

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – MARCH 1 EDITION

Wesley UMC builds wheelchair ramp, porch for Macon homeowners

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Louis Miller had been homebound for nearly three months. A disabled Vietnam veteran, he doesn't walk well anymore and uses a walker to get around. His wife, Patsy, has stage four metastatic breast cancer and is currently under hospice care.

The Millers use a ramp to get in and out of their Macon home, but it needed repairs to be safely used. They paid a contractor about \$400 to fix it, but the work wasn't done properly and their ability to get out of the home was severely limited.

But today, with the aid of a brand new 29-foot handicap ramp, the Millers can safely and easily get in and out of their home anytime they want. They also have a new storm door and a 6-by-6 porch off their front door.

It's all because a few folks from Wesley United Methodist Church in Macon lent a helping hand.

"We can't express how much this means to us," said Louis Miller. "It helps us out a lot."

Even though the Millers aren't members of Wesley UMC, Rev. Josh Gale heard about their need and knew the congregation could help.

Church members and longtime friends Travis Moncrief and Richard Paul enlisted the help of Moncrief's father, Danny Moncrief, a member of Lizella United Methodist Church, and within a few hours they had planned and designed the ramp and porch and made a list of all needed materials.

While none of the three men are full-time contractors or construction workers, they have each built more than their share of ramps, decks, porches, and other small structures. Their shared faith in Christ spurs them to serve, they said.

"I do this for my community, to help people," Paul said. "Jesus tells us to go out. It's all about Jesus as far as I'm concerned. If we didn't have Jesus in our hearts we wouldn't go out and do these things. Jesus is leading the way. It's just what we do."

The Millers paid for the materials and the congregation supplied the labor.

On a rainy, cold Friday afternoon, the old decking was torn off and new protective coating was placed on the home. By Sunday, the new storm door was installed and the ramp and porch were complete.

“We had tried for a while to find someone,” Miller said. It was hard to find someone reliable and trustworthy to do the work, and he and his wife were thrilled with the Wesley UMC team and their hardworking, fun, joyful spirit. “We appreciate all of these people who came out and helped us.”

Moncrief, Paul, and the rest of the team enjoy the fellowship that comes with helping others and try to live out the words of James 1:22.

“We want to show them that there are people out there who love Jesus and this is what they do for Jesus,” Paul said.

Rev. Gale is proud of the way the Wesley UMC congregation shares the love of Christ with its neighbors.

“It sure is a whole lot easier to speak about Christian love in the community when our little group is actively a part of it in such a tangible way,” he said in a recent Facebook post. “This doesn’t just sound like gospel – it feels like it.”

Dr. Jay Harris’ new book helps people read the Bible, connect with God through scripture

By Kara Witherow, *Editor*

Dr. Jay Harris has been hungry for God’s Word since he was a teenager.

Baptized at age 8, he gave his life to Christ a few weeks before he turned 14 while on a youth group outing at a Christian concert.

Given a New Testament and told to start reading at the Book of John, Dr. Harris’ faith has been grounded and formed in scripture ever since.

“I realized that this was instruction for me in that God, through the Bible, was instructing me how I was to live as a Christian. The relevance of it hit me and I felt a connection with God through his Word,” he said.

That connection to God’s Word has shaped and directed Dr. Harris’ life.

As a preacher, a Sunday school lesson writer, and now serving in extension ministry, he has – in various capacities – taught the scriptures for more than 30 years.

And now Dr. Harris’ passion for reading and teaching the Bible has culminated in the publication of [“Layered Bible Journey,”](#) a book that guides readers through the Bible with a plot-driven reading plan.

“Reading the whole Bible changes your life. The challenge is starting and finishing,” Dr. Harris said. “This book gives you a plot-driven guide to read the Bible more like you would a good book. If you have been a Bible reader for a while, this will become your favorite way of reading the Bible. If you have no prior knowledge of the Bible, this guide is designed to build your knowledge of the Bible as you read – one layer at a time.”

Inspired by those who set out to read the Bible in a year but have trouble reading it in its entirety, Dr. Harris remembered how things clicked for him when he started to understand the way the Bible is laid out.

He credits mentors like Danny Key, Dr. Bill Hinson, and professors at the religion department at LaGrange College for nurturing his hunger for the Word and giving him the tools he’s still using today.

“I remember that feeling of beginning to understand how the Bible is laid out,” Dr. Harris said. “It’s made up of very different kinds of parts and yet through it all there’s this story of redemption being told. The whole witness of the Bible is a story of redemption.”

Dr. Harris laid the groundwork for “[Layered Bible Journey](#)” 15 years ago when he produced it as a pamphlet for those in his local church. What was then a 15-page document detailing the readings in order with one-sentence introductions has grown into a 527-page book that guides readers through the 66-books of the Bible in one year.

“I realized it was meeting a need,” he said. “And then I had a desire to do more than just one-sentence introductions. I feel like I’m just a guide in their journey through the Bible.”

It’s different from typical Bible-in-a-year plans in that the reader reads the Bible in three layers that build upon each other. Instead of beginning in January and reading straight through from Genesis to Revelation, not getting to the New Testament until September, when using the “Layered Bible Journey” as a guide the reader starts in Genesis but is “rewarded,” Dr. Harris said, by reading sections of the New Testament in April.

For Dr. Harris, who has served in extension ministry since 2013 as Assistant to the Bishop for Ministerial Services, the “[Layered Bible Journey](#)” feels like a new ministry that’s about to emerge and unfold. A teacher at heart, he’s excited about the way the book can help make the Bible more accessible to people, help them complete their journey through the scriptures, and help them connect with God through His Word.

“It’s kind of a culmination of two parts of my ministry that, though I’m not preaching every Sunday, I feel like now I’m getting to do the part of preaching and teaching through the written word, being a guide in other people’s journeys,” he said. “They don’t need to know Jay Harris at all ... but hopefully it will connect them with God and will be that transformative experience that I’ve had through God’s word. I desire that for others.”

Learn more at www.layeredbiblejourney.com.

Bishop David Graves calls for special session of the South Georgia Annual Conference

Bishop David Graves, episcopal leader of the South Georgia Conference, in accordance with ¶603.5 of the 2016 Book of Discipline, calls for a special session of the annual conference on Saturday, August 20, 2022. The meeting will begin at 10 a.m. EST and, at this time, is planned as a virtual session.

The purpose of the special session is to vote on any matters related to local church disaffiliations within the South Georgia Annual Conference.

According to the current South Georgia Conference disaffiliation policy, the deadline for a church to disaffiliate at the regular June Annual Conference Session is April 1 of the same year. The Bishop's announcement of a called session allows local churches additional time to have any necessary conversations.

"I want to give everyone the space to do what they need to do without feeling like they are missing a window of opportunity," Bishop Graves said. "At the same time, and even more importantly for me, I want local churches to put their focus on the Lenten season and how we can draw closer to God on this Lenten journey.

"Now more than ever we have the opportunity to be a witness for Jesus Christ in this holy season."

It is anticipated that motions will be made at the June Annual Conference Session to amend the current disaffiliation policy timeline to allow churches to vote to disaffiliate prior to the special session in August.

The special conference session will consider only matters pertaining to this call; no other business can be considered.

Elected lay members of the 2022 June Annual Conference Session will again serve as the voting lay members for the called session in August. Clergy membership of the annual conference is defined in ¶32 of the Book of Discipline. Specific delegate instructions and information will be distributed by the Conference Secretary.

If the postponed 2020 General Conference does take place in August then an alternate date for a special session will be announced for October 2022.

**The Book of Discipline ¶603.5: A special session of the annual conference may be held at such time and in such place as shall have been determined by the annual conference after consultation with the bishop, or by the bishop with the concurrence of three-fourths of the district superintendents. A special session of the annual conference shall have only such powers as are stated in the call. (See Judicial Council decision 397)

Bishop Graves announces new Conference staff positions

Bishop David Graves, resident bishop of the South Georgia Conference, has announced three conference staff positions.

Mrs. Kelly Roberson will become the new Assistant to the Bishop & Director of Conference Ministries/Communications. She will continue her duties as communications director and connectional ministries team leader with additional responsibilities to assist Bishop Graves. Roberson is a lifelong United Methodist and has worked for the South Georgia Annual Conference since 2001. She has served at all levels of the Church, including on the general church Standing Committee on Central Conference Matters, the General Commission on Communication, the SEJ Committee on Coordination and Accountability, and various conference and district committees. She has also served as a delegate to General and Jurisdictional Conferences.

In her new role, Roberson will assist the bishop in overseeing, focusing, and guiding the mission and ministries of the South Georgia Conference to align with the Conference's vision, strategic goals, and priorities. She will continue to develop and guide the implementation strategies for effective communication among the annual conference, districts, and local churches.

“Kelly is a gifted and talented resource for the South Georgia Conference,” Bishop Graves said. “She is a denominational leader in the field of communications and will continue to manage that ministry area while expanding her leadership capacity for all conference ministries. She knows the South Georgia Conference as well as anyone and will be a tremendous asset to me in the role of the Assistant to the Bishop around the ministries for this great conference. I am grateful for her knowledge, deep faith, and the expertise she has demonstrated for more than 20 years.”

Rev. Abra Lattany-Reed will be appointed as Director of Diversity and Justice Ministries in the Office of Connectional Ministries. She is currently the pastor of Harper's Chapel United Methodist Church in Baxley and will continue serving the congregation until July 1.

Rev. Lattany-Reed is a bi-vocational pastor, working as the Chief of Administrative Operations for the Department of Justice, United States Marshals Service at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Brunswick. Before being appointed to Harper's Chapel UMC she served as an associate director in the Office of Connectional Ministries.

In her new appointment, Rev. Lattany-Reed will direct the Conference's strategic efforts in diversity, equity, belonging, and advocacy and will help implement these practices in all areas of Conference and local church ministry. Working closely with Bishop Graves, Conference staff, and Conference leaders, Rev. Lattany-Reed will implement a holistic and impactful equity and inclusion strategy across the conference and focus on initiatives to create a culture of belonging and justice at all levels of the Church.

"You've heard me say that during my time with you as your bishop, I want to lead in a way that continues the work of the South Georgia Conference as we strive to do our part to change systems of injustice," Bishop Graves said. "Abra is uniquely equipped to help us do this work. She is a true servant leader with tremendous gifts and graces whose unique combination of experience in ministry and management will serve the South Georgia Conference well."

Mrs. Anne Bosarge will serve as the Director of Leadership Strategies and Local Church Resources in the Office of Connectional Ministries. Bosarge has served at The Chapel Ministries in Brunswick for 14 years and served at St. Simons Island United Methodist Church for five years prior. During her time working in the local church, Bosarge has held a variety of roles including Family Ministries Director, Discipleship Director, Multi-Campus Director, and most recently Campus Pastor of The Chapel Online. For the past two years she has also served the South Georgia Conference as Associate Director of Congregational Development, working in the area of church revitalization and leadership development.

In this new role, Bosarge, in collaboration with conference staff and leaders, will oversee the development, implementation, and evaluation of resources to align with the Conference's mission and strategic ministry goals and priorities. She will support and assist local churches to be invitational and missional and will provide oversight to lay leadership training.

"As I have traveled around South Georgia getting to know the laity and clergy of the conference it has been clear that local churches want to do their very best to reach out in mission and ministry," Bishop Graves said. "Recognizing this need, I have asked Anne to move into this new role to help equip local churches. She has been doing this work with congregational development and will expand it even further as she brings her energy, passion, and creativity to help local churches discover how they are uniquely called to be a part of expanding the Kingdom of God."

Roberson and Bosarge will begin their new roles March 1. Rev. Lattany-Reed will begin her new part-time appointment July 1.

"What I love about the Bishop's decision with these three new positions is that we already know what we will be getting! Kelly, Anne, and Abra have all served our Annual Conference and our local churches so well," said Rev. Scott Tucker, chairman of the Conference personnel committee and senior pastor of Isle of Hope United Methodist Church in Savannah. "They are known already as modeling the kind of creativity, collaboration, and compassion we need to inspire our leaders right now."

United Methodists respond to invasion of Ukraine

By Sam Hodges, *UM News*

Russia's invasion of Ukraine brought calls for prayer and statements of deep concern from United Methodists, as well as a first-hand account from a denomination member in harm's way.

"We were awakened from deep morning sleep by the sound of explosions and many phone calls from friends," said the Rev. Oleg Starodubets, a district superintendent who messaged UM News from Kyiv on Feb. 24. "People took their beloved and tried to leave the cities."

Starodubets said United Methodists in Ukraine are opening churches as shelters. He asked for prayers for peace and a Russian withdrawal from Ukraine.

"Please pray that our people will be able to reach the shelters as many roads are blocked," he added.

Starodubets posted on Facebook on Feb. 23, as the full-scale attack was imminent.

"A huge tension is felt in our air," he wrote. "We all pray for peace, but there is a real threat of full-scale war and disunity."

The Rev. Üllas Tankler, United Methodist Board of Global Ministries representative for Europe, Eurasia and North Africa, said he had been in touch with Starodubets as well as another on-the-ground United Methodist pastor, the Rev. Volodymyr Prokip in Lviv, in western Ukraine.

"(Prokip) says they are keeping vigil in their church, just to be available for any support for people in need," Tankler said.

Soon after the invasion began, Nordic-Baltic Area Bishop Christian Alsted issued [a pastoral letter](#) about the reality suddenly gripping his continent.

"There is war in Europe. Russia has invaded Ukraine, which is a free independent democracy," Alsted wrote. "War and violence are evil and always entail considerable human costs. The Christian message points to the path of reconciliation and never to war and violence, as a solution to conflicts."

Alsted directly addressed the denomination's presence in the country experiencing invasion.

"We stand with the United Methodists in Ukraine in prayer for protection, reconciliation and peace," he said. "We pray for pastors, leaders and congregations in the United Methodist Church in Ukraine; may God grant that their witness of reconciliation and peace will bring strength and hope to the Ukrainian people."

Alsted also called for prayers for Eurasia Area Bishop Eduard Khegay, who oversees the denomination's churches in both Russia and Ukraine and is based in Moscow.

After the invasion began, Khegay [shared on Facebook](#) his distress at the invasion. The post says in part:

“I am ashamed of my country and hurt for the loss of human lives. This is a disgrace. How many corpses of war should appear in Russia and Ukraine in order for this nightmare to end?”

In 2017, Khegay [hosted a peace dialogue](#) for United Methodists from Russia and Ukraine, held in Lithuania.

Germany Area Bishop Harald Rückert joined Alsted in an appeal for prayers for Khegay, who he noted “is at the center of the parties to the conflict.”

Rückert also called on United Methodists to work for peace.

“Even if it seems naïve in the face of weapons, tanks and massive power plays, ‘peacemakers’ (Matthew 5:9) and bridge builders are needed more than ever,” Rückert wrote in a statement.

Roland Fernandes is the top executive of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, and [he issued a statement](#) on behalf of the denomination's mission agency.

“We join many Christian leaders and organizations worldwide in deploring the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, and we ardently pray for a redirection of military action toward diplomatic measures to resolve grievances,” he said.

Fernandes added that the United Methodist Committee on Relief is in communication with partners in the region, exploring the coordination of humanitarian response in Ukraine.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine was noted by New York Conference Bishop Thomas Bickerton as the Commission on the General Conference met on Feb. 24 to consider whether the legislative assembly can go forward.

“We gather to discern about a meeting, but in a part of the globe today, there are people who are discerning about their very lives,” Bickerton said, going on to call for prayers for peace.

Reaction came as well from United Methodist Women.

“United Methodist Women is watching this Russian aggression against Ukraine in horror and in fervent prayer,” the group said in a statement. “We have worked for years with women's peace networks in Eastern Europe and we stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian women and people against this unjustified invasion and war.”

Some local church pastors offered statements, among them the Rev. Adam Hamilton, who leads the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection, in Leawood, Kansas – the denomination’s largest in weekly worship attendance.

“Launching unprovoked attacks on a sovereign nation without any evidence of an impending threat is immoral and unethical,” Hamilton said on Facebook. “It is immoral regardless of who does this. . . . I am praying for wisdom for the diplomats and heads of states working to address the situation.”

Fernandes, in his statement, noted that broken ties between Methodist communities in the Soviet bloc and The United Methodist Church were reestablished in the 1990s by various mission initiatives related to Global Ministries.

“We have placed numerous missionaries and young adult Global Mission Fellows in the region over the years and accept applications for missionary and mission volunteer service from both countries,” he said. “We currently have no mission personnel in Ukraine.”

The United Methodist Church’s finance and administrative agency puts the membership of the Ukraine-Moldova Provisional Annual Conference at 351, but that statistic dates to 2017.

Conflict in 2014, particularly in eastern Ukraine, [caused United Methodists to join others in fleeing](#) their homes and resulted in the disbanding of one United Methodist congregation, Khegay reported in 2017.

The Rev. John Calhoun, a Global Ministries missionary currently based in Austria, but before that in Ukraine, [wrote an essay](#) in 2020 about armed conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine and its implications for United Methodist life in the country.

Hodges is a Dallas-based writer for United Methodist News. Heather Hahn contributed. Contact them at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org. To read more United Methodist news, subscribe to the free Daily or Weekly Digests.

Moving forward in the days to come

**FROM THE BISHOP
DAVID GRAVES**

In a new [video message](#), Bishop David Graves spoke about three new conference staff positions. Watch it [here](#). Read a story about the staff updates here.

Read the full transcript of his [video message](#):

It's my great opportunity to introduce to the South Georgia Annual Conference three new positions that are going to really, I think, help impact this annual conference for the immediate future and for the future to come.

I'm so thankful that, Kelly Roberson, who you know very well, is going to take over the position of Assistant to the Bishop/Director of our Conference Ministries and also our communications.

Kelly is so gifted in all of those areas and I'm so thankful she is going to walk alongside me and you to help us really lean into all the ministries this annual conference has to offer.

Then Anne Bosarge – you're familiar with her, as well – she's going to become the Director of our Leadership Strategies in the annual conference.

Also, Abra Lattany-Reed who is going to take the role – it's been in our budget for some time – but is going to be taking the role of Director of Diversity and Social Justice Ministries.

As I've traveled this annual conference for the last four months I've heard from many of you, both clergy and lay, talk about the need, (asking) "Bishop, what are you going to do to come alongside of us and help us in the local church? What are you going to do to help with dismantling racism and social justice in our communities? And also, what are we going to do around our conference ministries?"

So as I've heard from you, and as I've prayed and sought God's guidance, I'm so thankful these three persons are going to come and give leadership in this annual conference. We're going to lean in and just focus on our mission and ministry. I hear churches, especially lay people, say, "We just want to be about our ministry. We want to be able to be sustainable; we want to thrive."

These opportunities we have with these three outstanding people are going to help us move forward in the days to come.



Appeal for peace in Russia-Ukraine conflict and how to give

By Roland Fernandes, *general secretary of Global Ministries and UMCOR.*

The General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church is deeply troubled by the conflict between Russia and Ukraine and the ominous implications it has for escalating tensions between Russia and Western nations. We join many Christian leaders and organizations worldwide in deploring the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, and we ardently pray for a redirection of military action toward diplomatic measures to resolve grievances. United Methodists are people of peace.

The United Methodist Church has mission-founded congregations in both Ukraine and Russia, some from the pre-Soviet period and others dating from post-Soviet years. Both countries are geographically within the Eurasia Episcopal Area and relate to the United Methodist central conferences of Europe. Bishop Eduard Khegay, the resident episcopal leader in Eurasia, is based in Moscow.

We join with Bishop Christian Alsted of the Nordic and Baltic Episcopal Area and chair of our denomination's Connectional Table in the prayer that conflict involving political matters will not break the unity between United Methodists in Ukraine and Russia.

Ties broken by Communism between Methodist communities in the Soviet bloc and the United Methodist denomination were reestablished in the 1990s through a number of mission initiatives related to Global Ministries. That work led to the inclusion of the whole of Eurasia into the organic structure of the church through the creation of the Eurasia Episcopal Area.

While Global Ministries has no administrative role in the affairs of annual conferences, districts or congregations in Russia or Ukraine, we are partners in mission with church units and projects in those countries. We have placed numerous missionaries and young adult Global Mission Fellows in the region over the years and accept applications for missionary and mission volunteer service from both countries. We currently have no mission personnel in Ukraine.

We pray for the peace and security of United Methodists in Ukraine and Russia and for all of their neighbors, and that tranquility will prevail over their lives and countries.

Roland Fernandes is the general secretary of Global Ministries and UMCOR.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), the humanitarian relief arm of Global Ministries, is in communication with partners in the region and actively exploring the coordination of humanitarian response in Ukraine. Support UMCOR's international disaster response efforts by making a gift to [Advance #982450](#).

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.

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.

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Freed from Captivity

Spring Quarter: God Frees and Redeems

Unit 1: Liberating Passover

Sunday school lesson for the week of March 6, 2022

By Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scriptures: Ezra 1:1-8; 2:64-70

Key Verse: Ezra 2:68

Lesson Aims

1. Recount the who, what, when, where, why, and how of Cyrus's proclamation and its result.
2. Explain the significance of King Cyrus's proclamation

The subject of the Spring Quarter lessons is "God Frees and Redeems." According to the writer of the lessons, this quarter's Scriptures address three themes of true freedom in God: the power of memory, the significance of right belief, and the role of responsibility. The quarter's lessons will show that true freedom comes through the sustained acceptance of God's leading in our lives. When the people of God remember his work, they experience true freedom. So may these lessons remind us that God invites us to live freely and responsibly for him and for our community.

We turn now to Lesson 1, "Freedom from Captivity." The first chapters of Ezra tell the story of a grand reconstruction project for Israel. For sure, older Israelites had vivid memories of their pre-exile life (Ezra 3:12). However, memories alone would not complete the reconstruction project. Israel needed help from an unlikely source. Thus, their memories, combined with unlikely assistance, put Israel on the path of following God's requirement as they resettled their homeland.

Lesson Context

As we are informed, the text of Ezra tells the story of the Jewish people during the sixth and fifth centuries BC. In 586 BC, the Babylonian Empire, led by King Nebuchadnezzar, laid siege to

Judah and destroyed Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:10-14). The siege's result was the destruction of the Jewish temple and the removal of its treasures. And the removal of the treasures and the people of Judah were prophesied by Isaiah (II Kings 20:16-17). The Babylonians carried the people of Judah – with the exception of the poorest individuals – into captivity (II Kings 24:14; II Chronicles 36:20).

However, the Babylonian's rule was short lived. In 539 B.C., the Persian King Cyrus destroyed the Babylonian Empire. He consolidated the Persian Empire's dominance in a region that extended from modern-day Greece to modern-day India. Cyrus demonstrated tolerance of the religious practices of his subjects. A notable decree in this regard was written on a clay cylinder and is known as the Cyrus Cylinder. This decree detailed Cyrus's conquest of Babylon and the favor he sought from Marduk, the patron god of Babylon. The decree culminated with the command to repatriate exiled peoples and rebuild their houses of worship. Isaiah prophesied that Cyprus, commissioned by the Lord, would provide an opportunity for the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland (Isaiah 44:28).

Very important! Cyrus's decree fulfilled a promise made earlier by the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 29:10,14). Note the prophecy's fulfillment did not necessitate the return of all exiles, only a "remnant" (Isaiah 10:22).

I. Persian Decree (Ezra 1:1-4)

Something new had happened. In the past, God had frequently made use of foreign nations through the agency of their kings, but God's purpose had always been to chastise Israel. The nations had become the roots of divine wrath (for example, Isaiah 10:5). And the writer of Chronicle's ultimate example of this activity records the devastation that resulted in the Babylonian exile (II Chronicles 36:17).

But now, when God "stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia" (1:1) with the positive intention of redemption that Israel might return to the Lord, God's use of the nations brought about a new purpose.

As the long inscription known to us from the Cyrus Cylinder makes plain, the Persian throne returned "all" the exiled communities in Babylon without distinction and covered the initial costs of the rebuilding of their sanctuaries. The motivation, at least in Cyrus's opinion, was political. Cyrus and the Persians felt that as a matter of policy it was better to give the subject people of the empire a measure of self-determination and religious autonomy in the hope that this effort would instill feelings of loyalty.

However, the audacious claim of the text remains it was God who "stirred" Cyrus to make his monumental proclamation. And the reason for God's activity in this regard is also stated "that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished (Jeremiah 29:10).

The title “God of heaven (v.2) is distinctive of the text of Ezra where nine of its 22 Old Testament occurrences are found (examples, 5:11,12; 6:9,10). The title combined with the phrase “has given me” recognized God's sovereignty as the creator of both the heavens and the earth. And while God is all-powerful as creator, he is active in his creation (Genesis 24:7; Nehemiah 1:4-5).

Cyrus proclaimed new building plans as Cyrus himself would help the exiles build God’s “temple.” That the temple would be rebuilt “at Jerusalem in Judah” reflects certain importance. You see, Ancient Israel had illegitimate worship sites at other locations (examples, 1 Kings 12:28-33; Amos 4:4). However, because of God’s declaration and King David’s leadership, Jerusalem became the political and religious center for Israel.

The decree of Cyrus did more than provide orders for the exiled people. It oriented their perspective of “God.” God had not abandoned them, but his presence was with them as they rebuilt the temple.

That God was in Jerusalem did not imply that the presence of God was limited to their city alone (example, I Kings 8:27). Rather, it indicated that God was present to his people in a special way in Jerusalem, especially his temple (Deuteronomy 12:5; 14:23).

In verse 4, it is believed that many Jews stayed in Persia and continued their already established livelihood. The Jews who stayed behind were known as the “Diaspora.” And scholars tell us that this title is an English transliteration of a Greek noun meaning “scattering” (Isaiah 11:12; James 1:12).

There is one other notation of verse 4 and that is, the Jews who did not return from exile should help those who did return, and a number of gift possibilities are mentioned.

II. Preparation for Travels (Ezra 1:5-8,11)

Scholars tell us that “just as God had stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia” to send a herald which brought about the return from Babylon (1:1), so now the people’s faithful response to that proclamation came from “everyone whose spirit God had stirred...to go up” (1:5). It is crucial that we see the gracious promptings of God as the motivational force behind both aspects of the return. God is with them, in their midst, and at their head, leading them on to a second chance, a new opportunity to affirm their place in the great plan of redemption.

In this patriarchal culture, the “heads” of the tribes consisted of the fathers of the “family.” Therefore, tribal decisions were made by the tribal chief. Tribal leadership was intact, even in the midst of exile. The specification of “Judah and Benjamin” is notable because these tribes made up the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Chronicles 11:1) and were the specific tribes taken into exile by the Babylonians (2 Kings 24:2).

“Levites” were members of the tribe of Levi. Their task was overseeing Israel’s worship, holy places, and holy objects (example, Numbers 1:47-53). The author of Ezra often listed Levites alongside the “priests” and lay people to clarify the scope of all the exiles (see Ezra 3:8).

As mentioned earlier, while Cyrus issued the decree to rebuild the temple, it was ultimately God’s plan that those “whose heart God had moved” would return to build the house of the Lord (compare 127:1).

In verse 6, we see that Cyrus’s previous commands come to fruition. Unselfish support occurred when people gave generously and willingly to assist with the construction of the temple.

Moreover, in verse 7, we see that King Cyrus took control of the royal treasury. The treasury contained the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord from the campaign of Nebuchadnezzar against Jerusalem. Apparently, Cyrus had not melted down the articles into valuable bullion. Instead, the articles were kept and placed “in the temple of his god,” perhaps at the temple of Marduk (see Lesson Context).

Ancient texts describe other instances where Cyrus returned sacred artifacts to sacred cities. By returning them to his subjects, he made himself out as a pious king who honored all gods of his empire. However, his actions did not necessitate a particular attachment to those gods, including the God of Israel.

Cyrus needed “Mithredath the Treasurer” to release the artifacts from the treasury. And he counted them out to “Sheshbazzar” who was described as the “governor” (Ezra 5:14). And his only mention in Scripture is found in the book of Ezra.

“The articles” . . . “brought from the treasury” consisted of utensils and resources made of gold and silver (see Ezra 1:9-10, not printed in this text). And these numbers reflect a desire to be precise about the story of Israel’s return.

We are told that, like other ancient temples, Israel’s temple served as the treasury in which royalty and priests stored valuable materials. That there were 5,400 vessels describes the relative wealth to be housed in the rebuilt temple. Temples were thought to be safe because ancient peoples believed theft would offend the temple’s divine occupants.

III. People Returning (Ezra 2:64-70)

The second chapter of Ezra begins by listing the family groups of exiles who returned to Judah and Jerusalem (Ezra 2:1-62). A close look at those lists will show that they do not add up to the company numbered 42,360.

Perhaps the reason is that some family units were left off the lists (see Ezra 2:59). However, according to the scholars, the list highlighted three observations about the returning people: (1) the exiles formed a family of the people of God, (2) the exiles preserved family relationships during the exile, and (3) the exiles returned to their homeland in sufficient numbers to rebuild.

The included slaves in verse 65 might refer to indebted Israelites (Leviticus 25:39,40) or to foreigners (Exodus 12:44; Deuteronomy 20:14). The prophet Isaiah called on Israel to accept foreigners (Gentiles) who loved God, kept the Sabbath, and adhered to God's covenant stipulations (Isaiah 56:3, 6-8).

The singers who returned to Jerusalem were invaluable. Their talent reminded the exiles of the beauty and enjoyment of God's creation. What talent has God given you to build his kingdom? And are you following the psalmist by worshipping the Lord with gladness (Psalm 100:1-2)?

The horses, mules, camels and donkeys, the exiles needed for their return was surely a reminder of their ancestors' exodus from Egypt (Exodus 3:21, 22). As those Israelites left Egypt, they requisitioned the necessary wealth and livestock for the journey. Without doubt, the exodus defined Israel and its relationship with God (see Deuteronomy 5:6, compare Nehemiah 9:9-15). So God repeated history for Israel's benefit, providing the exiles with sufficient resources for their return home.

Even though in verses 68-70 the temple had not been rebuilt, its ruins were likely accessible and its altar would be rebuilt (Ezra 3:2). At this point, the heads of the families took on the responsibility to encourage their households to give toward the reconstruction. That the people gave freewill offerings was reminiscent of giving for the construction of the tabernacle (Exodus 35:5).

Christian author Elizabeth Elliott says she believes the whole purpose of life is to learn to know God. Now, if finances are a part of life, then the purpose of finances must also be to know God, too – to love God and to love humankind and to share with them. Another way of expressing this is that to love God and humankind is to know the reality of “freewill offerings.”

Before concluding, two other notes: the “gold and silver” formed an endowment for the “work” of reconstructing the temple and for the “work” of the priests and second, the repatriation efforts would not occur at one time but would take time as some of the other people began to settle throughout the towns of Israel.

Conclusion

The writer of the lesson points out that after a 2019 fire destroyed parts of the cathedral of Notre Dame, an international competition redesigned the building's destroyed rooftop and spiral. Architects had to keep in mind a variety of concerns: rebuilding costs, the cathedral's history, and the relationship between the cathedral and the city.

Our lesson today of the Jews returning from exile to their homeland has similar concerns. However, what could have been a disastrous mess was avoided because God provided excellent direction through a decree of Persia's King Cyrus.

Thus, God was with His people, at their head, leading them on to a second chance, a fresh opportunity to claim their place in God's story of redemption.

Action Plan

1. What some ways Christians might live as exiles in the world?
2. How do you recognize God's call to action? What questions might you ask to test that you are hearing from God? And how might Romans 12:2 and 1 John 4:1 support your answer?
3. What are one or two ways you can ensure a generous heart when giving?

Resources for this lesson

1. "2021-2022 NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, Uniform Series, International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching," pages 227-239.
2. "Interpretation Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Ezra-Nehemiah" by Mark Throntveit, pages 13-18.
3. "Interpreter's Bible, Volume 3," pages 570-575; 587-588.

Dr. Hal Brady is a retired pastor who continues to present the Good News of Jesus Christ and offer encouragement in a fresh and vital way through Hal Brady Ministries (halbradyministries.com).

Free to Worship

Spring Quarter: God Frees and Redeems

Unit 1: Liberating Passover

Sunday school lesson for the week of March 13, 2022

By Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scriptures: Ezra 6:1-12

Key Verse: Ezra 6:12a

Lesson Aims

3. List the main points of the decree.
4. Compare and contrast the decree of Darius with that of Cyrus (last week's lesson).
5. Commit to praying for opportunities to practice faithfulness in the tasks that God has assigned.

The once exiled residents of Judah and Jerusalem tried to exert their sovereignty in their homeland as they reconstructed the temple. In the process, certain forces delayed and prevented the construction. However, rather than giving up on the construction or acting violently against their opposition, these resettled Jews found support for their construction efforts from a surprising source.

This might be a good place to be reminded that it's especially in difficult circumstances and trying situations that God calls his people to be faithful to his purpose for their lives. The question is, how has and is God calling us, you and me, to obey and through what unexpected circumstances?

Lesson Context

This lesson contains the text of a decree of Persian King Darius I (reigned 522-486 BC). He came to power after several years of internal strife. Darius strengthened the Persian government, established a new method of taxation, and further organized the empire.

The decree continued a policy established by Cyrus (reigned 539-530 BC). His policy allowed for the return of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the Jewish temple (last week's lesson).

Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the exiles returned to Jerusalem and Judah (Ezra 2:1-2; Zechariah 4:9). Two years after the exiles returned, reconstruction began on the temple in Jerusalem in 535 BC (Ezra 3:8-9). However, the reconstruction was delayed several times by local opposition and regional authorities.

So today's scripture lesson comes as a response to questioning from Persian officials Tattenai (Tat-nye) and Shethar-Bozanai (She-thar-boz-nye). After seeing the efforts at reconstruction, they questioned Zerubbabel and the local leaders concerning whose authority granted them rebuilding rights (Ezra 5:3,9). The builders noted that their authority came from God and Cyrus. Immediately, a letter was sent to Darius to inquire on the nature and authority of Cyrus's decree (5:5-17). Thus, today's lesson concerns Cyrus's decree and Darius's response to the Persian officials.

But, there always seems to be an ulterior motive. While Darius was concerned with following Cyrus's decree, he also had a pragmatic reason to support the temple's reconstruction. By allowing agreeable Israelites to return to their homeland, Darius would have loyal subjects located in a geographically expedient place near Egypt, a region known for its rebelliousness and insurrections.

In addition, Darius would be able to bring about a new tax system among the repatriated Jews in the regions of Judah, thus adding to his coffers.

I. The Conduct of a Search (Ezra 6:1-2)

We are told that archaeological remains of Persian archives reveal detailed reports of taxes, expenditures, and local government occurrences throughout the empire. But, not all official records were stored at "Babylon." Other cities held local and national records and treasures. Therefore, a search for Cyrus's records would extend outside the capital.

That search for Cyrus's decree took investigators to "Ecbatana," a city located about 285 miles northeast of Babylon. The city served as the summer palace for Persian royalty, so it is possible that Cyrus issued his decree there during the summer of 538 BC.

II. The Content of the Decree (Ezra 6:3-12)

The focus of Cyrus's decree in chapter 6:3-5 expands a direction previously given in chapter 1:2-4. King Cyrus had given permission for the Jewish exiles to return to their homeland. Now, the text elaborates on a key detail of their return: the "reconstruction of the temple of God in Jerusalem."

Prior to Darius's decree, the altar, "the place to present sacrifices," had been reconstructed (Ezra 3:2-3). Now the temple would be built to provide space for worship.

Direction for the temple's reconstruction were given – height and width were to be sixty cubits or approaching 90 feet each way. A cubit equals about 18 inches. On the other hand, the dimensions of Solomon's temple were different – length 60 cubits, width 20 cubits and height 30 cubits (I Kings 6:2). The decree did not include the temple's length. One might assume that its length would match its height and width. If this assumption is correct then the building would form a perfect cube. This shape would echo the dimensions of the Most Holy Place of Solomon's temple (I Kings 6:20).

Archaeological discoveries in modern-day Syria have shown that the use of "timbers" after several rows of "large stones" helped buildings survive earthquakes. Cyrus's decree does not elaborate here.

What about the costs? Those remaining in exile contributed to the temple's reconstruction (Ezra 1:4,6). But in an act of goodwill, the decree placed part of the financial burden on the "royal treasury," and these funds come to the treasury by new taxation practices (see 6:8).

In verse 5, the centrality of the sacred "articles," their removal from "the house of God," and their eventual return to the temple is again made evident by Cyrus's repetition (compare Ezra 1:7-11). These articles were made by Solomon and were used at the temple for worship (I Kings 7:48-51). However, Nebuchadnezzar confiscated them and took them to Babylon following the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem.

Note that these articles had been used in unholy ways during the exile (Daniel 5:1-4). Therefore they would need to be re-consecrated before they were "returned and deposited into the temple." The restorative act required sacred anointing oil (example, Exodus 30:22-25). Important! The presence of these items in the newly restored temple represented the restoration of Israelite life as the holy people of God.

What do you think? How can Christians show the new life and restoration found in Christ Jesus?

What follows in verses 6 and 7 are the direct words of Darius to his officials, Tattenai and Shethar-Bozanai (see lesson context). The Trans Euphrates refers to the area west of the Euphrates River and east of the Mediterranean Sea. This area was a province of the Persian Empire of which Tattenai was governor. The identity and role of the other officials of that province is unclear.

Zerubbabel served as the governor of the Jews who had returned from exile. The governor coordinated local affairs with the Persian authorities. Another group of localized leaders consisted of the Jewish elders. They handled local affairs like family disputes or village conflicts. All this allowed the leaders to maintain good relationships with the Persians and the Persians to maintain control over the province without overt concern in local matters. However, Darius's message here is do not interfere with the reconstruction of the temple.

In reply to the letter questioning the Jewish authority to reconstruct the temple, Darius's reply is nothing less than a full confirmation of Cyrus's permission that immediately precedes it. In fact, it goes beyond the original decree.

According to Darius, the cost of the project was to be paid from the royal treasury and this enabled an aura of official support to the temple reconstruction. The Persians provided space for the reconstruction and some financial backing.

Specifically, Darius committed to funding part of the temple's construction expense from taxes and revenues from the Trans-Euphrates province. This action reflects a larger policy to restore and provide for local temples and cults in the empire. Darius's financial generosity highlighted his desire to honor the temple, whether or not he believed in the temple's God.

On the morning of January 17, 1994, the heavily trafficked Santa Monica Freeway lay in ruins. That morning an earthquake had rocked Los Angeles and the surrounding region. A portion of the freeway, known for its heavy traffic, was no longer passable. As a result, traffic delays and congestion increased throughout Los Angeles.

Because the freeway was crucial for the livelihood of the region, local officials offered a financial incentive for the freeway's rapid reconstruction. As a result, the project was completed two months ahead of schedule. The financial backing encouraged workers to rebuild rapidly. Without a restored freeway, the livelihood of Los Angeles was at stake.

Hear me now! As unexpected as that financial backing was, the backing by Darius was all the more so. A pagan king who offered to help subsidize Israel's temple! Through what unexpected measures has God provided for you to do his work?

In addition to financial backing, Darius ordered officials to provide the necessary resources for regular sacrifices in the temple (see Leviticus 1:2-13; 22:27; Numbers 7:87-88; 1 Chronicles 29:21). With these animals the returning exiles would eventually offer sacrifices (Ezra 8:35).

"Flour" made of wheat was used alongside daily sacrifices and burnt offerings. "Salt" accompanied grain offerings and burnt offerings. The preservative properties of salt served as a reminder of the preserving nature of God's covenant (Numbers 18:19).

"Oil" accompanied the sacrifices and "wine" was presented as a drink offering (Exodus 29:40).

As we are informed, Darius's use of the title "God of heaven" acknowledged the power and scope of the exiles' God. This God is the creator of all things and omnipotent (all-powerful) over all creation, even the Persian Empire (Genesis 14:19; Isaiah 37:16).

Now Darius's motives for backing the reconstruction became evident he desired that the returning exiles have a location where they might "offer sacrifices" rightly. And he hoped that the "God of the Jews" would be content and would hear their prayers, specifically those for "the king and his sons." Additionally, prayers offered nightly were considered to be "a pleasing aroma" to God.

In verses 11 and 12, we see one other part of Darius's decree. It is his intention to enforce the prescriptions of Cyrus with severe penalties for noncompliance.

As with a covenant or a royal inscription, the decree ended with a warning or curse for anyone who might disregard and defy the "edict" of the king. And ancient audiences would not have been shocked by such a dramatic and violent conclusion. Worshippers and leaders would have thought it appropriate that anyone

not knowing the temple of a god should have their own house destroyed and turned “to rubble” (compare Jeremiah 26:1-6).

The form of punishment for this disobedience is really unclear. It could have meant hanged, crucified or “impaled.” Impalement was an ancient New Eastern practice or method of execution whereby a spiked stake was set in the ground (or wall) and a living body thrust upon it. Even though Jewish audiences would be familiar with it, the Law of Moses restricted the practicing of it (Deuteronomy 21:22-23). Persian officials would have a similar gruesome fate after a failed assassination attempt.

The decree’s final line (verse 12) acknowledges the “presence of God” and the protection of all under his domain. This is the same God who promised to choose a place where he would cause his name to dwell (Deuteronomy 12:11, Exodus 20:24). This promise referred to the unique place where God met his people, the “temple in Jerusalem.”

Darius anticipated that Israel’s God would protect his holy place and all within its premises.

While it is unlikely that Darius was influenced by ancient Hebrew literature, the psalmist warned against the “kings of the earth...and the rulers” who “band together against the Lord and against his anointed” (Psalm 2:2). The Lord would “break them” and “dash them to pieces” (2:9). Those who went against the Lord and his intentions would be destroyed.

In concluding, the writer of the lesson points out that while the temple of God that Darius envisioned no longer stands, God’s promises to watch over his “temple” remains true. (see I Corinthians 3:16,17).

Conclusion

The sovereignty the Jews gained under Cyrus and maintained under Darius was short-lived. In the centuries that followed, the Jewish people experienced many years of occupation. However, in that specific season under the reign of and support from Darius, the Jews survived and even flourished as they resettled their homeland.

It is especially in difficult circumstances and trying situations that God calls his people to be faithful to his purposes for their lives. That Cyrus and Darius, two Gentile leaders, allowed for the resettlement of Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the temple shows the surprising ways God provides for his people. Through what unexpected circumstances might God be calling you to obey?

Action Plan

4. How can Christians make sure they are not hindering the work of God?
5. How might the government use its authority for the God of the governed?
6. What surprises has God given you in seeking to answer his call?

Resources for this lesson

4. “2021-2022 NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, Uniform Series, International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching,” pages 241-247.
5. “Interpretation Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Ezra-Nehemiah” by Mark Throntveit, pages 29-34.

6. “Interpreter’s Bible, Volume 3,” pages 606-610.

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John Wesley’s “Christian Library”

JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS

DAVE HANSON

John Wesley said, “I am a man of one book,” showing the importance he placed on the Bible. However, Wesley believed in reading many books. He encouraged his followers to read. But there were problems. Books were often too expensive and difficult to read.

In an effort to make books less expensive and simpler he published his “Christian Library” – 50 volumes! He took the writings of others and abridged them – something like “CliffsNotes” today. He made them shorter and therefore less expensive. He said that he took out sometimes a third of the words, sometimes half, sometimes two thirds, and sometimes nine out of 10. He also substituted simple, plain words for more complex ones. His title for this “Christian Library” was “Extracts From and Abridgements of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity Which Have Been Published in the English Language.”

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

UMCOR delivers hope to hurting people

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

Many United Methodists have heard of UMCOR. The United Methodist Committee on Relief does great work in places most of us have never been and maybe have never heard of, either. They respond after natural disasters like floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and mudslides. They are working all over the world in places like Haiti and New Orleans, helping to feed and rebuild.

What many may not know is that UMCOR also responds to man-made disasters and goes to places ravaged by conflict and war. One such place is Yemen. The first time I can remember hearing the word Yemen was on the show “Friends.” It sounded like a nice place. It may have been then, but it isn’t now.

Yemen is in the midst of a civil war. There are as many as 4 million women and children who are fleeing from the ravages of war. They are hungry, thirsty, tired, scared, and wondering if the war will reach them yet again. In the midst of this moment there is hope.

UMCOR has partnered with the Blue Crescent, another non-governmental agency that works in the Middle East, to deliver food, medical supplies, and hope. We might not think much of the food box. It has simple items like flour, sugar, oil, rice, and cans of beans, but to a starving population it means everything. To a young boy of 10 who has not had beans perhaps three years, beans are a luxury he can only dream of having.

When we give to UMCOR in our apportionments it frees up every donation they receive thereafter to use for disaster relief, both natural and human caused. Learn more about this story by reading [this article](#).

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

Retired Clergy Birthdays – March 2022

- 3/01 – Ralph Bailey: 9650 Lehigh Ave.; Savannah, GA 31406
- 3/01 – Buddy Whatley: 2153 Bold Springs Rd.; Ochlocknee, GA 31773
- 3/02 – Gene Yates: 705 Curl Rd.; East Dublin, GA 31027
- 3/03 – Ricky Bishop: 292 Timberwind Dr.; Byron, GA 31008
- 3/05 – Tim Paulk: 104 Lee Rd. 2153; Salem, AL 36874
- 3/06 – Ellison Whitt: 443 Lee Smith Rd.; Ellaville, GA 31806
- 3/08 – Jerry Lillard: 253 Paul Lockley Rd.; Lyons GA 30436
- 3/09 – Grover Bell: 333 E. 53rd St.; Savannah, GA 31405
- 3/10 – Joey Cannon: 146 Callaway St.; Leesburg, GA 31763
- 3/15 – Brenda Iglehart: 305 Palm Club Circle.; Brunswick, GA 31525
- 3/16 – Joel Dent: 1819 Pine Forest Circle; Dublin, GA 31021
- 3/16 – Truett Leveritt: PO Box 15893; Savannah, GA 31416
- 3/16 – Vance Mathis: PO Box 222; Bonaire, GA 31005
- 3/17 – George Durham: 844 Woods Hole Circle; Statesboro, GA 30461
- 3/17 – David Seyle: 304 Causton Harbour Dr.; Savannah, GA 31404
- 3/18 – Tom Oliver: 511 Victory Dr.; Waynesboro, GA 30830
- 3/20 – Ronnie Culpepper: 2848 Sue Mack Dr.; Columbus, GA 31906
- 3/20 – Dan MacMinn: PO Box 1325; Ellaville, GA 31806
- 3/21 – Delia Steffen: 128 Cambridge Way; Macon, GA 31220
- 3/22 – Beverly Flowers: 390 Brook Hollow Dr.; McDonough, GA 30252
- 3/22 – Tommy Mason, Jr.: 7321 US Highway 41; Vienna, GA 31092
- 3/23 – Dwight Bishop: 15 Blue Magnolia Dr.; Alapaha, GA 31622
- 3/23 – James McIlrath: 748 Old Jesup Rd.; Brunswick, GA 31520
- 3/23 – Jimmy Pennell: 2257 S. Lakeshore Dr.; Lake Junaluska, NC 28745

3/24 – Larry E. Bird: 325 Langston Chapel Rd.; Statesboro, GA 30458-3773
3/24 – Rob Grotheer: 4 Druid Court; Savannah, GA 31410
3/28 – Hal Brady: 36 Lullwater Estate; Atlanta, GA 30307

OBITUARIES

Rev. James P. Walker

James P. Walker, 82, of Tifton, passed away Friday, February 25, 2022, at his residence. His funeral service was held Sunday, February 27, 2022, in the Chapel of Bowen-Donaldson Home for Funerals with Enoch Hendry officiating. Mr. Walker will be laid to rest at a later date.

Honorary pallbearers were the Little River Wood Turners.

Born August 24, 1939, in Tifton, Mr. Walker was the son of the late James Calvin Walker and Mildred Branch Walker. He received his Master's Degree in Divinity from Emory University. He was the former pastor at Herring Memorial United Methodist Church in Tifton and retired as a United Methodist pastor. He was a member of the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church. He was also a retired farmer and a retired pilot for the Georgia Forestry Commission. He was a member of the Little River Wood Turners. He loved his wife and family and he loved flying.

Mr. Walker is survived by his wife, Charlotte "Jerry" Bundy Walker of Tifton; two sons and daughters-in-law, Clark and Julie Walker of Tifton and Michael and Kate Walker of Arcata, California; one brother and sister-in-law, Jerry and Mary Lee Walker of Griffin; one sister, Jane Campbell of Tifton; and two grandchildren, Bryson Walker and Claire Walker.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Mount Calvary United Methodist Church, P. O. Box 1913, Tifton, GA 31793.

Scripture Readings – March 1 edition

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

Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16 (UMH 810)
Romans 10:8b-13
Luke 4:1-13

March 13
Second Sunday in Lent
Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18
Psalm 27 (UMH 758)
Philippians 3:17-4:1
Luke 13:31-35

Events in the South Georgia Conference – 3/1/2022 edition

Join the Journey Confirmation Retreat – March 4-6

The South Georgia Conference's 21st annual retreat will be held at Epworth By The Sea March 4-6, 2022. For more information, [click here](#) or contact Suzanne Akins, Director of Camping and Retreats, at (912) 638-8626, ext.107 or suzanne@sgaumc.com.

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 or Mac Wooldridge at macdaddy1977@gmail.com. [Register](#)

Unto the Least of His Leadership Conference – March 22-23

Unto the Least of His will host a Leadership Conference March 22-23 at Wesley UMC in Macon. The conference has been designed for leaders to meet with other dreamers to explore possibilities as a leader within the church. To register for the conference, visit to totheleast.com. This conference has been approved for one CEU credit for in-person or online attendance. Contact Rev. Bobby Gale at 478-233-0345 or bobby@totheleast.com for more information.

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 or call 888-346-3862. [UMCOR Sunday Pastor and Leader's Kit](#)

Online Basic Lay Servant Training – April 12, April 14, April 19, April 21

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. Basic LSM Training includes a basic foundation of the faith and an introduction to leadership. This training will be offered via Zoom. Registration fee for the class is \$25. For more information contact Anne Bosarge at anne@thechapelministries.com.

United Methodist Men Spiritual Life Retreat – April 22-23

The South Georgia Conference's United Methodist Men will gather for their annual retreat April 22-23 at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Bishop James Swanson, episcopal leader of the Mississippi Conference and president of the General Commission of United Methodist Men, will be the featured speaker. The Goshen Travelers Praise Band will provide musical leadership. [Download brochure](#)