams. . .”

Job is saying, “Even if I had forsaken my fear of God, (which he believes he hasn’t) my friends should be an encouragement to me.” Yet, it is obvious Job believes his friends are of little help. However, his friends are not asking Job to abandon his faith in God. They are asking that he confess the sins that cause his suffering. After all, in their thinking, only sin could cause such calamity. Job’s friends are waiting for Job to believe God is his punisher, and for good reason; they believe Job is a sinner.

Bildad’s argument is interesting. How dare Job believe he is the exception to the rule! His logic is simple: 1. God punishes those who are unrighteous and sinful. 2. You, Job are suffering. 3. Therefore, you have sinned against God. Bildad thinks, “How dare you deny what we know to be true!” He understands Job’s defense as little more than “hot air (blustering wind).”

Bildad should not be condemned for his belief. It is a belief derived from what he has observed and understood up to that moment. If anything, he should be confronted for his refusal to open himself to new light and understanding. Like most of us, Bildad bases his theological premise of suffering on his experience and observation. It is true; men and women do reap what they sow *most of the time*. He even uses the death of Job’s children to bolster his argument. Bildad informed Job that his children died because of their sin. Can Job not see he too is suffering, and nearing death for the same reason? What painful, harsh words! Yet, the gloves are off in this theological argument and Bildad is determined to strike a blow for his belief. Most people are passionate regarding their beliefs. Many of us are familiar with the warning not to discuss politics and religion at family gatherings. Few discussions can become more passionate, heated, and divisive. Bildad is just as passionate.

Bildad also appeals to the teachings and experiences of their ancestors. They, too, believed the unrighteous suffer, and this belief is grounded, again, in their experiences and learnings. Bildad is putting Job in a difficult spot. Not only is Job refusing to accept the words of his friends and what should be obvious from his own experiences, he is refusing the teachings and experiences of all who came before. Bildad has offered strong arguments for his case.

However, Bildad refuses to examine the *exceptions* to the rule of sowing and reaping. Again, if he allows himself to entertain the thought that good people might indeed suffer, he must reconstruct his theological house. Change is almost always frightening and stressful, especially when we alter our system of belief. We construct our lives around what we believe, as we should. If a part of our belief system is altered, we feel vulnerable. It means instead of defending we should begin seeking and understanding. Of course, such seeking always leads to a more enlightened, meaningful relationship with the Lord. In our life, untruth should be shed that clearer, beautiful truth might emerge. Shadow must constantly give way to God’s light.

Certainly, Job’s argument has not yet offered Bildad clarity regarding human suffering. Bildad isn’t certain good people can suffer because he isn’t yet certain Job is a good man. He is challenging Job’s belief in himself. If he is a good man and his suffering is not the result of his

sin, then let Job arise from the suffering. Let God reward a *good Job!* Verse 6 reads: “If you are pure and upright, even now he (God) will rouse himself on your behalf and restore you to your rightful place.” Bildad seems to be imploring Job to accept the truth of his unrighteousness that Job can begin anew with God. Still, Bildad is attempting to make Job face his sin. He is arguing that if Job is correct, then God would naturally remove the pain and allow Job to prosper again.

*How do you think Job is feeling in light of Bildad’s assertion? What would be your defense? Why would it be your defense? Have you ever had to defend your beliefs? Were you certain of your position? Can you share a specific experience when you were confronted with something you knew to be untrue? Did you handle the moment as lovingly and kindly as possible, yet with strength? What was the result?*

### **Summation of the Conversation**

Our lesson remains incomplete. We must read the entire book of Job, with all of its give and take, with all back and forth, to more fully mine the spiritual wealth in this book. As we will realize in next week’s lesson, the great question of suffering remains unanswered. We still struggle to understand the suffering of the innocent and the property of the self-serving. We are left to realize that we cannot yet understand all God is doing and why God is doing it! Mystery does exist in our faith. We were not there “when he laid the foundation of the earth.” Choosing to acknowledge mystery is NOT a lack of faith. Faith isn’t always about certainty. It is also about trust. We trust our loving God, revealed in Jesus, with the unanswered questions of life.

One of the great errors we often make is to believe “God owes us all answers.” God doesn’t owe us anything! We owe God everything! There will come a day when we see clearly. Paul wrote in I Cor. 13 that “Now we see through a glass dimly, but then, we shall see face to face.”

So what is our response? First, we must always be open to the truth that appears in the “exceptions.” Often in life our beliefs are shaken. These are moments that can lead to renewal and stronger faith. They are also moments that can lead to constructive, Christ-like change. We must be open. If I believe I know all of the answers, then I am announcing my journey in faith, in discovering God’s truth is over. This is that moment, in the words of the Proverb, “A haughty spirit goeth before a fall” Proverbs 16:18.

Secondly, we must be humble. God’s ways are always higher than our own. God’s purposes are often beyond the understanding of men and women. Every generation has encountered “truth yet to be understood.” We can only trust, yet, trusting is everything. The gift of Jesus serves as the foundation of our trust. Jesus reveals God is love, and that all of life is moving toward redemption and eternal life. Therefore, even if we do not understand what is occurring in life, we can know who is in control. We can know that the One in control is loving, and life is always leading toward goodness.

It requires humility to admit we do not know everything. I taught Old and New Testament at a college for three years. I began every class by saying, “I am going to write on the white board the greatest thing I’ve learned to say.” I would turn and write, “I don’t know.” It is permissible to know what we can know at the time. There will always be a degree of mystery in our faith. It is this mystery that drives us to our knees in seeking.

*Do you think we are a people who believe God owes us answers? How do you think many people handle the unknown and mystery in faith? How do we handle such mystery? Why do you think mystery frightens us? What do you believe is the one truth that overcomes this fear? Can you share a specific moment in life when the answer to the struggle remained elusive? Can you share your response?*

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, you are omnipresent and omniscient. Your ways are always higher than our own. Grant us the humility to accept the unknown as a gift. Grant us patience to wait for the light to come. Give us strength to cling to what we know, and open hearts and minds to what we do not. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Dr. D. Craig Rikard is a South Georgia pastor. Email him at [craigrikard169@yahoo.com](mailto:craigrikard169@yahoo.com).*

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## **Job and the Just God**

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

**Unit 3: Justice and Adversity**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of February 27, 2022**

**By Dr. D. Craig Rikard**

**Background Scripture: Job 42**

**Key Scripture (NIV):** “Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.” Job 42:3b-c

### **Lesson Aims**

1. To realize God’s greatness in contrast to our limitations.
2. To embrace the importance of humility in our relationship with God.
3. To recognize the blessings of God that emerge from humble confession.

### **Introduction**

Our lesson is an addition and expansion of last week’s lesson. Last week we explored the debate between Job and his friend Bildad. At that point in the book of Job, both men were struggling. Bildad was so certain Job must have sinned that he felt compelled to convince Job. After all, Job

was adamant that he could recognize nothing in his life to merit his suffering. We could say that both men in the narrative are left with questions with no answers. It is quite evident that Job has no answer to Bildad's question, and Bildad cannot answer Job. Therefore, they must turn elsewhere with their questions. They must turn to God, for only God is infinite wisdom. There are dynamics and realities in the world we cannot understand, and may not understand in this lifetime. However, God knows them. If we are intended to understand them, the time will arrive when God reveals such answers.

Our text quickly leaps to the end of this inspired saga of Job. In chapter 41, God closes his argument and waits for Job's response. Our text picks up the debate there, and begins, "Then Job replied to the Lord." The ensuing response of Job to God contains the text for our lesson. This lesson will be structured in this manner: 1. God confronts Job in the previous chapters, especially chapter 41. 2. Job responds to God's message. 3. God will have the last word of blessing.

## **The Text**

### **1. God Confronting Job: "I'm Greater than Your Comprehension!"**

As stated above, our text begins with Job's response to God. Consequently, we need to understand what Job heard from the Lord in the previous chapters, especially chapter 41. The metaphor of the Leviathan encapsulates God's major contention with Job's argument and state of mind.

The Leviathan was a great sea creature. In Psalm 74:14, the Leviathan is presented as a multiheaded sea serpent. This creature is almost always a serpent and becomes symbolic of Israel's enemies (read Isaiah 27). Our lesson is not concerned with identifying the Leviathan or defining the type of creature it was. For the purpose of our lesson we only need to understand IT IS BIG! The creature is bigger and stronger than the human and therefore is impossible to catch. In chapter 41, God asks Job, "Can you pull in Leviathan with a fishhook?" Naturally, the answer is a definitive "No!" God's metaphor continues, "Can you tie down its tongue with a rope? Can you put a cord through its nose or pierce its jaw with a hook?" Again, these questions are rhetorical. The answer is obvious and known: "No, we can't catch or subdue a Leviathan!"

The interrogation of Job by God continues in 41, using the Leviathan metaphor, by taking on a "personal tone." "Will it (the Leviathan) keep begging you for mercy? Will it speak to you with gentle words? Will it make an agreement with you for you to take it as your slave for life?" Obviously, the serpent does not possess these humanistic, personal qualities. Furthermore, humankind is in no position to barter with a Leviathan.

In verses 5 forward in chapter 41, God's interrogation through the metaphor of the Leviathan continues with even more absurd questions. God asks Job if a Leviathan can be domesticated, taken as a pet. Is it something with which you can play, as a pet? God continues by asking Job if the Leviathan is something with which he can trade or barter with another.

The metaphor concludes with God asking pointedly, “Can you subdue the giant creature in any fashion?” We are even given the pointed warning, “If one tries to lay their hand upon the serpent and attempt to subdue it, “They will never do it again!” See verse 8. Verse 9 brings the metaphor to its obvious close, “Any hope of subduing it is false; the mere sight of it is overpowering. No one is fierce enough to rouse it.”

In verse 10 forward, God reveals that the Leviathan represents the Lord. At this point, Job is confronted with powerful, necessary theological questions. Can any person “catch and subdue God?” Though our humanity is feeble and frail, so many of us attempt to “capture God,” or place God in a cage. We are tempted to say, “this is what God will always say and always do!” How arrogant and futile! The Lord is God of the cosmos. There is none greater, and our limited minds can never fully capture the full essence of God. What we do know of God has been revealed to us. If left to our greatest intellectual and analytical thinking, we still fall so far short of all there is to know of the Lord.

I was present when someone asked our new bishop if he could state his theology simply. He answered, “God is great, and God is good.” That answer might not have satisfied those who wanted a far more complex answer. However, I knew exactly what he wanted to convey. Before we can make assertions about God, we must always first realize God is greater and bigger than us! Thus, God is always greater than any answer we might offer. God is not a pet for humankind to place a leash about him, and God’s ultimate truth is not up for barter. It is not up for “give and take.” God’s truth is THE TRUTH. As humans interacting with one another, we can engage in give and take as we attempt to understand together. However, that which is sought is unchangeable and eternal, for it emerges from the eternal person, God.

The following verses are certainly intended to pierce the heart, to awaken the soul. A Leviathan has no personal, or human qualities. However, God has revealed He does! The Lord who transcends all those things that define us (including our labels of male or female), yet has endowed his human creation with the awareness that the Lord does speak, unlike the Leviathan. And, the Lord not only speaks, but does so with “gentle words.” Think of the gentle words spoken by our Lord in Christ. To Bartimaeus he asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” To the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn you.” To those who crucified him, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” God is not a “creature” that can be defined or subdued. God also is not impersonal. God can relate to our humanity in ways no other creature on earth can. These words to Job allow me to ask, “Is God not accusing Job and his friends of attempting to place him in a box, attempting to define him and say with certainty what the Lord has done, is doing, and will do?”

Job and his friends are debating the question of human suffering. Specifically, they are debating the question, “Do good people suffer?” Job’s friends have already placed God in the box and concluded, “No, good people do not suffer.” “Only sinful people suffer as Job is suffering.” Though Job argued valiantly, he is beginning to question himself.



However, God is offering them a word of comfort. God's response, on the surface, may not sound comforting. After all, God has still not specifically answered their questions. Job's friends want to know why Job is suffering if he is indeed good. Job is beginning to wonder the same. They are dealing with the oldest question of human existence, "Why do good people suffer?" They have attempted to answer the question, both the friends and Job, through their assumptions about God. God has just revealed they can never assume anything. All they can do is listen to what God reveals. Their comfort will be found in the fact that the God of the cosmos is good and loving. Therefore, whatever the cosmic, theological answer might be, it will be an answer born from God's goodness and love. Herein lies the comfort.

*Can you share examples of people, or us, treating God as one who can be boxed, leashed, or altered? Are there times in your life when you made assumptions about God only to later discover God is bigger than those assumptions? Such temptations to limit God with our assumptions arise from the questions that are difficult to answer. Is it better to reach a conclusion about the big questions of life or to remain in a state of seeking? Is it possible to believe in a theological belief, and yet still be seeking? It is possible to know, and yet realize we do not fully know? Where do you believe faith enters this scenario? Can mystery be a vital part of our faith? What is the value of mystery? Certainly, there is truth we are intended to know and to trust. Yet, there are areas of life that remain difficult to fully grasp and questions that are difficult to understand. Can you share how we, as Christians, should approach these questions and should deal with what we do not yet fully understand?*

## **2. Job's Response: "You Are Right"**

Job has been humbled by God's interrogation. He realizes God is indeed right. Verse 3 is most revealing, and reveals not only words Job needed to speak, but for us to speak as well. "I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." There isn't a person, excluding Jesus, who could not make this confession. How often have we spoken without understanding? How often have we spoken first, only to understand later? However, Job's humble confession continues as he admits there are things he may never know. Those things, that truth, might be too great for human understanding. And Job describes such truth as "wonderful."

There exists a beauty in recognizing the unavailability of the unknown. For most of us, the unknown represents the frightening. We walk with fear and trepidation into places we've never visited and about which we know little. However, when one embraces what we do know, that God is good and loving, then the fear diminishes or dissipates altogether. We may not know where we are headed, but we know who is already there! It is this great truth that can make the unknown beautiful and wonderful. The unknown makes life meaningful and exciting. There is always something new to know and experience. I once read a quote, "I had a nightmare. I dreamed all truth was known." I could not find the source of this quote, but it grasped my attention years ago and I have remembered it. What would be the nature of our life if we knew everything? Would we even be able to handle it? It is the mystery in life that drives us to our

knees in prayer. It is mystery that keeps us forever seeking. And, when we are allowed to make a great discovery of God's truth, it is most beautiful!

Humility is an all-important facet of our faith in God. The prophet Micah wrote in 6:8, "He has shown thee, O man, what is good, and what does the Lord require of thee: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God." Humility always recognizes that God is greater. Not only is God greater, but so many facets of God's creation remain beyond our understanding. Humility must always be our "starting point" in the journey of faith. Job's friends had reached their conclusion about suffering, not from a posture of humility, but of pride. They made an assumption about God based upon their limited observation and declared it true for every circumstance in life. Observations are important in the learning process. However, one must realize even our observations are limited. Therefore, to reach a conclusion based solely on what we see and think without humble seeking is to participate in potential error.

One of the first missions in which I participated, on the Yucatan Peninsula, occurred among people living in great poverty. They lived in concrete hovels, slept on hammocks, had no hot water, and had no sufficient plumbing system. My first conclusion was this: If we could give them those things that make our life easier, like hot water, beds, better housing, etc., they would be happier. However, as I lived with them for two weeks I discovered they were some of the happiest people I knew. Giving them "those things" may have made their life less meaningful. They would not have needed each other so much. I assumed "having things made people happy." That assumption was made from my posture of pride and ignorance. My perception was initially so limited. What I observed was true. They were poor. However, I had not yet grasped the entire story. One must always be aware that there is far more to reality than what we see with our eyes only. There is truth we have not yet seen, and some elements of truth we cannot yet comprehend.

When we wrestle with the issue of suffering, especially the suffering of the innocent, we must bow our knees, open our hearts, and become determined in seeking truth. We must also accept the humble posture that we may never fully know the truth about suffering in our lifetime. For more than 40 years I have conducted funerals for good people who died too young. First of all, how does one define "too young?" Furthermore, how do we define "good?" Certainly, as followers of Jesus, we seek to eradicate any form of suffering. When the Kingdom of God arrives in all its fullness, suffering is eradicated. However, the Kingdom has not yet fully arrived. It is present in life, moving in life, and moving toward its ultimate culmination. However, that means that suffering remains. Suffering remains a mystery for us as it did for Job and his friends. Thus, we pray, seek to understand, and accept our frail humanity. Yet, we must also accept God's infinite love and goodness. It is the acceptance of God's love that makes suffering bearable and can even make it meaningful. We may not fully understand suffering, but when all is said and done, all things will be good, love will reign, and suffering will cease.

*Can you recall a time in your life when you could say, "I spoke of things I did not understand?"  
Can you recall arriving at the conclusion, "I spoke of things too wonderful for me to*

*understand?” How do you currently deal with issue of suffering? Especially the suffering of the innocent? What did the life and crucifixion of Jesus say about the suffering of the innocent? What does the resurrection say about our current suffering?*

### **3. God’s Last Word: “Blessing is Found in Humble Acceptance”**

The text concludes with the restoration of Job’s blessings. Notice, the former suffering and pains are not “undone.” They occurred, and Job experienced them. They hurt him and his family. However, life has moved on, and Job is blessed. This does not mean he no longer has the memories of his painful losses. He has simply been able to accept them and move forward in life. How was he able to accept them? His humble confession in the previous section reveals the power of his acceptance. When Job recognized there were painful dynamics in life he could not yet understand, he realized the futility of jumping to erroneous conclusions. He also recognized that God is God. Job accepted his place in life. He is a man who has been invited into a relationship with the One who knows all. Through humble faith Job is able to move forward into a new future. Erroneously blaming himself would accomplish nothing. Blaming God for what Job could not yet understand would prove futile.

Our text in no way attempts to state that such an outpouring of blessings always follows suffering and loss. The text exists simply for us to realize that life does not end with suffering. Suffering can only place a “comma” in life, not a period. When we walk humbly with God our story is unfinished. Blessings continue. These blessings can occur in the most common ways, or at times, the spectacular. However we experience them, they are blessings! Life itself is beautiful. We fight to live every minute possible, to prolong life as long as we can. Whether in this life or the life to come, we are blessed.

The great promise of Job is that goodness, righteousness, and love triumph in the end. Our loving God knows all and knows where all life is headed. We cannot allow our conclusions and assumptions about life to steal this beautiful and wonderful truth. If we do not have an answer now, we patiently and humbly wait. In God’s time, we will understand. Thus, we walk forward into life, humbly trusting God, being grateful for every blessing that makes life so meaningful. In the end, all will be well.

*What role do you believe patience plays in our faith? How does patience empower us through suffering? How do God’s promises and the coming Kingdom empower us to continue trusting and living? If a suffering person asks you to explain why they suffer, how would you answer? If you or another asks in the midst of suffering, “Where is God?” how would you respond? Can you share how patient humility allows us to recognize God’s blessings in life?*

### **Prayer**

Almighty God, forgive us our pride. Our pride tempts us to trust in our limited conclusions. May your Spirit grant us greater vision. Help us to seek the greatness of truth. Help us to seek truth

through patience. Empower us to wait for that which we do not yet understand. Help us to seek what we do not understand, and to embrace in faith what we do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

*Dr. D. Craig Rikard is a South Georgia pastor. Email him at [craigrikard169@yahoo.com](mailto:craigrikard169@yahoo.com).*

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## **I'm going to Hollywood!**

### **PATHWAY TO HIS PRESENCE**

#### **B.J. FUNK**

Occasionally, I look at the beginning process of "America's Got Talent." The judges watch the talent and give a pass if the performance is really good. If the person gets that pass there is a big celebration. There's shouting, dancing, and music as each contestant comes out from the room where he or she performed and tells their waiting parents and friends the good news.

And what is that good news? Why, he or she has made the first pass and that person is GOING TO HOLLYWOOD for the next step in the process of becoming a finalist. The joyful crowd jumps up and down, clapping, shouting, and hugging like they don't have good sense. They, after all, are GOING TO HOLLYWOOD and everything inside them is dancing. You'd be jumping too, you are convinced, if you knew you were GOING TO HOLLYWOOD!

Or maybe not. Something is wrong with this picture. Going to Hollywood is nothing compared to going to heaven! So, what's it going to take to bring a repentant sinner to run out of church with this kind of joy? Wouldn't it be grand if, while you are at the altar taking care of the only truly important business there is, your family and friends are waiting just outside the front door eager to share your great joy that heaven will eventually be your reward?

It's been said that we have things all wrong down here on earth. We clap when a baby is born and we cry when a person dies. Knowing how difficult this life can be and our great expectation of heaven, we should reverse that order and cry when someone is born and clap when they die. Our clap signifies that the greatest joy we can know is not that we might go to Hollywood, but that indeed we are definitely going to heaven.

So, let's make that change. Next time you hear of a sinner saved by God's grace, make a circle around this redeemed and regenerated soul and shout as you sing and twirl. This news is the best news ever!

The thrills of Hollywood pale in comparison with the eternal and never-ending joy of an eternal home! A Christian's exuberant shout is, "I'M GOING TO HEAVEN!!"

*The Rev. B.J. Funk is associate pastor of Central UMC in Fitzgerald. Email her at [bjfunk@bellsouth.net](mailto:bjfunk@bellsouth.net).*

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**These three ...**

**WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN**

**ANNE PACKARD**

On January 15, 1891, Vanderbilt Benjamin Simmons was born to Frank and Cornelia Simmons as one of their 22 children. He married Sarah Smith in Brunswick, Georgia in 1914 and went on to father eight children. V.B. Simmons served as a successful lay leader until he was received on trial in the Savannah Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South on November 25, 1931. After being ordained a deacon in 1934, V.B. Simmons was ordained an elder in the newly formed Methodist Church in 1939. His appointments included Sterling, Chipley, Barnesville, Greenville, Mt. Zion, Speedwell, Pulaski, Hiltonia, Millen, Dublin and Gordon. Rev. Vanderbilt Benjamin Simmons retired in 1953 and died in 1957.

Essie Cornelia Simmons was born to Rev. Vanderbilt Benjamin Simmons and Sarah Simmons in Waynesville, Georgia on June 2, 1923. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Early Childhood Education from Clark College in Atlanta and from Fort Valley State College and a Masters of Education degree from South Carolina State College while working for 34 years as a teacher and principal in the Screven County High School. In 1972, Essie Simmons was admitted to the newly formed United Methodist Church as a lay preacher in the South Georgia Conference. She was appointed to the Leet's Chapel-Oak Grove circuit where Nannie B. Williams UMC was added in 1974. Because of Essie Simmons' fruitful ministry, in 1977 the circuit was renamed the Simmons Circuit in her honor. Rev. Essie Simmons was appointed to Cordele in 1984 and to the Waynesboro Circuit in 1985 before completing a Course of Study degree from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in 1993. This led to her appointment as the first female, African American elder in the South Georgia Conference. In addition to serving local churches, Rev. Essie Simmons was also active in the Black Methodist Church Renewal program and received numerous honors and awards. She died peacefully on October 16, 2012, and was buried in her hometown of Waynesville, Georgia.

Sharma D. Lewis was born to Charlie and Alethia Lewis in Statesboro, Georgia in 1963 as the fourth of five children. Her mother is the daughter of Rev. V.B. Simmons and the family, devotedly Methodist, attended Brannen Chapel. Lewis graduated from Mercer University with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1985 and Master of Science degree from the University of West Georgia in 1988. While waiting to hear if she would be accepted to medical school, Lewis' aunt, Rev. Essie Simmons, encouraged her to enter the ministry and Lewis entered Gammon Theological Seminary instead of medical school. She earned a Masters of Divinity in 1999 and was ordained elder in the North Georgia Conference. After serving as both associate pastor and senior pastor of Ben Hill UMC, Lewis was offered a cross-racial appointment at Powers Ferry UMC making her both the first African American and the first female pastor at this

predominately white congregation. After another appointment in McDonough, Georgia, Lewis was awarded the G. Ross Freeman Leadership Award as the first female winner. In 2016, she was one of five new bishops elected at the quadrennial gathering of the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. Lewis was elected on the first ballot, and according to news reports, there was cheering and applause when her election was announced. It was an historic moment, as she was the first African American woman ever to be elected to the position of bishop in the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference. She was also the first African American woman bishop to be elected within The UMC since 2000.

Rev. V.B. Simmons, his children, and grandchildren could have been angry. They faced racial discrimination at every turn. He entered the ministry in 1931 with a denomination that had fought to retain slavery and wasn't ordained elder until 1939 when a new denomination allowed him to participate but only in segregated terms. And, yet, he passed faith, hope, and love onto not only the members of his churches but also his children. And that faith, hope, and love made all the difference. His daughter, Rev. Essie Simmons, entered the ministry during the transition between the Methodist Church and The United Methodist Church, a time when the south was very reluctantly ending racial segregation but still retained discrimination against women. She could have been angry. She had many reasons not to minister to those in need but she allowed faith, hope and, love to change the church and society in ways that seemed unimaginable in the not too distant past and that made all the difference. Bishop Sharma Lewis, granddaughter of Rev. V.B. Simmons and niece of Rev. Essie Simmons, had choices in education and career that her relatives could only dream of, had fought for, but she chose to devote her life to the same faith, hope, and love that was instilled in her by these relatives and, again, it has made all the difference.

What are we passing on to our children and grandchildren? What can we pass on that will transform peoples' hearts to become a Christ-centered, faithful body of believers? What will take us to places that we can only dream of today? The only answer to those questions is the same answer it's always been. I sincerely pray that this is one old thing that is new again.

*Anne Packard serves as Conference Historian and director of the Arthur J. Moore Methodist Museum on St. Simons Island. Contact her at [director@mooremuseum.org](mailto:director@mooremuseum.org).*

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## **Retired Clergy Birthdays – February 2022**

2/01 – Rodney Body: 1205 North Palm Dr.; Plant City, FL 33563

2/02 – Paul Buckhiester: 3832 Chris Dr.; Columbus, GA 31909

2/03 – Eugene Barlow: 605 Victoria Circle; Warner Robins, GA 31088

2/03 – David Barton: PO Box 497; Talbotton, GA 31827

2/03 – Gary Page: 136 Altama School Rd.; Baxley, GA 31513

2/04 – John Bagwell: 5300 Zebulon Rd., Apt. 2226; Macon, GA 31210

- 2/06 – Robert Buckles: 5429 Sirius Dr.; Wilmington, NC 28405  
 2/06 – Robert McDaniel: 1065 Dr. Deryl Hart Rd.; Buena Vista, GA 31803  
 2/07 – Bill Brown: 109 Woodlawn Dr.; Statesboro, GA 30458  
 2/09 – John O’Connor: 247 Jim Nash Ct. NW; Lilburn, GA 30047  
 2/10 – Paul Best: PO Box 747; Social Circle, GA 30025  
 2/10 – Bill Reinheld: 102 Arthur J. Moore Dr.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
 2/10 – Tommy Veal: 340 Pine Hill Rd.; Dublin, GA 31021  
 2/11 – Robert Poston: 105 Hawk Hammock Dr.; Springfield, GA 31329  
 2/14 – Jim Jensen: 4323 15<sup>th</sup> St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
 2/15 – Mark Carter: 903 Upper River Rd., Americus, GA 31709  
 2/16 – Bill Lee: 480 Bostwick Circle; Vidalia, GA 30474  
 2/16 – David Griffin: 1561 Griffin Rd.; Baxley, GA 31513  
 2/18 – Don Black: 13553 Highway 171 N; Avera, GA 30803-5234  
 2/19 – Dennis Lanning: PO Box 328; Unadilla, GA 31091  
 2/19 – Don Proctor: 106 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522  
 2/20 – C.G. Haugabook, Jr.: 215 Walters St.; Plains, GA 31780  
 2/20 – Lee Pulliam: 16702 Ollifftown; Metter, GA 30439  
 2/21 – Eddie Conaway: PO Box 2361; New Britain, CT 06053  
 2/21 – Jim Duvall: 10502 Regal View Loop; Clermont, FL 34711  
 2/22 – Wayne DeFore: 107 Chestnut St.; Bloomingdale, GA 31302  
 2/25 – Wesley Jones: 6191 Peake Rd.; Macon, GA 31220  
 2/27 – Jim Osborn: 310 Slash Pine Dr.; Broxton, GA 31519  
 2/27 – Donald Sparks: PO Box 407; Portal, GA 30450

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## **OBITUARIES**

### **Rev. Elvin E East, Jr.**

Reverend Elvin E. East, Jr., age 73, of Lakeland, Georgia, passed away Wednesday, February 2, 2022, at South Georgia Medical Center, Lanier Campus, from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Elvin was born July 25, 1948, in Columbus, Ga. to the late Margie Henson Johnson and Elvin E. East, Sr. Elvin and has served as pastor with United Methodist Churches for more than 40 years and was currently serving as pastor to both Springhead United Methodist Church and Kirkland United Methodist Church. He enjoyed watching car racing, fishing, talking and he never met a stranger. He was preceded in death by his parents; son-in-law, Roger Kelly; and a sister, Barbara Barlow.

Survivors include his loving wife of 53 years, Sheryl T. East, Lakeland, Georgia; three daughters, Missy East, Baconton, Georgia, Lisa Kelly, Ray City, Georgia and Amanda Jilcott of Valdosta, Georgia; 10 grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; sister, Pat Jones, and a brother, John East, both of Cordele, Georgia, numerous nieces and nephews and extended family.

A celebration of life service was held Sunday, February 6, 2022, at Springhead United Methodist Church in Pearson, Atkinson County, Georgia. Kind words and expressions of sympathy can be left for the family at [www.musicfuneralservices.com](http://www.musicfuneralservices.com).

### **Rev. Fred Foster**

Rev. Fred Mosley Foster, 87, of Quitman, passed away on Friday, February 4, 2022, at Fellowship Home. He was born in Waynesboro, Ga. on September 3, 1934, to the late Johnny and Zulie Holland Foster. He graduated from Girard High School in Burke County, Ga. and went on to Asbury College in Wilmore, Ky., and then to Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. Rev. Foster enjoyed cooking, fishing, and gardening. He enjoyed traveling and also catered and owned Fred's BBQ & Steakhouse. Rev. Foster was a retired Methodist minister who ministered at various churches across South Georgia. He served four years in the Indiana Methodist Conference and 56 years in the South Georgia Methodist Conference. Reverend Foster really enjoyed spending time with his family and friends.

Rev. Foster is survived by his daughter and son-in-law, Debbie and Jimmy Sublett; grandchildren and their spouses, Terry and Dana Sublett, of Quitman, GA, Kelly S. and Todd Shiver, of Hahira, Freddy Sublett, of Quitman, Sean and Mandy Foster, of Adel, Travis Foster, of Palm Harbor, FL and daughter in law, Pat Newbern of Hahira, five great grandchildren; two great-great grandchildren; two sisters, Lillie Foster Harden, of Sullivan, IN, and W. Mae Foster Carter, of Waynesboro, GA; a brother Joe (Zolene) Foster, of Waynesboro, GA. He is preceded in death by his parents, his wife of 58 years, Gloria Foster, a son Donnie Foster, a brother Ralph Foster, and a sister Dorothy Foster Seago.

Services were held Tuesday, February 8, 2022, in the chapel of the Carson McLane Funeral Home with Rev. Marc Foster, Rev. Rose Sparks, and Rev. Carl Howard officiating. Burial followed at McLane Riverview Memorial Gardens. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Gideon's International or Halcyon Hospice. Condolences to the family may be made online at [www.mclanecares.com](http://www.mclanecares.com).

### **Dr. Brad Brady**

Rev. Dr. Remer Logan "Brad" Brady, III passed away in his home February 7, 2022.

Brad was born Nov. 16, 1953, in Statesboro, GA. He graduated from the former Armstrong State College, now Georgia Southern University. He received a Master of Divinity from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in 1984 and his Doctor of Ministry from McCormick Theological Seminary in 1994.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Remer Logan Brady, Jr. and Annie Nell Bowen Brady.

He is survived by his brother, Robert Bowen "Bob" Brady (Lori), of Savannah, sister, Mary Elizabeth "Beth" Mozingo (Jamie), of Savannah, nephews, Robert and Michael, nieces, Kendal and Sarah, great nieces and nephews, and his adopted family Brian, Kelly, Will, and Nate



Roberson of Leesburg. The clergy of the South Georgia Conference, the lay persons in the churches he served, and the staff he worked alongside were his large, connectional family.

Brad was a beloved and faithful minister of the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church, having served 41 years. He retired in June 2021 as senior pastor of Perry UMC. Prior to serving in Perry, Brad served at White Bluff, Savannah; Swift Creek, Macon; Mulberry St., Macon; Hillcrest, Macon; Epworth, Jesup; Pittman Park, Statesboro; Director of the Conference Council on Ministries; Macon District Superintendent; and Assistant to the Bishop for Connectional Ministries. A trusted and gifted leader known and respected throughout the United Methodist connection, Brad held numerous leadership roles on the district, conference, jurisdictional, and general church levels. He was the South Georgia Conference Secretary for nearly 20 years and served as the Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference Secretary from 2009-2012 and had just begun another term as secretary. He was a delegate to numerous Jurisdictional and General Conferences, was serving on The United Methodist Church's Connectional Table, and taught courses at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Since becoming a Certified Peace Officer Chaplain in 1998, he served men and women in law enforcement, local police, and the Georgia State Patrol.

Brad's leadership, knowledge, and experience were valued and highly respected at all levels of The United Methodist Church. Brad had no greater joy than sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. He will be remembered for his visionary leadership and his passion for teaching, mentoring, and encouraging others in their faith and in their ministry. We are all better for having known Brad, and his bold faith, his faithful response to God's call to ministry on his life, and the deep relationships he developed out of an abundance of respect and love bear witness to the fruit in his life.

A celebration of life service was held Thursday, February 10, 2022, at Pittman Park United Methodist Church in Statesboro. Visitation followed at the church. A private family interment was held at Eastside Cemetery in Statesboro.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be sent to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (PO Box 7227, Macon, GA 31209), Pittman Park UMC (1102 Fair Road, Statesboro, GA 30458), Perry UMC Family Life Center (1002 Carroll Street, Perry, GA 31069) or the United Methodist ministry of your choice.

Deal Funeral Directors are in charge of arrangements.

### **Rev. Fred Maddox**

The Rev. Fred Lemore Maddox, 88 years old, passed away at East Georgia Regional Medical Center, Statesboro, Georgia, on Tuesday, February 8, 2022.

Brother Fred, as he was fondly called, was born in Cordele, Georgia, Crisp County, to the late John Alexander Maddox and Nannie Sue (Moreland) Maddox.

The Rev. Fred Maddox is survived by his devoted wife of 62 years, Patricia Ann (Brooks) Maddox; three children, Laneah June Maddox of Warner Robins, Ga.; Lacreia Ann Maddox of Alexandria, Va.; Fred Alexander Maddox (Andrea Michelle) of Atlanta, Ga.; two grandchildren, Alexander Brooks Maddox and Robert Sawyer Maddox.

Fred was predeceased by his father and mother, and his brothers, the Rev. Eugene Matthews Maddox, John Moreland Maddox Sr., Notley Glawson Maddox Sr. and Lemuel Maddox.

Fred has 43 nieces and nephews.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial donations be made to Berry College, Emory University or Statesboro First United Methodist Church.

Additional information will soon be found at the Deal Funeral Directors' website.

A memorial service is planned for 2 p.m. February 26, 2022, at First United Methodist Church in Statesboro, Georgia.

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## **Scripture Readings – Feb. 15 edition**

### **February 20**

#### ***Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany***

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40 (UMH 772)

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38

### **February 27**

#### ***Transfiguration Sunday***

Exodus 34:29-35

Psalm 99 (UMH 819)

2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2

Luke 9:28-36 (37-43)

### **March 2**

#### ***Ash Wednesday***

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17

Psalm 51:1-17 (UMH 785)

2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

## **March 6**

### ***First Sunday in Lent***

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

Psalms 91:1-2, 9-16 (UMH 810)

Romans 10:8b-13

Luke 4:1-13

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## **Events in the South Georgia Conference – 2/15/2022 edition**

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

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

### **Advanced Lay Servant Training, Macon – Feb. 18-19**

Lay Servant training is designed to educate those persons interested in stretching their faith to participate more fully in the ministries of the church. They have three main areas of focus: Leading, Caring, and Communicating. The advanced class, based on Cokesbury’s book, “Each One a Minister,” by William Carter is a study of the book of Ephesians and what it teaches about how we are called to use our spiritual gifts. This class will meet from 6:30 – 9 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18 and from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 19 at Forest Hills UMC in Macon. Registration fee for the class is \$40. This fee covers all materials and lunch on Saturday. (Note: Basic Lay Speaking class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) For more information, contact Anne Bosarge for more information at [anne@thechapelministries.com](mailto:anne@thechapelministries.com). [More information](#) / [Register](#)

### **Volunteers in Mission Awareness Sunday – Feb. 20**

[United Methodist Volunteers in Mission](#) (UMVIM) exists to promote, encourage, and enable Christians to exemplify “Christian Love In Action” through short-term mission service in the United States and abroad. UMVIM provides opportunities for service by developing and nurturing relationships with domestic and international leaders. They continually nurture their contacts with these leaders to respond to the needs of local communities and to provide comprehensive project information. You can help support the work of UMVIM in the South Georgia Conference by giving an offering to support this vital ministry on this special Sunday.

### **Join the Journey Confirmation Retreat – March 4-6**

The South Georgia Conference’s 21<sup>st</sup> annual retreat will be held at Epworth By The Sea March 4-6, 2022. Online registration is now open for South Georgia UMC churches through Jan. 7

when it will open up to all churches, both in and out of conference. The deadline is Feb. 18, 2022, or until the event reaches maximum capacity. [Click here](#) for more information about registration. For more information, contact Suzanne Akins, Director of Camping and Retreats, at (912) 638-8626, ext.107 or [suzanne@sgaumc.com](mailto:suzanne@sgaumc.com). [Register](#)

### **2022 Clergy Spouses Retreat – March 18-20**

The 2022 Clergy Spouses Retreat will meet March 18-20 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. The retreat theme is “God’s Peace, God’s Calm” and the featured speaker is Joyce Ashley. [Download the brochure](#) / [More information](#)

### **Basic ERT Training and Chainsaw Safety Course, Midland – March 19**

A Basic ERT Training and Chainsaw Safety Course will be held Saturday March 19 at Pierce Chapel UMC in Midland. The basic class starts 8 a.m. with the chainsaw safety class to follow after lunch. Lunch is included. For questions, contact Luis Morales at [morhill@gmail.com](mailto:morhill@gmail.com) or Mac Wooldridge at [macdaddy1977@gmail.com](mailto:macdaddy1977@gmail.com). [Register](#)

### **UMW Spiritual Growth Retreat – March 25-27**

The 2022 UMW Spiritual Growth Retreat will be held March 25-27 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. The retreat theme is “Becoming a Romans 12 Church” and the retreat leader is deaconess Clara Ester. [Download the brochure](#)

### **UMCOR Sunday – March 27**

UMCOR Sunday (fourth Sunday in Lent) enables the United Methodist Committee on Relief to reach out through worldwide ministries of food, shelter, health and peace. A special offering is taken on this day to support humanitarian aid through the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). You can be assured that when catastrophes cause suffering, your church, impelled by Jesus’ love and compassion, will be in the lead to ease the pain. Gifts to the UMCOR Sunday offering underwrite UMCOR’s “costs of doing business.” That helps them keep their promise that 100 percent of every other gift you make to a specific UMCOR project can be spent on that project – not on home office costs. To learn more about UMCOR or to order resources to promote the offering, visit [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org) or call 888-346-3862. [UMCOR Sunday Pastor and Leader’s Kit](#)