

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – SEPTEMBER 6 EDITION

Isaac and Paty Salgado find ‘esperanza’ on mission trip to the DR

By Allison Lindsey, *Advocate Contributor*

When Rev. Isaac and Mrs. Paty Salgado boarded the plane for the Dominican Republic early one morning in late July 2022, they carried extra baggage. Not baggage in the form of luggage but baggage in the form of worry, busyness of work, church activities, family, and the growing uncertainty of The United Methodist Church. All of this weighed heavily upon them. Leading right up to the time of departure, they even questioned whether now was the appropriate time to go.

Rev. Salgado serves Waynesboro United Methodist Church where their congregation is blessed to be home to John and Donna Bearden, a missionary couple leading the work of Big Hope Ministry. The Beardens lived in the Dominican Republic for several years and continue to serve the people there alongside [Iglesia Evangelica Dominicana](#), one of the largest protestant denominations in the country.

The Salgados were asked to be part of this multi-denominational medical mission team to serve as translators for the doctors and nurses. This mission journey was coordinated by a group from Pittman Park UMC in Statesboro led by Dr. Randy Smith and included members from Grace Fellowship Baptist Church in Greensboro, Ga. and Waynesboro UMC.

A highlight of the trip for the Salgados was Sunday morning when Rev. Salgado preached in Spanish for the Sunday worship service and the team then ministering to their brothers and sisters in attendance. Mrs. Salgado described this cross-cultural worship experience as a great time of fellowship and blessing with ‘one God, one Spirit, one heart.’ The very next day the work they came to do began.

The team served five bateyes, a term used to refer to a rural community of sugarcane workers, during their time in the Dominican Republic. They felt the love and mercy of God each and every day as they served. Makeshift clinics were set up at each site, team members processed patients for intake, doctors and nurses attended patients, tests were run in the lab, the vision team tested and provided glasses for patients, and the pharmacy team completed the patient’s visit with needed medications. By the end of the week, over 700 Dominican and Haitian children, youth, and adults had been cared for physically and prayed for by the mission team.

Although the days were long and tiring, the hearts and spirits of the team were uplifted.

“What did I learn from this experience?” said Mrs. Salgado. “I learned that God is still at work! The church of God keeps sharing and proclaiming about the love and peace of God! God is still using His people, His church. Just for a week, we forgot about all our worries and fears and let God fill us with His love and grace to remember our call to go and heal the sick, make disciples, and proclaim His word.”

The Salgados traveled to the Dominican Republic to help translate for the team and carry the good news of the gospel in their native tongue. But what they found was that God had a message for them. The message that God was sharing became clear. The message was one of promise and hope, or ‘esperanza’.

“It is incredible what the church can do when we focus on the important things,” said Rev. Salgado. “When the gospel is proclaimed, there is freedom. Yes, we were on a medical mission, but we prayed for people, shared the word with them, and saw lives transformed!”

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13



Conference votes on church disaffiliations, adjusted 2023 budget

During a special called South Georgia Annual Conference session on August 20, 2022, clergy and lay members voted on matters related to disaffiliation, including ratifying the disaffiliation of 62 congregations and approving an adjusted budget for the 2023 calendar year.

Bishop David Graves, episcopal leader of the South Georgia Conference, opened the 157th session of the South Georgia Annual Conference with a centering moment from Colossians 3.

Reading from Colossians 3:12-15, Bishop Graves encouraged members to keep this as their prayer as each church and person moves forward in the direction God is leading and calling them.

“May we clothe ourselves with a sense of humility and thankfulness and remember that we are united in one body in the love of Christ; we are Easter people,” Bishop Graves said. “As we move through this time there is a lot of emotion and wonderment, but let us rest assured that God is on the throne. The Holy Spirit is powerful and moving amongst us.”

Prior to moving into the business of the day, clergy and laity recited together the Apostles Creed.

In the first item of business, the South Georgia Conference [voted to ratify the decision of 62 local churches](#) to disaffiliate from The United Methodist Church.

Provisions passed at the called 2019 Special Session of the General Conference outlined in paragraph 2553 in [The Book of Discipline](#) and two policies passed during the 2019 South Georgia Annual Conference session – a [Disaffiliation Policy](#) and a [Pension Liabilities Proposal](#) – laid the groundwork for the following churches to disaffiliate.

From the Coastal District: Bethesda, Folkston, Gateway Community, Kingsland, Mt. Olivet, Odum, Screven, The Chapel.

From the North Central District: Andrew, Bonaire, Dexter, Dudley, Forest Hills, Haddock, Harvest, Sunshine.

From the Northeast District: Adrian, Alston, Charlotte, Ellis Chapel, Glennville, Grace, Harmony, Hopewell, Kea’s, Nevils, Oak Grove, Poplar Springs, Sardis, Shiloh, Smyrna, Springhill, Union, Uvalda, Vidalia First.

From the Northwest District: Bethel, Dixon, Roberta, Shellman, Trinity, Union.

From the South Central District: Adel, Alapaha, Beulah, Brookfield, Enigma, Lone Hill, Pearson, Sparks, St. John’s, Willacoochee.

From the Southwest District: Calvary, Centennial, Christ, Doerun, Ebenezer, Hatley, Metcalfe, Mt Zion (Campground), Peavy, Weeks Chapel, Whigham.

After the conference approved the disaffiliation of these churches, Bishop Graves offered a prayer of thanksgiving for each church and its ministry.

It read, in part, “We have shared with each other good times and bad, we have shared each other’s joys and sorrows, we have lightened each other’s heavy loads. Together we have laughed and cried, together we have worshiped and praised God, together we have lived.”

Per the policies adopted, once each congregation pays their pension liabilities, two years of apportionments, and any legal fees involved, they will be released from the trust clause and will own their property.

In the second item of business, conference members approved [three adjustments to the 2023 budget](#) that was approved in June: a reduction to the Congregational Development budgeted line item, a reduction to the Comprehensive Protection Plan budgeted line item, and a reduction to the contingency line item. [These proposed reductions total \\$223,847](#), which will ensure that remaining churches do not have increased apportionments resulting from local church disaffiliations. The new 2023 budget is \$7,713,021.

During his report, Rev. Robert Beckum, budget committee chair for the conference’s Council on Finance and Administration (CFA), thanked churches for their support and also acknowledged additional challenges in setting the 2024 budget at next year’s Annual Conference session.

“We thank our Bishop for his leadership as we gather a larger conversation about our mission and priorities before we set a new budget for 2024,” Rev. Beckum said. “Together we believe we can meet the challenge and serve our Lord fruitfully in the years to come.”

In his closing remarks, Bishop Graves invited people to join him in [district meetings in September](#).

“I want to answer questions but also share hopes and dreams for the future,” Bishop Graves said. “In the midst of all of this, I hope you will join me in being excited about ministry and winning people to Christ and changing our corner of the world. You are doing it every day in spite of all the obstacles.

“I have great hope for the future. Let’s focus and continue to work together,” he said.

Minutes of the special called session will be included in the 2022 South Georgia Annual Conference *Journal*, which will be available later this fall.

[An updated 2022-2023 Appointment Book can be found here.](#)



Revised budget approved, missional apportionment numbers to be sent to churches

At the called session of Annual Conference on August 20, 2022, a revised 2023 Conference budget was approved. This budget is \$223,000 lower than the budget approved at the June Annual Conference session for the 2023 year.

“We did not want those churches which have faithfully remained to bear an extra financial burden,” Rev. Robert Beckum, budget committee chair for the conference’s Council on Finance and Administration (CFA), said in his presentation during the online session. “We lowered the original 2023 budget, taking into consideration those churches which left in June. We now propose additional reductions to account for churches leaving in August.”

Conference members approved [three adjustments to the 2023 budget](#): a reduction to the Congregational Development budgeted line item, a reduction to the Comprehensive Protection Plan budgeted line item, and a reduction to the contingency line item. [These reductions total \\$223,847](#), which will ensure that remaining churches do not have increased apportionments resulting from local church disaffiliations. The new 2023 budget is \$7,713,021.

CFA reported in June that the situation is fluid.

“We are tracking budget projections carefully and adjusting to the current circumstance,” Dr. Derek McAleer, Conference Treasurer, said.

Rev. Beckum reported that CFA recognizes the 2024 budget will be particularly challenging. The Council has consulted with Bishop Graves, who is convening the Leadership Forum – a representative working group of the Annual Conference – to give oversight to the work of larger reductions which may be necessary.

In addition to the conference adjusted budget, the 6 districts have also amended their 2023 District apportionments. District finance committees have reviewed their own missional needs and the revenue changes expected from disaffiliations and made the needed adjustments.

With updated numbers in hand, the 2023 missional apportionments will soon be sent to South Georgia United Methodist congregations.

The Administrative Services Office is currently running new calculations and will have the preliminary apportionment number mailed as quickly as possible.

“Due to the upcoming charge conferences, there will be a short window in which to review these preliminary askings and request adjustments,” Dr. McAleer said. “We appreciate treasurers and finance committees helping us in this work by responding quickly.”

Rev. Beckum thanked churches for their support, “Together we believe we can meet the challenge and serve our Lord fruitfully in the years to come.”



Bishop Graves Announces Diversity, Inclusion, and Vitality Task Force

A Word from the Bishop

It has been one full year since I was assigned as the bishop of the South Georgia Annual Conference. As I began my tenure here in South Georgia, I watched the trial for those convicted of killing Ahmaud Arbery unfold. The video, the story surrounding Ahmaud’s murder, and the trial captured not just my attention but the nation’s attention.

As eyes were focused on Brunswick, Georgia one thing I am certain of amidst all of the heartache: the nation saw a faith community come together in unity and prayer. I witnessed this first hand during one of the many prayer rallies on the doorsteps of the courthouse. The ecumenical leadership of the Brunswick-area churches sought to be people who expressed themselves in a spirit of peace, not hostility.

We were reminded last fall – and continue to be reminded – that we live in an unjust world. As followers of Jesus, we are reminded that mercy, grace, forgiveness, and love must abound amid the injustices of this world. However, we must strive to eliminate the injustices that continue to happen to people, especially people of color.

One of my priorities as your episcopal leader that I announced last fall is a focus on disrupting and dismantling racism. 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 and help see the vision of the prophet Amos fulfilled: “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” (Amos 5:24 NRSV)

Rev. Doreen Smalls, Southwest District Superintendent, Mrs. Kelly Roberson, Director of Conference Ministries, and most recently Rev. Abra Lattany-Reed, who is now on staff as the Director of Diversity and Justice Ministries, worked over the course of the last 8 months with Rev. April Casperson, a diversity and inclusion consultant, to lay the groundwork for the formation of a working group.

It is my honor to now announce the formation and launch of the Bishop’s Diversity, Inclusion, and Vitality Task Force. Members of the Task Force include:

- Rev. Jimmy Cason
- Rev. Michael Culbreath
- Mr. Archie Grubb
- Ms. Meika Hilsman
- Rev. Cedric Jackson
- Rev. Daniel Medina
- Mrs. Debra Thomas
- Ms. Patsy J. Thomas

Conference staff members:

- Rev. Abra Lattany-Reed
- Mrs. Kelly Roberson
- Rev. Doreen Smalls

This group will explore how the South Georgia Conference can better work across our differences: race, gender, socioeconomic status, theology/politics, ability, and more. As we meet this Fall and into 2023, you will hear more about how the churches of the South Georgia Conference can partner with and engage in this important work.

I am excited about how God will challenge us and use us here in South Georgia. May we join together in prayer that justice will reign and people will have a spirit of peace: God, lead us to peaceful streams. Help us, Lord, and may your peace begin in each of us. Amen and amen.

In Christ,

Bishop David Graves



Wesleyan College partners with Duke Divinity School

Committed to the shared values of educational opportunities and excellence, Wesleyan College and Duke Divinity School have joined together to offer a program that provides a unique combination of liberal and professional education well suited for those desiring entry to the fields of ordained and lay ministry.

This pathway is designed for highly qualified Wesleyan College students to accelerate their course of study by completing both their bachelor's degree while taking graduate level courses at Duke, saving both time and money for students planning to pursue a graduate theological degree.

Beginning in the third year of undergraduate study, students can begin taking graduate level courses eligible to apply toward completion of requirements for the Hybrid Master of Divinity or Hybrid Master of Arts in Christian Practice degree at Duke. Although designed to accommodate a wide range of undergraduate backgrounds, majors in the humanities, including religion and/or philosophy, are best suited to the program.

Upon completion of requirements for the baccalaureate degree, students may apply for admission to Duke Divinity School. Accelerated Program students will be eligible to matriculate in the term immediately following conferral of the baccalaureate degree. Graduate credits already earned from Duke may be applied to the designated degree program.



Registration open for fall children's and youth retreats

Registration is now open for KidzQuest, the Conference's annual fall children's retreat for students in third through sixth grades, and Encounter, the Conference's annual youth retreat for students in sixth through twelfth grades.

KidzQuest is scheduled for September 23-25 2022, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island for 3rd-6th grade students. [More information & registration](#)

Encounter Youth Retreat, for 6th-12th grade students, will take place November 18-20, 2022, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. [More information & registration](#)

www.sgaumc.org/kidzquest
www.sgaumc.org/encounter



Bishop Graves to meet with Laity in District Gatherings September 11, 18, & 25

During three weeks in September, Bishop David Graves will travel across the South Georgia Conference to meet with clergy and laity in various settings. The purpose of these gatherings is to provide necessary and accurate information around current denominational matters. While the three Sunday district gatherings are geared toward laity, all are welcome to attend. The Sunday gathering dates are as follows:

- September 11: District Gathering for the North Central & Northwest Districts at Perry UMC from 4pm – 6 pm
- September 18: District Gathering for the South Central & Southwest Districts at Tifton First UMC from 4pm – 6pm
- September 25: District Gathering for the Coastal & Northeast Districts at Richmond Hill UMC from 4pm – 6pm

Clergy will have an opportunity to meet with the bishop while he is in each district for clergy specific meetings. The weekday gatherings are for clergy only.

“I look forward to visiting, talking with, and listening to clergy and laity from each district as we seek to bring clarity around where we are as a denomination and a conference,” said Bishop Graves. “I hope you will make plans now to be a part of a gathering near you.”

[Click here for more information](#). Already know a question you would like to ask Bishop Graves? You can submit your questions ahead of time using the following links. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions at the gathering.

- [Questions for the September 11 Gathering](#) (North Central & Northwest Districts)
- [Questions for the September 18 Gathering](#) (South Central & Southwest Districts)
- [Questions for the September 25 Gathering](#) (Coastal & Northeast Districts)



God Chooses the Younger Twin

Fall Quarter: God’s Exceptional Choice

Unit 1: God Calls Abraham’s Family

Sunday School Lesson for the week of September 11, 2022

By Craig Rikard

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 25:19-34

Key Text

The Lord said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger.” Gen. 25:23

Lesson Aims

1. To recognize the importance of context when reading an O.T. narrative.
2. To recognize the three sins present in the narrative for the purposes of avoiding and overcoming.
3. To recognize God’s grace and divine purpose at work in spite of our sins and frailty.

Author’s note: This lesson is to supplement the lesson in the book.

Introduction

The Bible never attempts to hide the sins of its most notable characters. The men and women God used to reveal the Lord’s divine will all had feet of clay. We will examine the three destructive sins operative in the narrative. The recognition of these sins serves a reminder to avoid them and to minister to those effected by them. One of the grand dynamics in Scripture is the reality that God accomplishes the divine purpose in spite of frail, and at times sinful, people. Often God transforms our sins and weaknesses into good.

Studying the Narrative in Context

It is important to realize there are two worldviews present when studying scripture, especially the Old Testament. First, there is the worldview of the Old Testament near-eastern people. Secondly, there is the worldview of the student. Thus, the narrative is written by an author that holds a different worldview than the teacher and reader. We possess a western worldview that can prove drastically different from the Old Testament people. Here is a sampling of the important distinctions:

1. In the Old Testament world, the community was more highly valued than the individual. An individual was expendable if they became a threat to the community. For example, the story of Achan troubles us when we read it. Achan and his entire family are killed for bringing a threat to the Israelite community. Read Joshua 7 for an account of Achan's sin and death. The Israelite community believed if a member of the community sinned against God their sin would corrupt the community and possibly bring God's judgement upon them. Therefore, Achan and his family were killed for the protection of the community.

In the western world, we highly value the individual - at times more than the community. We place great emphasis and value upon the rights of the individual. We protect the individual's way of life and thinking even if they stand in contrast to the larger community. We worry far more about the sin and injustice of the larger community and its effect upon the individual.

2. The Old Testament worldview was very patriarchal. The male possessed far more power and was treated as having higher value than the female. Few examples are more poignant than the passing of the birthright. The firstborn male received the entire birthright. Even if the first born was a female, she received no birthright. The concept of a shared inheritance is western and was commonly not practiced in the ancient near-eastern world. Daughters were of value as dowry when given to another in marriage. A dowry was paid to the bride's father, and she was given to her husband. These marriages were almost always arranged, and she had little or no say regarding the person she married. This does not mean that parents possessed no affection toward their daughters. It also does not mean exceptions to this cultural perspective did not exist. However, the treatment of a daughter was drastically different from a son.

A woman's major role was to give birth to a male child for her husband. The inability to give birth, or give birth to a male, was always considered the woman's fault. This type of thinking continued to exist into the 1600s and beyond. You may recall Henry the VIII divorced Katherine of Aragon for her inability to give birth to a son. He then had his next wife Ann Boleyn beheaded for the same reason. The culture never considered the fact that the inability to give birth, or birth a male, could reside within the husband. Consequently, it is difficult for us to fully understand the pain experienced by a married woman who could not have children, or not give her husband a male child. She would have felt a depressing sense of worthlessness. Her life would have felt purposeless. If her husband divorced her, she could not remarry. Our western culture again lives in stark contrast to the Old Testament world in relation to the role of men and women.

These customs should not be accepted as God's will. They were adapted behaviors among people attempting to survive in a hostile world. Yet, God used these cultural norms to accomplish His (generic) redemptive purposes. As stated in last week's lesson, God's revelation is progressive. That is, the Lord reveals the divine will to us in a way we can understand at the time. Each revelation enlightens and moves God's people forward in a shared life of love, compassion, respect, and mission. For example, we begin with a foundation of law and move toward a day when the law will be written in the heart. This internal law is the Shema found in Deut. 6, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart soul, mind and strength." Jesus will add, "and, they neighbor as thyself." This internalization of this law is fully revealed in Jesus. The events in our lesson occur during the

period of law. As a matter of fact, the events unfold prior to the giving of the Mosaic Law. Consequently, God moves His people from a life of law to a life of grace and love.

3. Naturally, the Old Testament world was not a fully developed “scientific” world. They reached conclusions about nature and life from observation. This is the foundation for all science. However, during this era so much remained unknown. Our vision was very limited. In our lesson, Rebekah has no way of knowing she is pregnant with twins. Our modern scientific world allows us to understand what we observe and its causes. We understand fertility and childbirth whereas Isaac and Rebekah could not. Rebekah will learn of the twins through a dialogue with the Lord. Thus, the movement of the sons in her womb was difficult to understand.

Not only is it important to recognize the differences in worldview when studying our lesson, it is also important to remember the narrative is written “looking backward.” The events and consequences of the story have already unfolded. The author is writing with greater knowledge than the actual people in the story. He knows Rebekah is with twins and thus understands the actions of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob and where those actions lead.

Can you articulate the problems that can arise when failing to consider these differing worldviews? The Bible is a near-eastern book being read by us, with western eyes. What can we do to help us avoid imposing our worldview upon the Bible? Realizing the existence of differing worldviews when studying the Bible is important in order to read the Bible in proper context. What are some questions we can ask to ensure we are reading a text in proper context? What mistakes can occur when we fail to consider context?

The Three Sins Present in the Narrative

Our lesson reveals the presence of three major sins and dysfunctions:

1. First, we encounter the sin and dysfunction of “parental favoritism.” This does not mean that when a parent feels closer to one child over another that it is sin. However, in this case the favoritism is not hidden or shunned. Isaac favors Esau. Esau was a “man’s man” in Isaac’s world. He was a hunter of wild game, what we might call an outdoorsman. Rebekah, on the other hand, favored Jacob. Jacob shared little in common with his brother. Jacob held far more in common with his mother than his father. Jacob was sly, and some might see him as a conniver. Not only does our story reveal that the two parents favored different sons, it also reveals Isaac’s favoritism toward Esau led Rebekah to clandestinely plot against him regarding the birthright. Later, she will plot with Jacob to steal the birthright from Esau. In our narrative, Jacob makes the first move toward taking the birthright. His actions raise certain questions. What made him think he could accomplish such an unusual task? What type of character did he have to plot such an endeavor in a culture that greatly frowned upon it? Had Jacob been speaking of stealing the birthright with Rebekah? He uses the food he cooked as an enticement to make famished Esau give the birthright away. However, later, after these initial events in our narrative, Rebekah and Jacob plot together to steal the passing of the birthright from Isaac to Esau.

It can be argued Rebekah’s plot emerged from her conversation with the Lord. Rebekah did not know she carried twins her womb. Undoubtedly, the babies were overly active in the womb, leading Rebekah to fear something might be wrong. Thus, she inquired of the Lord. It was in this time of prayer that she learned of the twins. However, in our story, she was also informed that the second-born male would rule the firstborn. This conversation possibly led to the strong favoritism she felt

toward Jacob. Still, this information should not have led to favoritism. The favoritism that existed within Rebekah most likely was birthed as a result of Isaac's favored treatment of Isaac. Consequently, she might have felt a need to "balance the scales." Often, when one parent openly favors one child over another, the other parent will seek to compensate. Whatever the reason, both Isaac and Rebekah engaged in favoritism. This favoritism led to destructive consequences. The two sons lived in tension and engaged in enmity toward one another most of their lives. Even their descendants engaged in such animosity.

Can you list the consequences of overt parental favoritism? Can you recognize the long-term effects of such favoritism? Why do you think the Bible makes no attempt to hide such sins from the reader? What can we learn about God's purposes in light of Isaac's and Rebekah's favoritism? What do their behaviors and the emergence of Jacob as the inheritor of the birthright teach us about God accomplishing His divine purposes in spite of human sin? Where is God's grace present in the story of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob? What can we learn about God's purposes being fulfilled through our frailty?

2. The second major sin is actually birthed by the first. Parental favoritism almost always gives birth to jealousy. Rebekah almost certainly felt Jacob was not equally favored by his father. Thus, jealousy could creep into her heart. Likewise, Jacob also certainly felt jealous of Esau. Though Rebekah had learned of Jacob's important future, the family functioned as though that knowledge did not exist. In other words, Isaac treated Esau as his firstborn and as if the child would receive his birthright. Rebekah would have observed Isaac's actions, and though God revealed to her that Jacob would rule over Esau, she said nothing. Consequently, Esau and Jacob were normal boys being raised in a normal Hebrew household. Jacob would have witnessed Isaac's preferable behavior toward Esau. It would have proved natural for him to feel slighted, less important, and perhaps ignored. His ability to accept the reality that his brother was the proper recipient of the birthright did not mean he did not have feelings. However, as most boys would have accepted this favoritism in spite of their feelings, Jacob did not.

Nothing good emerges from jealousy. Jealousy always leads us to stand in places we would never otherwise stand. When considering the sin of jealousy, I often think of the religious leaders standing by a cornfield watching Jesus and his disciples pick corn. You might remember they accused Jesus of breaking Mosaic Law by picking corn on the Sabbath. I asked myself the question, "Why are they standing there?" That is not where religious leaders often stood. They stood in places of learning and sat in the high places during banquets. They were standing at a cornfield because of their jealousy. They were determined to entrap Jesus in order to discredit him among the people. Thus, they stand at the cornfield. Jealousy causes us to stand in places that are not pleasing to God.

Jealousy makes us look for mistakes and shortcomings within those toward whom we feel jealous. Seeking the sins and mistakes of others requires time and energy. If we seek these sins and mistakes it means we are "not seeking" that which is productive and constructive. It also means we are not engaging in self-examination. In the words of Jesus, we are not looking for the "log in our own eye." All jealousy is a waste of time, causing us to become diverted and distracted in our walk with the Lord.

In the narrative, jealousy eventually leads Rebekah and Jacob to plot against Isaac and Esau. They plot to interrupt the normal order and custom of life in order to accomplish their desire. Again, we can offer leniency toward Rebekah by claiming she was simply attempting to fulfill what God had told her about Jacob. However, God never asked Rebekah to plot and scheme. The Lord informed Rebekah that Jacob would become the leader of his brother. God never called Rebekah and Jacob to

ensure this occurred through their own actions. It was their own jealousy and Rebekah's favoritism that led to the plot.

Can you share how family favoritism and jealousy are related? Can you share some places in life you chose to stand because of jealousy? Can you share the destructive consequences of jealousy as they have occurred in your own life? What are some ways and disciplines that can help us avoid jealousy?

3. The third sin is that of taking advantage of another due to their vulnerability. We are most vulnerable when one of our most basic human needs is not being met. Hunger is among our most basic human needs. Undoubtedly, Esau is desperate for food. We don't know how long Esau has been hungry. We can go up to 8 days without food before hunger becomes unbearable. Either Esau was a man of such weak character that he would sell his inheritance for a bowl of stew, or he was a man truly hungry. Perhaps he was both. Selling one's birthright was a serious breach of custom. Esau was most likely suffering severe hunger. Listen to his statement to Jacob, "Look, I am about to die! What good is a birthright to me?" It is difficult to believe Esau was just "a little hungry" in our narrative. He is severely hungry and thus very vulnerable.

Jacob chooses to take advantage of that vulnerability. A good brother, a good man, would feed another suffering from such hunger. In Hebrew culture, the laws of hospitality required a person to provide shelter and food for the visitor, especially when the visitor was in need. The law of hospitality allowed people in the near-eastern world to survive in such a hostile world. The descent act would be that of providing food for the visitor to the camp, especially when that visitor is one's brother. However, Jacob takes advantage of his brother's vulnerability. Esau's behavior reveals that this was indeed a moment of vulnerability. However, following this event, Esau returns to his normal life and lives as though his birthright is still intact. Thus, later Rebekah and Jacob have to create a plan to properly steal it. Esau most likely recognized the moment for what it was. It was a moment of desperation and need. It was such a dire moment that his rash actions could be dismissed in his own mind. He probably also believed his actions could in no wise nullify his right to the birthright.

Though a desperate moment, the selling of his birthright does not speak well of Esau's character. Again, he went against custom and his father's desire in selling his birthright for a meal. Likewise, the moment does not speak well of Esau's character. He doesn't appear concerned or even guilty that he had done the unthinkable. Likewise, Jacob's actions reveal a flawed character. He is taking advantage of his own brother, in a vulnerable moment, using a basic human need.

All sin is serious, leading to destructive consequences. Few are more grievous than preying upon the vulnerable. Those who prey upon vulnerable children in our society are guilty of a most serious sin and social breach of law. Counselors and pastors who prey upon their vulnerable clients and parishioners are guilty of this painful destructive sin. The arms of this particular sin can reach broadly and deeply through a society. For example, taking advantage of the vulnerable occurs when there is price gouging. When people are in need of a commodity, and one seeks excessive gain from that need, it is a sin. Many will remember the individuals who sought to buy all of the hand disinfectant at the beginning of the Covid pandemic in order to make a great profit. This sin can manifest itself in a myriad of ways.

Without doubt, though Esau dismissed the selling of his birthright, he almost certainly did not forget his brother's taking advantage of him. The animosity between the two was not the result of a single action, but rather the consequence of many actions that drove them apart. Still, Jacob's refusal to feed his brother without gain would have inflamed the distrust and dislike.

Can you recall a time when you felt vulnerable and believed a person took advantage of that vulnerability? Can we recall, in a repentant spirit, when we took advantage of someone in a vulnerable moment? Can we share how we felt when we witnessed someone taking advantage of the vulnerable? What do you believe is our Christian and church responsibility to the vulnerable? Can you identify the most vulnerable in our society? What can we do in ministry to lessen that vulnerability? What can we do to protect them? What actions and disciplines can help us identify the vulnerable?

God's Grace at Work

Our lesson reveals the painful sins of Isaac, Rebekah, Esau and Jacob. We might conclude that the severity of their sin would exclude these characters from God's will. However, the Bible presents a story of grace. Our key text for this lesson can mistakenly be understood as a statement of what God desired. God did not desire division, nor two nations at enmity with one another. The key text is merely a statement of fact. The text is the author revealing to us what God said would happen. God consistently works in spite of human sin and mistake, and often even uses our frailty to bring hope and redemption to the world. The severity of our sin should make us more aware of the depth and breadth of God's grace in choosing to include us in His divine will.

The good news of our lesson is that none are excluded from God's purposes. Naturally, the Lord uses our faithful obedience as a powerful means of redemption. Yet, we are all imperfect. However, our imperfection is not more powerful than the grace and love of God. The love of God is unstoppable, and the reach of God's grace beyond measurement. We should never embrace our sins and weaknesses as acceptable. We should be engaged in confession and open to the forgiveness of God. We would rather God use our faithfulness. But, the fact that God never excludes us should fill our hearts with profound gratitude and appreciation for grace. This gratitude and appreciation lead to greater and deeper devotion to Christ.

God would use the events of this story, as unattractive as they prove to be, to create a nation. This nation would become a major instrument for the revelation of God's love and grace to and for the world. Today, we are the recipients of that same grace, and participants in God's will to redeem the world. The new nation God has created is the Church. As members of the Church, we are participating in the most important endeavor present in life. We are being used to bring hope and redemption to the entire world.

Can you recall moments when God used your weaknesses or even failures to accomplish good? Do you believe your sin and failure are excluding you from the mission of bringing the Kingdom of God upon earth as it is in heaven? Since God uses even our sins and failures, what is the importance of confession and forgiveness in our life? Is your heart filled with gratitude for God's unstoppable grace? Do you fully appreciate the grace present through forgiveness?

Prayer

Almighty God, how great and wonderful is your redemptive purpose! We give thanks for grace that forgives and restores. Increase our thanksgiving and deepen our devotion to you and your Kingdom. When life appears to move into the shadows and our mistakes and sins are glaring, open our eyes to the gift of forgiveness and our hearts to transformation, that we might walk in your light and loving purpose. In Jesus name, Amen.

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



Jacob Called Israel

Fall Quarter: God's Exceptional Choice
Unit 1: God Calls Abraham's Family
Lesson 3

Sunday School Lesson for the week of September 18, 2022
By Craig Rikard

Lesson Scripture: Genesis 32:22-32

Key Text: *The man said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you struggled with God and humans and have overcome."*

Lesson Aims

1. To recognize our experiences of "wrestling" with others and God in our modern experiences.
2. To understand the background and context of Jacob's wrestling.
3. To comprehend the intention and meaning of this story as it relates to our life and faith.
4. To embrace the transformation that emerges for being faithful to God, and to our calling in life.

Thrust of this Lesson

Everyone struggles to be true to self and to God. We have all wrestled against the actions of others that conflict with our conscience, against cultural trends that seem antagonistic to our faith, and against God whose will and call so often challenge us. Our text is a meaningful narrative that recognizes such conflict in life and reveals the hope and promise awaiting those who remain true to their faith. As people of faith and as a people loyal to truth, we often wrestle with our conscience and God. This narrative serves as a great metaphor of this wrestling.

Context of the Narrative

Jacob stole his brother Esau's birthright. The animosity between the two brothers is long-lasting and intense. In our text Jacob is preparing to encounter his brother for the first time in years. He is overwhelmed with the fear of losing his life, family, and possessions. What Jacob and Rebekah did to Esau was a violation of near-eastern culture and law. Stealing the birthright was a serious breach of social contract.

Many often ask why Isaac did not take the birthright back from Jacob and bestow it upon the rightful recipient. The birthright was passed through the rite of the father laying his hands upon his son and pronouncing his blessing and inheritance over the son. Rebekah and Jacob slyly took advantage of Isaac's poor eyesight. They covered Jacob in hairy animal skins so that when Isaac placed his hands upon Jacob he would think it was Esau kneeling before him. Esau was a ruddy man with significant body hair. His complexion and appearance were far different from his fraternal twin brother. Thus, Isaac was deceived when he placed his hands upon Jacob. He felt the animal skins and believed it was Esau who knelt before him. Isaac spoke the birthright over Jacob mistakenly. So why didn't Isaac nullify his actions upon learning he had been deceived? In the near-eastern world, words possessed creative power. Notice in the Hebrew story of creation God "spoke" the world into being. Once the word was spoken it was irrevocable. It set forth a course of action. Thus, Isaac could not reverse his mistake, regardless of the deception involved. The word that had been spoken was already active.

A spoken course of action could only be altered by "another word." The original word was not totally eradicated, it was overcome and overpowered by a new word. However, this new word would have to prove more powerful than the already spoken word. It is important to remember that Jesus was the "Word." Read John 1. Humankind had unleashed a word of sin and rebellion in the world. Jesus was a new word, a new

course of action, a redemptive course of action far more powerful than the actions of humankind. Jesus was not just “a word.” He was “the Word.” This Word was unstoppable and nothing can overcome it.

Having stolen the birthright of Esau and living terrified of Esau’s revenge, Jacob devised a strategy. Jacob may have been deceptive and sly; however, he was smart. First, he would offer Esau a generous gift. Jacob would make this offering in hopes of softening Esau’s heart and soothing his angry spirit. Secondly, Jacob divided his family and possessions into two camps. This would ensure that a remnant of his name and family would survive if Esau attacked. The Hebrew people had a poor understanding of the afterlife. They did not understand the afterlife with clarity. Consequently, they developed a strong affection for “continuing to live” through your children and descendants. A person continued after death through their descendants. Should a man completely lose his family, life would go on as if he never existed. Thus, Jacob is smartly ensuring a remnant would exist should he die in battle with Esau. Thirdly, Jacob most likely wanted to impress his brother. Esau would see how richly blessed he was by God. Perhaps Esau would note that God favored Jacob and think twice before attempting to kill him.

Whatever the reasons behind Jacob’s actions in preparing to meet Esau, the meeting did not go smoothly. Esau was overt with the desire to reestablish a relationship. Jacob must have been greatly surprised! Esau greeted him with kindness and warmth. In contrast, Jacob was stiff and formal. There might have also been some “one ups-man-ship” involved. As Jacob calls attention to his wealth, which he states is a blessing from God, Esau counters that he too is a blessed man. If we continued to read the ensuing narrative of Jacob and Esau’s meeting, we would learn their tense relationship continued and over the years animosity would again rear its head. The one ingredient missing from Jacob’s meeting with Esau was his own personal integrity. He had taken advantage of his brother’s hunger, had been easily swayed by his mother, and doesn’t appear to desire a meaningful reconciliation with his brother. Instead, he is trying to save his own life and family. Esau isn’t someone with whom he is seeking reconciliation; he is someone Jacob is attempting to get by.

Our text occurs as Jacob has finished developing his strategy and is preparing to meet Esau. Prior to meeting Esau, Jacob has some wrestling to do. He must wrestle with himself. Jacob must deal with his fears and his propensity toward deception. He must wrestle with what Esau means or should mean to his life. He is not meeting a stranger. He is meeting his brother, a brother he has seriously wronged. Jacob must wrestle with God. God has chosen to use Jacob in spite of his flawed character. The calling to represent God and the Covenant would weigh heavily on anyone’s shoulders. The person of the angel represents all of the wrestling occurring within Jacob. Remember, finite man could not see, touch or even speak the name of God. In the O.T. especially, God speaks through intermediaries. These intermediaries were angels. However, when an angel speaks the message is understood as being from God and is referred to as the “word of the Lord.” Likewise, wrestling with an angel of the Lord was akin to wrestling with God.

Do you believe this context is important in understanding the narrative and its message? In what way does the context help you in reading this text?

Important Points in the Narrative

The Night

Jacob encounters the angel at night. Jacob has entered a state of solitude prior to meeting Esau. It is in the night that the angel appears. It is important to remember the night is most often the time we wrestle with others, God, and ourselves. During the day we engage in various activities and are easily distracted. However, when we lie down at night, the quiet invites us to think. It is in the night that our fears and struggles come out to play. Many of us are accustomed to the phrase the “dark night of the soul.” This phrase reminds us that it is usually in solitude and darkness that our most serious wrestling occurs. In Matthew 14 the disciples are trying to sleep in a boat upon the Sea of Galilee. Jesus approaches them, walking upon the

water. The text reads that it was the fourth watch of the night. This was considered the darkest time of night and often the loneliest. The disciples are terrified. They thought Jesus was a ghost. Many of the Galilean people believed in ghosts. Fisherman often believed ghosts were responsible for the frequent storms that occurred on the sea. During the fourth watch of the night Jesus enters their fear. It is night in our narrative. Jacob lies in solitude. The fear and anxiety in meeting Esau most likely kept him awake.

Can you recall particular struggles in the night? Why do you think the night is often the time we worry and fret? What do you think is ongoing in the heart of Jacob as he lies in solitude? Can you identify with him?

The Angel Represents both God and Jacob's Inner Struggle

One of the ways that we deal with our inner struggles is to project them outside of ourselves. If we can project our fears and sins upon another, they seem easier to fight. God often used this facet of our frail humanity to address our need for redemption and hope. The scapegoat in Leviticus 16 provides an insightful example. The people within the Hebrew camp chose a goat once a year upon which they cast their sins. They would project their inner sins upon an outside object: the goat. The priest would wrap the horns of the goat with a scarlet cord. He would then lay hands upon the head of the goat and transfer the people's sins upon it. The goat was then sent outside the camp where it almost certainly died. It was far easier to cast them upon the goat than deal with them internally. In the dark of night Jacob is about to wrestle with an angel. In truth, he is wrestling with himself and his God. The angel is the messenger of God and serves as the projection of Jacob's inner struggle.

Each of us has used blame to project our sins and mistakes upon another. Whether we are aware or unaware, we are attempting to avoid dealing with our own struggles. If we can project them upon another, we can walk away and forget them. However, all blame is a waste of time. We carry our sins and mistakes within us no matter how strongly we attempt to cast them elsewhere.

Can you recall a time in which you projected your struggles upon another through blame? Why do you believe things did not go more smoothly between Jacob and Esau? Can you attest to the worthlessness of blame? Instead of blaming another or casting our inner struggles elsewhere, what is the best way to face those struggles?

The Wrestling Match

The angel approaches Jacob during the night and when Jacob is alone. The text does not offer any detail as to exactly how the angel approached and appeared. We read that Jacob is alone and the narrative immediately moves to the wrestling match. The match is long and tiresome. Naturally, we might ask why the angel didn't force Jacob into submission immediately. Certainly, an angel of the Lord can overwhelm a man. Consequently, we might conclude that the angel wanted a long period of wrestling without desiring to "beat Jacob."

Since the angel did not overcome Jacob, we might consider the fact it was the wrestling itself that was important, not the outcome. God desires that each of us "own" our sins and frailty. If Jacob had been forced to face his struggles by force, would he have become a better man? God's desire is for each of us to come to the realization that we are sinful and in need of grace. God doesn't force us to confess or accept grace. Most of us arrive at a point of humility and acceptance after wrestling with God within ourselves. It is this act of wrestling that helps us arrive at this point of confession and acceptance. Usually, this wrestling occurs over an extended period of time.

The very act of the angel approaching Jacob in the night was an act of grace. Jacob had not asked for such an encounter. In the angel the Lord has walked into Jacob's fear and struggle. We are never left alone in our fear. As we wrestle within ourselves, we would benefit from asking, "Whom am I wrestling?" Am I just

wrestling with my own conscience? Yet, who is it that speaks in my conscience? The act of wrestling is a moment when God is especially present. God is in our wrestling and will not leave until the struggle is over. Believe me, we will always leave blessed.

When I experienced my call into pastoral ministry I did not immediately accept. In my mind I possessed too many disqualifying character flaws. For over six weeks I offered God a litany of my sins and weaknesses in hopes the Lord would choose another. However, God did not leave me alone. We wrestled. I developed a severe twitch in my eye from the anxiety. At last, I arrived at a point of submission. I realized if God called me, God could shape me and use me.

Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord all night. Jacob wrestled long and hard. Though neither Jacob nor the angel overcame the other, Jacob did arrive at an important place in his life. He knew he needed the angel's blessing; he needed God's blessing. Jacob was intent upon receiving this blessing. "I will not let you go until you bless me!" is strong language. At least Jacob realizes he cannot leave this moment without having received the blessing. Jacob wants to know he has God's blessing before encountering Esau. The fact that Jacob believed his wrestling opponent could bless him implies his awareness that the man was an angel of the Lord and represented the Lord.

Jacob wants to know the name of his opponent. The angel refusing to give his name is an indication it is the angel of the Lord. Jacob senses this is not a normal man with whom he has wrestled. The angel eventually reveals to Jacob he is the angel of the Lord.

Can you share a time when you wrestled with God? Did you realize God was present in the wrestling? How long did you wrestle? Is the wrestling over a concerning matter? At what point did you feel the wrestling was over? Can you share a moment or moments when you arrived at an important decision after wrestling with God? How do you think your life would be different if God forced you to be receptive? Do you believe there was merit in the wrestling? Can you explain why? Can you identify God's presence in your struggle and wrestling?

The Changing of a Name

The blessing appears to be related to Jacob's accepting his call to lead the covenant people. In both old and new testaments, a change in name occurs at a pivotal moment in God's redemptive history. Abram and Sarai became Abraham and Sarah. Jesus would change Cephas into Petros, or Peter. Finally, Saul's name was changed on the Damascus Road to Paul. In our narrative, Jacob's name is changed by the angel of the Lord to Israel.

As the angel allowed Jacob to wrestle all night, he was letting Jacob know that if Jacob strived against him, he could face Esau with strength. However, there was more substance to the blessing than Jacob imagined. Jacob wasn't anticipating the name change, or the scope, breadth, and depth of his role in God's redemption. God always has more in store than we expect. As a pastor I have experienced tremendous moments of God's grace and love. I could not have imagined the life I have lived. This incredible journey is available for all of us. We will encounter obstacles and struggles. There will be moments of wrestling. However, God will always bless us.

Though God is present in our every moment, there are special moments that profoundly redirect our lives. Can you recall a particular season of struggle in your walk with Christ? Can you share such a moment of redirection in your life? Can you share an experience in which God did far more than you asked?

The Limp

We are not given the reason for Jacob's energy. On the surface it appears the angel touched Jacob's hip to bring the wrestling to an end. Sunrise was approaching. However, Jacob continued this limp in the days following. The limp became a symbol of God's touch upon Jacob and the nation of Israel. The narrative shares the people of Israel's refusal to eat that part of an animal. Therefore, the limp became a spiritual sign. The limp certainly would have reminded Jacob of that night and the changing of his name by the angel of the Lord. Personally, I also think it reminded Jacob that though he persevered, he was still a fragile man in need of God's blessing.

Now forty-four years after receiving my call, I never develop a twitch in my eye without thinking of the experience of my calling. Of course, this is a subjective and personal experience for me. Still, God's people have created altars and memorial to remember special moment in their walk of faith. Each of us has our own "limp," that object or experience that reminds us of what God has done in our life. For some it is a hymn, a text from the Bible, or a special place. Remembering we are a blessed people is important for appreciating God's love and grace.

Can you identify such a "limp" in your Christian walk? Was there a moment in your life that you can call a "definitive moment?"

Prayer

Almighty God, we thank you that you are present in our joys and struggles. Thank you for being that voice in our conscience, calling us to consider the consequences of our actions. Thank you for all the reminders of you love and grace in our life. Give us the grace to face our sins and the weaknesses within us. Empower us to live honestly, avoiding blame and accepting our sins and failures. Open our hearts to receive your forgiving grace in Jesus Christ. Thank you for never leaving us, for never removing the call upon our life, for the strength that allows us to embrace and live that call, and for using us in ways beyond our imagination. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.



Global Ministries' US-2 program sends missionaries into United States communities

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

There have been Methodist missionaries in North America sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ before there was even a United States. After John Wesley returned to England, he sent numerous young adults to ride across the colonies to share the Gospel. It was not a role for the faint of heart. Until 1847, almost half of the young men died before the age of 30. Thank God for their willingness to share the message in spite of the dangers they faced.

It is considerably safer to be a missionary in the United States today. The United Methodist Church still sees a need to send young adults to share the Gospel message. There is a program called US-2. It is sponsored by the General Board of Global Ministries.

Young adults on the US-2 track leave their home state to serve in a new community for two years. They gain a fresh perspective on systems preventing social change and address injustice by serving in areas such as immigration rights, homelessness, civic engagement, youth and campus ministry, food insecurity, and anti-racism and justice outreach.

Fellows form meaningful relationships with their host community as they are mentored by organizations

meeting immediate needs and working toward lasting transformation. In addition to long-standing placement sites in Florida, Michigan and Washington state, new placements are available in Iowa and Utah.

The Global Mission Fellows program is open to those from different denominational backgrounds, but participants must be willing to represent The United Methodist Church and uphold its social principles during their time of service. The Wesleyan value of personal and social holiness is at the core of the program.

To learn more about this and how you can become involved - whether as a volunteer, a host site or a sponsor - send an email to: missionaryinfo@umcmmission.org.

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



**FROM THE BISHOP
DAVID GRAVES**

Navigating this Next Season Together

At the conclusion of the Called Annual Conference Session on August 20 I recorded a video I want to now share with you. I hope you will hear my heart and hear my commitment to churches committed to remaining at the table and navigating this next season together.

[Watch the video](#)

Despite all that is going on around us, I am excited about our focus on mission and ministry and the great work we will be doing in connection with one another as we move forward. One of the things I am most excited about is the formation of the Bishop’s Diversity, Inclusion, and Vitality Task Force. [You can read more about this Task Force here.](#)

I also want to invite you – both clergy and laity – to join me at one of the [September gatherings](#) in a location near you. I look forward to visiting, talking with, and listening to clergy and laity from each district as we seek to bring clarity around where we are as a denomination and a conference.

I am thankful for each of you and your ministry.

In Christ,

Bishop David Graves



**JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS
DAVE HANSON**

John Wesley Mellows

John Wesley was once criticized because he thought he was always right. His reply was, “Of course I believe that I am right. If I didn’t think I was right I would change my opinion.” Many thought he was stubborn and autocratic.

Later in life he began to mellow. In 1765, at the age of 62, he wrote, “When I was young I was sure of everything. In a few years, having been mistaken a thousand times, I was not half as sure of most things as I was before: at present I am hardly sure of anything but what God has revealed to man.”
Thank God we can all grow in grace and kindness.

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

Being Thankful Makes Everything Better

By Dr. Hal Brady

Perhaps the single most famous speech given by a baseball player was given by New York Yankee first baseman, Lou Gehrig. Gehrig is remembered for playing in 2,130 consecutive games in 14 seasons with the New York Yankees. He compiled a lifetime batting average of .340 and batted in 150 runs or more in seven different seasons. In addition, he contracted a horrible disease – ALS – that forced his retirement in 1939 and shortly thereafter took his life.

On this occasion, however, he stood at a microphone on a day when he was being honored. He took the time to thank the vendors, and ticket takers and workers who never got any recognition but who made his job possible. Then he said the words that still echo in our time. Lou Gehrig said, “Today I consider myself the luckiest man on the face of the earth.”

As an American, I’m reminded to be thankful at a specific time of the year. As a person of faith, I’m reminded to always be thankful. At any rate, in this article, I want to say a few words about gratitude.

First, gratitude is recognition! On one occasion the late Scott Peck tells about having two checks sitting on his lap. One check was in payment for services rendered. The other check, however, was unasked for. It was an unanticipated donation. Peck said he sat there with an earned meal on one knee and a delicious surprise on the other. Right here we can review our understanding of grace. Here we have something earned and something unearned. The latter, of course, being grace. Grace is for free. And as Scott Peck observed, “Perceive grace and you will naturally feel grateful.” Hear me now! The failure to see ourselves as sinners is the root cause of all ingratitude. On the other hand, to see ourselves as sinners and understand God’s grace (His love, forgiveness and second chance) is the key to a grateful heart.

Second, gratitude is a choice! While we cannot always determine the circumstances of our lives, we can determine our response to those circumstances. And, of course, one response is always the response of resentment, “Why did this happen to me?” While the other response is the response of gratitude, “What is there to be thankful for in this particular situation?” The noted scholar Matthew Henry was accosted by thieves and robbed of his valuables. He later wrote in his diary, ‘Let me be thankful, first, because he never robbed me before; second, because although he took my purse, he did not take my life; third, because although he took all I possessed, it was not much; and fourth, because it was I who was robbed, not I who robbed.’

Gratitude is a choice.

Third, gratitude is an opportunity! Someone has said that God has two dwelling places. One is in Heaven, and the other is in a grateful heart. So what does gratitude provide an opportunity for? An opportunity to make someone else's day! Most of us know how good it feels to receive gratitude. Such affirmation is important to our health, happiness, and wholeness as human beings. And that is also true of others. We have an opportunity to soften and make the world a better place. If there is any place where unkindness is broken in this world, it is the place where gratitude is expressed. It is an opportunity to give God God's rightful praise!

A few years ago, I attended a banquet that honored a friend. A couple of other people were also being honored. One of those other honorees was from Pakistan. He made it big in business in this country. His business was listed in the Fortune 500. I wrote down his final remarks. He said, "This is a great country. I truly believe there's a God up there who is blessing us all." So do I! Being thankful makes everything better!

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).



Retired Clergy Birthdays – September 2022

- 9/01 – David Boggs: 7715 Church St.; Bartow, GA 30413
- 9/03 – Guy Mathis, Jr.: 1108 Moore Dr.; Americus, GA 31709
- 9/04 – Earl James: 310 Avondale Circle; Warner Robins, GA 31088
- 9/05 – Gene Yelverton: 6345 Concord Church Rd.; Ellaville, GA 31086
- 9/06 – Sanford Wills: 1021 Sunrise Rd.; Preston, GA 31824
- 9/09 – Richard Soper: 102 Ingham St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
- 9/13 – Bernie Khaw: 344 S. Old Middletown Rd., Media, PA 19063
- 9/14 – Tom Johnson, Sr.: PO Box 127; Oxford, GA 30054
- 9/15 – Elick Bullington, Jr.: Lakeside Senior Care; 1025 N. Chester Ave., No. 11; Douglas, GA 31533
- 9/15 – Buddy Cooper: 414 Chambliss Rd; Cataula, GA 31804
- 9/16 – Henry Bass: 404 Clyde Ave.; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 9/16 – Bob Norwood: 946 Old Wadley Rd.; Swainsboro, GA 30401
- 9/16 – Ray Youngblood: 214 Lee St.; North Augusta, SC 29841
- 9/16 – Carl Barnhardt: 146 Laurelbrook Drive; Leesburg, GA 31763
- 9/18 – Burns Willis: 1815 E. Washington St.; Thomasville, GA 31792
- 9/19 – Wayne Moseley: 29 William E. Moseley Rd.; Collins, GA 30421
- 9/19 – Dan Pegram: 112 Tahoe Dr.; Pooler, GA 31323
- 9/21 – Robert Herrington, Sr.: 185 S. Sixth St.; Cochran, GA 31014
- 9/21 – Virgil Lee: 208 Yorkshire Crescent; Thomasville, GA 31792
- 9/22 – Edwin Chase: 70 Shipwatch Rd.; Savannah, GA 31410
- 9/23 – Steve Posey: 122 Asbury St.; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
- 9/26 – John Irwin: 109 Deer Run Dr.; Macon, GA 31220
- 9/26 – Larry Sauls: 206 Westview Dr.; Dublin, GA 31321
- 9/27 – Andy Brownley: 34 South Broad St.; Alamo, GA 30411
- 9/28 – Donna Jordan: 404 Brentwood Dr.; Dublin, GA 31021
- 9/28 – William Ryan: 2138 Red Bank Circle; Sevierville, TN 37876
- 9/30 – Dennis Stalvey: PO Box 685; Americus, GA 31709



Obituary: Rev. Roy Lee Dial III

Rev. Roy Lee Dial III, 78, passed away peacefully at his home on Sunday, August 28, 2022, after an extended illness. Services will be held on Wednesday, August 31, 2022, in the sanctuary of Fort Valley United Methodist Church, 301 West Church Street in Fort Valley, with visitation beginning at 12:30 PM followed by funeral services at 2:00 PM. Rev. Herb Flanders will officiate. Rev. Dial will be laid to rest in Oaklawn Cemetery.

Born in Key West, Florida, to the late Roy Lee Dial Jr. and Laura Elizabeth Matthews Dial, Rev. Dial was a United Methodist Minister in the South Georgia Conference for 25 years, serving churches in Arlington, Mount Vernon, Folkston, Quitman and others. He was a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist for 20 years and a former vice president of charitable giving at Magnolia Manor in Americus. He was an avid horse enthusiast.

Left to cherish his memory is his devoted wife of 57 years, Kay McCollum Dial; their sons, Matthew Dial (Meredith) of Dunedin, Florida, and Burton Dial (Becky) of Vancouver, Washington; granddaughters, Kayln Baylis (Josh), Morgan Dial, and Makenzie Dial; great grandson, Noah Baylis; and a sister, Nina Dial Goodroe (Don). He is preceded in death by his parents, Roy Lee and Laura Elizabeth Dial, a brother, Charles "Charlie" M. Dial, and his mother and father-in-law, Sally and Glen McCollum.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations in memory of Rev. Dial to your favorite charity. Rooks Funeral Home in Fort Valley is in charge of arrangements.



Obituary: Rev. Charles (Buddy) Coss

Charles "Buddy" Douglas Coss passed away 31 August 2022 in Edison GA. Rev. Coss was serving Arlington/Edison/Vincent UMC in the Southwest District. There will be a Memorial Service Friday, September 9, 2022 at The Arlington United Methodist Church, Arlington, Ga at 2:00pm with a visitation starting at 12:00pm.



Scripture Readings – September 6 edition

September 11
Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost, Year C

- Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28
- Psalm 14 (UMH 746)
- 1 Timothy 1:12-17
- Luke 15:1-10

September 18
Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost, Year C

Jeremiah 8:18-9:1

Psalm 79:1-9 or Psalm 4 (UMH 741)

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13



Events in the South Georgia Conference – 9/6/2022 edition

September Gatherings with Bishop Graves

During three weeks in September, Bishop David Graves will travel across the South Georgia Conference to meet with clergy and laity in various settings. The purpose of these gatherings is to provide necessary and accurate information around current denominational matters. While the three Sunday regional gatherings are geared toward laity, all are welcome to attend. Clergy will have an opportunity to meet with the bishop while he is in each district for clergy specific meetings. [Click here for dates and locations](#)

Online Advanced Lay Servant Training – Sept. 13, Sept. 15, Sept. 20, Sept. 22

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. Advanced LSM Training includes learning how to put your spiritual gifts into service. This training will be offered via Zoom. You must complete all of the scheduled dates to complete your training. To participate you will need either a cell phone that will allow you to download the Zoom app (please do so ahead of time) or a laptop, a steady wi-fi connection, and a willingness to learn in a modern way. Registration fee for the class is \$25. (Note: Basic Lay Servant class must be completed before taking Advanced Class.) For more information contact Anne Bosarge at abosarge@sgaumc.com. [Register](#)

Clergy Time Apart with Tod Bolsinger – Sept. 15

Clergy, don't miss speaker Tod Bolsinger, author of "Canoeing the Mountains" and "Tempered Resilience," who will join us Thursday, Sept. 15 for a Clergy Time Apart. Hosted by Bishop David Graves, we will meet from 10 a.m. until noon via Zoom. [More information and registration](#)

Speaker Tod Bolsinger, author of "Canoeing the Mountains," will join us Thursday, Sept. 15 for a Clergy Time Apart. Hosted by Bishop David Graves, we will meet from 10 a.m. until noon via Zoom. [Register](#)

Methodist Children's Home Work Day Offering – Sept. 18

Every local church in South Georgia is encouraged to receive a special Work Day Offering to support the ministry of The Methodist Home for Children and Youth. The Work Day Offering for the Methodist Home is a tradition from the 1900s, a time when people, mostly farmers, donated the equivalent of one day's wages to the Methodist Home. Sometimes they would load a freight car with cotton or peanuts and send it to Macon. Today folks just use a calculator. The amount of the work day offering can be calculated quite simply: Divide your annual income by 365 (farmers didn't take vacation days.) For example, if a person made \$60,000 a year, it would be \$60,000 divided by 365 = \$164. Whether you give cotton or a check, be assured that your gift will bring hope and a new lease on life to the more than 400 children and families they serve every day. To learn more about this incredible ministry of our conference visit www.themethodisthome.org.