

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – OCTOBER 18 EDITION

Pastor steps out in faith and discovers the promise of Ephesians 3:20

By Allison Lindsey, Advocate contributor

Early each morning you will find Nick Pumfrey live on social media sharing God's word, offering a word of encouragement, and issuing a challenge for the day. Until recently, as soon as he stopped the live feed he would hop in his car for his morning commute to his full-time job at Gulfstream in Savannah, Georgia.

As a bi-vocational pastor, Pumfrey enjoyed a solid career path in which, professionally, he worked his entire life to fulfill and had accomplished more than he could have imagined at 41 years of age. But God had a different path and plan for Pumfrey.

"It took a long time for me to answer God's call on my life to serve Him in pastoral ministry," said Pumfrey. "I have been hard headed my entire life and have had to learn so many hard lessons because of my self-reliance."

Pumfrey became a certified lay ministry in 2018 and attended basic and advanced lay servant training in 2019.

In 2019, a defining moment occurred as a meeting wrapped up at Goshen United Methodist Church where Pumfrey and his wife, Sabra, were active members. Rev. Chance Ward, his friend and pastor at Goshen UMC, jokingly said, "Stop running, boy!"

This light-hearted statement cut straight to Pumfrey's heart, and, at that moment, he realized he had indeed been running from God's calling on his life. Feeling as if he could not take another step, Pumfrey - with Ward by his side - knelt at the altar where he vowed to "get more comfortable saying yes to God."

What followed was a continued struggle for self-reliance versus trusting God and God's timing. As Pumfrey began to lean into and discern his calling, he accepted his first appointment in 2020 as a part-time associate pastor to Goshen UMC in Rincon.

Prayers continued for God to clearly reveal his next step, but Pumfrey admits what he was really saying was, "God please show me what's next; then I can decide whether I will be faithful or not."

In 2021, that next step was his own church through a part-time appointment as pastor of the Clyo/Silver Hill Charge. As the daily prayers and wrestling continued in discerning his calling the answer continued to be to simply trust God, which, for Pumfrey, felt beyond his understanding and obedience at the time.

Pumfrey's next step would require the biggest step of faith in his journey: the resignation from his full-time job. The uncertainty of going from executive pay to part-time pastor salary was scary, he shares, but that fear fell away and was replaced with joy and excitement in following God more fully.

Pumfrey said what happened next could only be captured in the essence of Ephesians 3:20-22: "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!"

A week after turning in his resignation Pumfrey was sharing his faith journey with the local sheriff. During the course of the conversation, Pumfrey became an answer to the sheriff's prayer and was met with an

opportunity to be a full-time chaplain for the Effingham County Sheriff's Office. Pumfrey knew his next step. Along with serving his two churches - Clys and Silver Hill - he is now serving as a chaplain.

"I am so humbled, so amazed, so thankful," said Pumfrey. "We serve an awesome God, a God who loves us and leads us even when we are stubborn and self-reliant. God has reminded me again that He will be with me always and to trust him."

For more information on the certified lay ministry program offered by the South Georgia Annual Conference, visit www.sgaumc.org/layministryopportunities.

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



Jurisdictional Conference to elect bishops Nov. 2-4

The Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference will be November 2-4, 2022, at Lake Junaluska Conference Center in North Carolina.

The primary business of the session will be the election and assignment of bishops. There are nine nominees for bishop.

Originally set for July 15-17, 2020, the SEJ Conference was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council of Bishops has called for Jurisdictional Conferences across the U.S. to meet November 2-4, 2022.

The South Georgia Conference delegation to General Conference and Jurisdictional Conference is chaired by Rev. Robert Beckum.

More information, included information on bishop nominees, a proposed agenda, and the Advance Daily Christian Advocate can be found at www.sejumc.org/sej-conference-2022. A live stream of the conference will be available on this website beginning Nov. 2.



Wesley Glen is in the business of spreading joy

A Word from Cameron Bishop, CEO, Wesley Glen Ministries

I have had the privilege of traveling to various churches and community groups over the past month to share about "what's happening" at Wesley Glen Ministries. Aside from meeting some incredible people during my travels, I have been amazed to learn just how many individuals have a personal connection to someone with an intellectual or developmental disability (IDD). Although the stories vary in terms of the who, what, when, and where, one thing remains consistent: each person tells me about how they have been personally blessed by having a relationship with someone who has IDD. Specifically, I often hear people talk about the contagious sense of JOY the person has and shares with others.

As a clinical social worker, I've spent a lot of my career studying human behavior. Typically, my studies have involved behaviors that challenge, trauma responses, depression, and anxiety. A great deal of neuroscience and psychology points to the significant impact of mirror neurons in our brains. In short, these neurons are a type of brain cell that respond when we witness someone else perform an action. For example, recently as I watched the UGA vs. Missouri game, I found myself feeling frustrated, short of breath, and a

sinking feeling in my stomach. From the comfort of my couch, my body was responding to what I was seeing take place on the TV. I was experiencing emotions similar to the players on the field.

Although we often talk about mirror neurons in terms of negative emotions, they are also credited for their work in experiencing positive emotions. I believe that the joy I've heard people recount from having a relationship with someone who has IDD is due, in part, to these mirror neurons. Pull the science out of the equation...the JOY is CONTAGIOUS! I am certain that many of you have experienced this CONTAGIOUS JOY firsthand as you've spent time with the incredible individuals we serve at Wesley Glen. I've witnessed this contagious joy while observing our employees and residents play, laugh, and work together. I've witnessed this contagious joy on the faces of guests to our campus as they tour our facilities and meet our community. I've witnessed this contagious joy spread amongst groups of people as we have gone out into the community to share about the work and ministry of Wesley Glen. Most importantly, I have EXPERIENCED this CONTAGIOUS JOY personally as I have grown in deeper relationships with both the adults we serve as well as the team who supports them each day.

Growing up in Sunday School we would sing, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine." As you'll recall, part of the song says "Hide it under a bushel? NO! I'm gonna let it shine!" At Wesley Glen, we are in the business of spreading joy! We will not hide it under a bushel! We invite you to come experience this joy firsthand. And because your brain is full of mirror neurons, you too will be filled with an incredible sense of JOY!

Wesley Glen Ministries is a Christian organization whose core mission is to support adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Find more information about Wesley Glen Ministries at www.wesleyglenministries.com.



UMCOR hurricane response – Ian and Fiona

As each day has brought new reports of the extensive damage caused by hurricanes Ian and Fiona, UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) has been there to help. Prior to Ian's arrival, UMCOR used a preemptive approach and helped the conferences that expected to be impacted prepare their response.

After Ian made landfall, solidarity grants were issued to Florida and South Carolina, where damage was most severe. Lara Martin, UMCOR's director of U.S. disaster response, traveled to Florida six days after the storm. While she was there, she met with conference leadership to express support and share the message that United Methodists everywhere were praying for them. [Read more here.](#)

A team from South Georgia, headed by Luis Morales, conference disaster response coordinator, was also in the Ft. Myers area of Florida immediately after the storm passed through, assisting with initial tarping and debris removal. The Florida Conference has already reached out to Luis about areas ready to receive teams. If you have a team ready to serve, please contact Luis (morhilll@gmail.com) or one of the [disaster response coordinators](#). [Read more and learn how you can give to disaster relief efforts now.](#)



Making Clergy Mental Health a Priority South Georgia Conference Mental Health Task Force

Grief and Loss

By Rev. Grace Guyton

I experienced my first major loss my sophomore year of high school at the age of 16. After battling cancer for several years, my grandfather finally succumbed to the disease that touches so many of us. It was hard to watch him decline over the years. He was a vibrant man who filled his retirement from ministry with wood working, traveling, volunteering, and more ministry. He loved to hike and take us on sailboat trips up and down Dog River. To see him reduced to being bed ridden with a poor quality of life still brings a slight sting to my chest.

When I started working in a local church, I felt completely inadequate to minister to families during and after the death of a loved one. What was I supposed to say? Should I try to comfort them with words or sit in the silence? How much time should I spend in the hospital or hospice room? It was a daunting task to be with my congregation during these moments. Over time, however, I grew to be quite comfortable with death and dying. I sat with families as their loved one drew their last breath, planned and officiated funerals, listened to stories, and watched husbands, mothers, and children weep. I still didn't always know what to do or say, but over time it felt like a privilege to be with families in such a holy and tender time.

Being in ministry guarantees that one will develop an intimacy to loss. While most of us expect to encounter the death of members or colleagues, there are many other losses that don't come with a death certificate. The last two and a half years have brought a slew of losses most of us never saw coming and that most of us were not equipped to cope with. Even for those not in ministry, the pandemic and denominational upheaval have weighed heavy on our souls as we have fumbled our way through uncertainty and change. Even without labeling it as such, we have been grieving, both individually and communally. We have grieved those who have died and for funerals that felt woefully inadequate. We have grieved for those who have drifted away from church, for a loss of community, and for routines and schedules that ordered our days. We have grieved for our children's education, for friends and colleagues who are no longer in the same denomination, and for the future of our church.

The question for many of us is what do we do now? How do we go on serving and being disciples? I don't remember where I came across this tidbit, but I remember hearing somewhere that we can't know how to fix a problem if we can't name what the problem is. We have to be able to name what it is we are experiencing in order to know how to deal with it. While our churches are back up and running in-person and much of life feels "normal," I still believe many of us are working through our grief – either from the past few years or of what we anticipate the next few years to bring. So, there it is. Grief. Still rearing her head and getting in the way of moving on. But maybe being able to label it, to put a name to our experience, will help us to cope.

While many of us associate grief with death, it is a natural reaction to any type of loss. That's one reason the pandemic was so hard. It brought losses of all shapes and sizes, and many of those losses weren't as clear cut or final as death. With death, there is certainty. There is a death certificate, a body, and communal rituals that mark the loss and aid in our grieving. We have funerals, people send cards and bring food. But how do you mark the loss of canceling worship on a Sunday morning for an indefinite period of time? Or what about when a church with people you love leaves the denomination you both called home? We don't have any liturgy to turn to for these occasions or any rituals to acknowledge what we've lost. But that doesn't mean we are stuck.

I remember a client saying to me one time, "It's been 8 months since he died; I feel like I should have moved on by now." I responded to her with two things. One, it is less about moving on and more about moving forward. We don't move on from people (or things or places or communities) that we love and are dear to us. They stay with us. Instead, we find a way to hold the loss as we look to the future. And, secondly, the only way through grief is through it. There are no shortcuts, and you can't simply ignore it. Well, you can, but it

will find a way to pop back up. Grief takes as long as it takes, and maybe the most compassionate thing we can do for ourselves and others is to give the space needed to wrestle with it. Grief is slippery with ups and downs and surprises along the way. It is unpredictable, uncomfortable, and unsettling, which are not things many of us welcome with open arms.

So, if you feel weighed down or discouraged by the losses you've encountered, I offer these takeaways from my short time as a minister, therapist, and human being. First of all, try to label what it is you have lost and how it has affected you. No matter how trivial it might seem, acknowledge it and name it. Rely on your community – your church, family, small group, Bible study, or something else. God created us to be in community with one another and to bear one another's burdens. It might be hard to open up, but you don't have to grieve on your own. Don't participate in comparative suffering. Yes, someone else may have lost more family members, or their job, or has struggled more financially, but that doesn't take away the pain from your own losses. Loss is loss, and you're entitled to your grief. Try to come up with a ritual that acknowledges and honors your loss. This might come in the form of a worship service that gives space to bring our sorrows to God as we gather with our siblings in Christ. Or perhaps it is baking your mom's favorite dessert and eating it with your family as you share stories. As always, the scriptures have a special way of offering us solace and comfort, and time spent in prayer with God can be so healing for our souls.

I pray that in the days and weeks ahead, each of you will feel the Holy Spirit embrace you with tender care and that you will allow yourself to rest in the knowledge that God is with you every step of this journey. Peace and blessings.

If you are interested in learning more about grief and loss or need additional help, check out some of the resources listed below.

- <https://www.hospiceandcommunitycare.org/grief-and-loss/grief-links/>
- <https://www.ambiguousloss.com>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us> (to find a mental health professional in your area)

Rev. Grace Guyton is a deacon in the South Georgia Conference and is working towards licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist. She is a member of the South Georgia Conference Mental Health Task Force.



Praying for the Walk to Emmaus in Spanish

By Daniel Medina

Will you join us in prayer? After three years of being canceled because of the pandemic, the Walk to Emmaus in Spanish is now only two weeks away - October 29-30.

The Walk to Emmaus is a program of the Upper Room and The United Methodist Church. It is an experience of Christian spiritual revitalization and development that starts with a short course in Christianity during a weekend. It is an opportunity to meet Jesus Christ in a new way as God's grace and love is revealed through the service and fellowship of other believers.

The Walk to Emmaus in Spanish here in South Georgia has been our main program to train and inspire our members in Christian-Wesleyan doctrine. Almost ten years ago we adopted the Walk to Emmaus annual retreat in Spanish language and almost 500 people participated in this event during those years.

We are one out of the few events of this class in the country in Spanish. Even pilgrims (participants) from other countries as far as Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, and other United Methodist conferences here in the U.S. have come to experience this with us.

Please join us in praying for the event, the pilgrims, and the volunteers who will be a part of the spiritual retreat weekend. Come, Holy Spirit!

Rev. Daniel Medina is the Director of Hispanic and Latino Affairs in the Office of Connectional Ministries. He also serves the congregations of Nueva Vida UMC and Warner Robins First UMC.

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Georgia UM Foundation Offers Highest Certificate Rates in the Last 10 Years

Churches, nonprofits, individuals, and families have an opportunity to elevate and advance the mission and ministry of the Methodist Church across Georgia through investments in the Georgia United Methodist Foundation's Certificate Program.

Loan demand is growing as churches renovate and expand existing facilities and as Methodist churches work with the Foundation to refinance with favorable terms.

When you purchase 1-, 2-, 3-, and 4-year fixed-rate certificates, you earn higher returns than similar instruments while providing much-needed funds for loans to churches and nonprofits. Lives are being transformed because of your investment, making it possible for the church to construct, expand, and renovate facilities, acquire land and property, and refinance other financial institutions' loans. Below are the new higher certificate rates as of October 1, 2022.*

1-year = 3.00%

2-year = 4.00%

3-year = 3.75%

4-year = 3.50%

To learn more, please:

1. Visit our [Certificate Program Offering Circular and Application Page](#)
2. Review our [Certificate Investments Brochure](#)
2. Contact the Foundation at 770-449-6726 or info@gumf.org.

**All rates are subject to change without notice. Please contact the Foundation at 770-449-6726 for current rates. Georgia United Methodist churches, nonprofits, individuals, and families must invest a minimum of \$5,000. Certificates are not insured by the FDIC or any other government agency and are not obligations of or guaranteed by a bank. This ad constitutes neither an offer to sell nor a solicitation to buy the securities described. Offers are made only after receiving and reviewing an [Offering Circular](#).*

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FROM THE BISHOP DAVID GRAVES

A Time to Pause During Advent

Dear Friends of the South Georgia Conference,

What a joy it has been to visit with over 2,000 laity and clergy across the South Georgia Conference during the month of September. The attendance at these regional gatherings surpassed my expectations, and it was good to be in connection and conversation with the people of South Georgia. Thank you to those who attended as we sought to bring clarity to the issues facing our denomination and annual conference.

A Time to Pause During Advent

It goes without saying that we have had a lot to deal with over this past year. There has been great ministry happening all across the conference, but we have also faced challenges as we try to navigate a post-pandemic church and our path forward as a conference. As I met with laity and clergy last month, I heard over and over again: “Bishop, we are weary.” I see it in your faces; I hear it in your voices.

Our six District Superintendents have been extended in unprecedented ways. You’ve heard me say that I truly believe they have the hardest job in the denomination in this season we find ourselves. They have worked tirelessly in 2022 to accommodate numerous requests from local churches to hold church conferences and town hall meetings.

In order to give our Cabinet, staff, clergy, and lay leadership time to focus on ministry in the local church, their family, and their personal faith walk, I want us to “pause” as we move into the Advent season.

Therefore, I am calling for a pause on any special church conferences or town hall meetings related to local church disaffiliations between November 20, 2022 - January 1, 2023.

Timeline, FAQ, Video

There will still be time for any necessary conversations and meetings in the new year. There is no window that is closing if a church wants to disaffiliate at the 2023 Annual Conference Session. Together, the Cabinet, the Conference Board of Trustees, and the Conference Chancellor will be releasing a timeline this month for 2023 and 2024 as it relates to disaffiliations. Conference leadership is also working on a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document based on the questions I was asked in our various meetings during the month of September. In addition, I will be releasing a video providing a summary of these questions and answers. I hope these resources will help your local church.

A Personal Word

In my journey over the past two months visiting with clergy and laity - in August I was in the Alabama-West Florida Conference and in September I was in South Georgia - it occurred to me that it would be helpful to share with you several reasons why I choose to remain United Methodist. I feel a deep sense of calling from God to stay at the table and to be part of the future of this great denomination that has been such a witness for Christ. I hope you will see my heart in the reasons “Why I Love Being a United Methodist.” (see below)

I have shared with you all in various settings that I am a United Methodist pastor and bishop, and I firmly believe a future UMC needs traditional, orthodox members as well as progressive members, centrist

members, and everyone in between. A church cannot effectively reach the least, the lost, and the lonely if it is of one mind on every topic. It takes us all to challenge and encourage one another in our discipleship efforts and our spiritual journey.

As expected, I fielded questions about many relevant denominational topics during our September conversations. However, my heart was warmed to know that many people attended these sessions in order to better understand what the future of The United Methodist Church looks like and what laity can do to encourage their church to remain United Methodist.

Some in attendance wanted more information on the steps for local church disaffiliation. We did not focus our time on the nuances of that topic. However, [a page on our website explains those details](#), and your District Superintendent is always available to answer questions.

Your District Superintendents, conference leadership, and I have spent a lot of time helping churches get to where they need to be. Now as we move forward and some churches make a decision to depart, I want you to know my commitment is focusing on the people and churches of the great South Georgia Conference and moving forward in this next season of ministry together.

My prayers are with each of you, and I welcome your prayers as we continue to focus on mission and ministry.

In Christ,

Bishop David Graves

WHY I LOVE BEING A UNITED METHODIST

1. The United Methodist Church is a GLOBAL CHURCH of 12 million members whose reach and impact can be felt around the world. From Imagine No Malaria to the support of Ukrainian refugees, from Africa University to Camp Connect, The United Methodist Church is empowering people to love God and love neighbor around the world.
2. Jesus is at the center of all that we do. Together, we join in God's mighty acts of salvation, proclaiming and living the Lordship of Christ throughout the world. Our mission is clear, and we are committed to MAKING DISCIPLES of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
3. GRACE is central to our theology, our witness, and our ministry to the world. Steeped in the best of evangelical theology, we believe that salvation is a gift available to all, offered to us without price, through faith in Jesus Christ. In The United Methodist Church, everyone is welcome—including sinners! All are invited to follow Jesus.
4. Our evangelical theology is bolstered with a focus on TWO SACRAMENTS. In the sacrament of baptism, we are adopted into the family of God and given new life through Jesus Christ. In the sacrament of holy communion, all are invited to the table of our Lord where Jesus meets us. In both sacraments, God's amazing grace is poured out on God's people.
5. We are a DIVERSE church. "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." With Christians around the world, we worship the Triune God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. At the same time, we believe there is strength in our diversity. We boldly welcome people from different backgrounds, with different political views, and with a variety of worldviews. As a community born out of the fires of Pentecost and shaped by the cross of Christ, our stories make us stronger, give us resiliency in times of uncertainty, and provide a rich testimony of the steadfast love of God in our lives.
6. We WORSHIP God in a variety of ways, across four continents, in a multitude of languages. United Methodists faithfully worship in traditional high churches and tiny house churches, in contemporary

venues and on college campuses. Together, our varied voices proclaim the goodness and grace of God.

7. The United Methodist Church's IMPACT is felt and known across our country. Countless colleges, universities, hospitals, community centers, and social services agencies were born through the vision and gifts of United Methodists. This cultural impact continues from giant research universities to church-sponsored institutions like Andrew College and Wesleyan College.
8. The United Methodist Church is a CONNECTIONAL church, wherein churches are joined with each other and the global church in a multitude of ways. Our connection provides training and resources for clergy and laity, produces curriculum and devotional material for all ages, sends missionaries and mission teams around the world, and empowers new ministries to reach new generations.
9. When there is a DISASTER our connection responds through The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). United Methodists are often the first ones in and the last ones out when disaster strikes. After Hurricane Michael, our connectional partnerships gave us access to money and aid that enabled us to assist hurricane survivors.
10. The United Methodist Church has a BRIGHT FUTURE, for God is at work in ways seen and unseen across our connection. God is using United Methodist churches to proclaim the gospel, feed the hungry, comfort the broken, and resist the evils of this world. God has called us, God has equipped us, and God will carry us forward to reach new people and new generations for Jesus Christ.



Encounter Youth Retreat set for November 18-20

Registration is open for Encounter, the Conference's annual youth retreat for students in sixth through twelfth grades. **Encounter Youth Retreat** will take place November 18-20, 2022, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. [More information & registration](#)



Who is King?

Fall Quarter: God's Exceptional Choice

Unit 2: Out of slavery to nationhood

Lesson 8

Sunday School Lesson for the week of October 23, 2022

By Craig Rikard

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 8:1-9; 10: 17-26

Key Text: *You have now rejected your God, who saves you from all disasters and calamities. And you have said, "No, appoint a king over us." 1 Samuel 10:19a*

Lesson Aims:

1. To learn the importance of praying before making decisions.
2. To understand the importance of remembering God's past acts of goodness to enrich our faith in the present and future.
3. To understand that God can take our sins and mistakes and accomplish a higher good.

Introduction: Background

As we learned in the call of Gideon, the book of Judges consists of the repetitive pattern: Grace – Sin – Redemption. Israel's negligent behavior in relation to the Law always resulted in pain and chaos. God would then raise a judge from among the people to lead them out of the chaos and back into a life of grace. These kings were usually military rulers and often also a prophet.

After the judge leads them out of the consequences of Israel's sinful behavior, the people lived as a loose confederation of tribes. Each tribe had its elder(s) and on occasion they gathered to address the welfare of Israel. However, the sinful behavior of Israel often resulted in consequences far too great for the capabilities of the elders. Thus, God called forth the judge.

Samuel was a prophet/judge for Israel during the period between the judges and the emergence of the kings. He was known as a fair, righteous man. He judged from a pure heart. The people respected Samuel, and the period of his ministry was a time of relative calm and prosperity.

However, Samuel's sons did not possess the same character and desire for God's justice as their father. As Samuel entered the latter stage of his life, the people of Israel became concerned about their future. They were asking, "Who will oversee us after Samuel's death? Certainly not his sons!" Consequently, the elders met with Samuel and voiced their concern. They were respectful enough of Samuel that they did not attempt to circumvent him or usurp his authority. Again, their addressing Samuel speaks volume about the esteem in which they held him.

The elders, however, had already devised an answer to safeguard the future. "Other nations are ruled by kings. Let us also have a king!"

Our narrative begins with the conversation between Samuel and the elders.

The Narrative and Its Message

Why Choose a King?

Actually, it is God's conversation with Samuel, and then relayed to the people, that reveals the meaning of the elder's request. God reminds Israel that the Lord has led them through every painful and chaotic moment in their life. Beginning with the Exodus, Israel's history contains a wealth of events revealing God's grace. Notice again that the Exodus is perceived as the pivotal and highest redemptive moment for the Israelites. The prophets and psalmists often anchored their praise of God for the Lord's goodness in the Exodus. God continued to remind them that He had empowered them against all their enemies. It was the Lord that provided them with the land upon which they stand and live.

Basically, God appears to be asking, "Is that not enough to own your faith and trust?" and "What more must I do for you to trust in me?" The request of the people and elders was perceived by God as doubt. What God had performed in their past should grant them hope and serenity about their future!

I cannot state that the request for a king was a haughty act on the part of Israel. Perhaps it was a sincere sign of their desire to protect their future. Though the elders did not circumvent Samuel, they had failed to consult God. They failed to entertain the thought, "How does our desire for a king effect our relationship with God?"

If we were to "humanize" God, the Lord almost sounds like a hurt parent who has given everything for his children's welfare only to have them leave home without talking with them.

How would you feel if you were a kind, giving parent only to have your kids leave home without consultation? Have you ever been so afraid of the future, or even current events, that you sought your own answers? Have you ever considered how your decisions, made without prayer, would affect your spiritual life? Do you believe God through Jesus has done enough to possess your trust?

From our beginning, we have learned through Holy Scripture that we are allowed to choose actions that govern our life. However, we have equally learned to take such actions after much prayer. Remember the Israelites running about in terror and panic at the sea. “What are we to do?” was the great question they asked. God asked them to be still and see the salvation of the Lord. Prayer is absolutely necessary and beneficial when making all decisions, especially those decisions that could result in life-changing consequences. We do not know that God would have rejected their request for a king. After all, the Lord does grant them their king. However, the Lord did dislike the way and reasons they asked. Again, they asked without consulting the Lord, and their reasons were very secular. Other nations have kings, why shouldn't we? They asked Samuel for the king, not God.

Without doubt, in 1 Samuel this request is viewed negatively. It is perceived as a rejection of God as their king. Israel has been a theocracy from the beginning. Now, they are asking for the governing structure as the rest of their neighbors. “They have a king, and we want a king.”

The elder's request for a king does make us question their thinking and motivation. How did they believe a king could serve them better than their judges, and especially God? Had God disappointed them in some manner? Absolutely not! It is obvious they were afraid of Samuel's sons leading them, and rightly so. The sons were not righteous, and most likely they would not serve them well as prophet/judges. But what assurance did they have that the kings chosen would rule in a godly manner? Looking ahead, the reign of Saul started well but ended in a painful manner. Consistently, the Bible reveals that decisions made apart from God almost always end in less-than-ideal results. In reading the narrative, we can see the need for prayer. We can see the need of the elders to talk with the Lord FIRST.

One of the issues that came to mind for me was humankind's belief that God owes us more than we have already received. My mind turns to Jesus on the cross, while those at the foot yelled to see one more grand miracle. Did Jesus owe them anything? He is giving them the greatest treasure he has: His love and life. This narrative makes me ask, “How much did God need to do for Israel to trust Him above all?” That same question can be applied to me, and most likely, all of us.

Are we guilty of a “convenient faith?” After all God has done for us in Christ, are we guilty of failing to contemplate just how much God has loved us, how much God has forgiven us? Do we find ourselves expecting God to rescue us from bad decisions made apart from prayer?

Furthermore, I can almost hear in the narrative a tone of “you have done well by us thus far, we'll take it from here.” Of course, I don't believe this was the major intent of Israel. But it does appear that they are now taking things into their own hands since the future judges might prove disastrous.

Let us also not forget the formidable power of fear. Fear can cause us to react and not act. There exists a great difference between the two. In reaction, we rarely think and certainly rarely pray other than “Help me now God!” Action involves prayer, thought, and wisdom. The elders did not have to react at all. They had time to consider the matter and to pray over the request. Samuel was still living so there was no need for a rash reaction. There were a lot of hypotheticals at work in this narrative. What if Samuel dies very soon? What if his sons choose to remain unrighteous and rule us in such a manner? What if a king could ensure our future? What we are reading is a lot of hypotheticals, void of prayer.

Have you made a decision you now regret? What role did prayer play in your decision? Have you made an attempt to ensure a prosperous future apart from your relationship with God? Are you guilty of acting first and praying later? Has fear ever caused you to react rashly? What do you think is the difference between reacting and acting?

God's Response

From a human perspective I can understand God refusing to answer their request for a king. Yet, I always underestimate the grace of God. God chooses to give Israel its king. God's response leads us to consider two questions. First, did God agree with the request and choose to overlook their rejection of Him? Or, secondly, did God give Israel its king to teach them that their request, made by rejecting God's lordship, was not as wise as they thought and ultimately led Israel back to the Lord's leadership? We don't know with certainty God's reason, but without a doubt it was for the ultimate good of Israel.

We cannot escape the repetitive pattern of God taking us from the midst of our poor decisions and ensuing chaos and then accomplishing a greater good. Again, we do not know the exact rationale of God in granting them a king, but we can know with certainty the Lord will lead them into grace and redemption. Of course, Israel would learn from their experiences, and they would eventually own a greater collective wisdom. However, how long it takes for Israel to recognize their mistakes and God's loving response are related to the Lord's will and Israel's seeking the Lord.

Have you ever learned greater wisdom from a mistake? Have you learned of God's grace in your life and learned God's will for the world and yourself through a mistake or sin? Do you believe God has allowed you to make a mistake for your future good? How do you see God's grace at work in your poor decisions? Out of the two reasons offered for God's granting Israel her king, which do you think is most likely possible? Did God finally agree with Israel and their plan for their future, or did God choose to grant them their desire in order to reveal their frailty followed by His grace and redemption? What experiences in your life affirm your answer?

Choosing the King

We might expect a far more "spiritual" way of choosing a king than casting lots. The using of lots simply reveals the Lord using the customs of the people to reveal the divine will. The people were seeking God's will for their life, and, though primitive, the lots were a means the people understood. The process involved the gradual moving from the general to the particular. First, the tribe would be identified from which the king would come, then the family in the tribe, followed by the individual.

Initially, the tribe of Benjamin was chosen. Some might have wondered if the lots were an effective manner of finding a king. After all, the lots landed on the smallest of tribes: Benjamin. Next, they cast lots on the clans of Benjamin. The clan of Matri was chosen next. Finally, the lot chose Saul.

If left up to us, most of us would expect the first king of Israel to be standing among the crowd. However, he has hidden himself away in the supplies. Our text offers no reason as to why Saul was hiding. Our book offers possible answers. Still, the book also admits the text does not reveal the answer. Whatever the reason, this is a strange place to find one chosen to become king of a nation.

Nevertheless, the cast lot has revealed Saul, and without doubt it is assumed he must be the king. As Saul is brought before the Israelites, he is noted to be handsome and head and shoulders taller than the others. Physically, he is the perfect secular king. He looks the part!

Thus, whatever doubt may have reared its head in the process of the lots, Saul's appearance eradicates it. He must be our king because he looks like a king! This type of thinking and choosing of a natural leader might seem very primitive and unwise. However, let us not forget that candidates for public office today usually

have teams that devise a way for their candidate to look the part of a leader. Appearance has long played a role in choosing those who will lead. Even Samuel joined the enthusiastic choice of the crowd. “There is not another like him in Israel!” The people respond, “Long live the king!”

How often do you think we allow appearance to influence our decisions of leadership? Are there ways we can at least recognize a person’s heart? What are they?

The people will return home feeling hopeful and enthusiastic about the future. God has chosen them a king above kings through the lots. This is the second major decision made by Israel based upon the secular. They wanted a king because other nations had a king. They believed they had certainly chosen the right king because of his appearance. This type of decision-making calls to mind again, “The Lord does not see as we see, the Lord sees the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). There was one important factor the people could not know or see in their new king: his heart.

If we cast our eyes briefly into the future, we quickly understand the mistaken assumptions and decisions of the Israelites resulted in pain and chaos. Saul would suffer severe bi-polar illness. A young shepherd named David would play music to calm Saul’s tormented spirit. In the end, Saul falls on his own sword and dies.

What is God’s response after the Israelites have brought division, suffering, and death among themselves? God responds as always: with grace and redemption. A new king will be chosen. The new king will be known as one of the greatest in all of Israelite history. God will call David to shepherd God’s people.

Though the future reign of Saul ends in death and chaos, why do you think God did not call for an end to the rule of kings? Instead of eradicating the choice of kings for the future, what did God do? Why do you think God chose another king? What does God’s redemptive actions say to all of us when we make mistakes? When we sin? When we act without prayer? Most every disciple Jesus chose to follow him - and to one day lead his Church - were flawed. What do you believe Jesus was saying to all of us in choosing people with feet of clay? Jesus laid his head in Judas’ breast at the last supper, a place of trust. Why do you think Jesus chose this last action of love and trust for Judas when Judas had already made plans to betray him? What do you think of the statement: “Even the greatest sin we commit, and the greatest mistakes we make, can always be used for good and redemption in the hands of God”? How does the crucifixion of Jesus relate to this statement?

Prayer

Almighty God, forgive us for our rash behavior. Forgive us for acting without praying. Forgive us when we judge by sight alone. Grant us the ability to remember your great and mighty works in our individual lives and the life of our Church. May our past with you lead to a deeper trust in you. In Jesus name, Amen.

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



David Anointed as King

**Fall Quarter: God’s Exceptional Choice
Unit 2: Out of slavery to nationhood
Lesson 9**

**Sunday School Lesson for the week of October 30, 2022
By Craig Rikard**

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Key Text: *The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart. 1 Sam. 16:7b*

Lesson Aims

1. To understand the consequences of rash, impulsive judgements and decisions.
2. To understand the humanity of our leaders.
3. To recognize the presence of God's Kingdom at work in history, the present, and the future.
4. To embrace the importance of not judging only by what we see.
5. To embrace the reality that a new day always comes through Christ.

Author's note: In this particular lesson I found the best way to glean the lessons from the narrative is to allow the narrative itself to speak. It is rich in truth and possesses many precious observations. Thus, we will read the text and allow it to speak. Again, the lesson is a supplement to the lesson book, which is well done. All pronouns are traditional. However, God transcends all pronouns and language.

Introduction

Israel's request for a king resulted in pain and chaos. God warned Israel, through Samuel, their desire for a king was in essence a lack of trust in God. The Lord reminded them His call to trust Him was not without a foundation. Their trust should be freely given based on the many acts of God's grace at work in their past. However, the Lord, in the mystery of His will, allowed Israel to have their king. Notice God steered them toward a king fitting the near-eastern world's expectation for kings. Saul was handsome and stood head and shoulders over the other Israelites. He "appeared" to be everything Israel desired in a king.

Saul suffered from progressive emotional instability during his reign. Many modern professional psychologists acquainted with the biblical text believe he suffered from bi-polar illness. His behavior certainly would fit today's diagnostic criteria. Saul's moods would swing drastically from a kind soul to a violent, aggressive personality. He most likely was often depressed. Still, he reigned for 42 years. His long reign reveals that much of the time he was a functional king. His illness seems to have had no effect upon his ability to know right from wrong. In the Bible people are almost always responsible for their actions.

One of the many reasons we are not to judge another is related to our lack of knowledge. We do not know if the person struggles with an emotional disorder or unresolved grief. We don't know at what point God holds that person accountable for their actions. Only God knows what truly occurs in the heart of another. Still, we must remember that emotional distress does not always mean a person is not responsible for their actions. The judicial system in the U.S. struggles with this issue constantly. In our text, it is obvious that Saul was well aware of his decisions and possible consequences.

Jonathan, Saul's son, befriended David after David slayed Goliath in chapter 17. They entered into a binding covenant of friendship and never violated that covenant.

The remedy that seemed to soothe Saul's troubled soul was music. I had the privilege of touring hospitals especially created for mental illness and addiction. Most of them had a "music therapy" room. It is quite amazing that today we still employ the methods used by Saul's court.

As an aside, Saul did not enjoy the plush court as other kings. He dwelled within a fort-like structure and did not have a court hierarchy. However, there were those who served closely with him. Thus, I simply refer to them as his court, though it was a very loosely constructed court.

Members of Saul's inner circle recommended warrior/poet/musician David as an instrument to soothe Saul's torment. Only Samuel and the house of Jesse knew of the anointing of David as king. However, over time David never knew "which Saul" would greet him. Later, after David's slaying of Goliath, David became a courageous, heroic figure in Israel. He grew in popularity since defeating Goliath, and this roused Saul's jealousy and created paranoia in the mind of the king. Saul, on occasion, attempted to kill David in a fit of anger and jealousy. Jonathan, on many of those occasions, helped David escape harm. Eventually Saul chased David throughout Canaan. David and the 600 men loyal to him avoided Saul and refused to bring harm to Saul. Saul was "God's anointed," and David dared not harm him. David was a young man of faith, and to harm Saul would prove a great sin against God. Harming those whom God has chosen was an affront against the Lord in the eyes of David. There was no circumstance where David would hurt Saul's son and dear friend Jonathan.

Prior to Saul's death, the crown was taken from him. Saul engaged in sins against God and ignored the godly wisdom of Samuel. Samuel delivered the news that, in the eyes of God, Saul was no longer king. Prophets possessed tremendous power in the early years of the Old Testament. Even kings listened intently to their words and took them seriously. Saul must have been devastated to hear the news of his dethroning. However, Saul continued to serve as king in spite of Samuel's message. What else could Saul do? There was not yet another king to replace him. Later, young David would be anointed king in Bethlehem, yet David did not press to take the office of king. He waited. Though anointed, David still respected and honored king Saul. It is possible that Saul believed he might win back the Lord's favor. There seems to be some indication that Samuel greatly desired a change in Saul's heart. However, the change did not occur.

Saul led Israel in a vicious battle against the Philistines. The Philistines were one tribe Israel never drove from the promised land. The Philistines were a thorn in Israel's flesh for years. During the battle, three of Saul's sons were killed, including Jonathan. Saul was severely wounded and asked his armor bearer to end his life. It would have proved a great humiliation for the king of Israel to be taken prisoner. The armor bearer was too afraid to take the life of the king. Thus, Saul fell on his own sword. In fear and anguish, the armor bearer also took his own life.

The growing awareness of Saul's instability, and eventually his death, must have led some in Israel to recognize that in their desire for a king they had actually exchanged the reign of God for a man with feet of clay (like all of us).

The Text

When Samuel informed Saul that God removed from Saul the spiritual mantle of kingship, Samuel entered a period of mourning. His mourning represents his great love for Israel. After all, now that Saul was not blessed as king, what would happen to the people of Israel? Samuel was now in old age. He had to wonder, "Who will guide and direct Israel?" "Would God continue to bless His people, or remove the divine hand from upon them?" His grief also reveals a fondness for Saul and a great desire that the king prosper. Though Samuel knew that selecting a king had not been the ultimate will of God, he still wanted Israel's king to do well. Samuel greatly desired that Saul be a godly, righteous king who could rule the people with justice and protect them from neighboring enemies, especially the Philistines.

Has life ever become so difficult you wondered, "Who is in control?" "What do I do next?" "Where is God?"

Samuel is left to ask, “What now?” In the eyes of God, Saul is no longer king, yet the people recognize him as such. Approximately ten years passed between the removal of the kingdom from Saul and the official anointing of David. During that time Samuel most certainly prayed and interceded for Saul. Eventually his intercession became mourning. Our narrative finds Samuel in a despondent state. What is a prophet/judge/advisor to the king to do when the king has failed? What is next?

Can you relate to Samuel’s mourning? His possible confusion? Have you ever found yourself in grief, wondering “What do I do now?” How does our faith bring us comfort when facing uncertain times? What gives us hope for the future?

It is during this period of sadness and mourning that God speaks to Samuel, telling him to “Go.” Sadness and mourning the loss of someone, or a way of life, is understandable. It is part of the human condition. Mourning allows us to release the stress and pain from the emotions and body. However, prolonged mourning is destructive. Prolonged mourning easily leads to depression. Depression saps us of energy, both physical and emotional. We suffer spiritual fatigue when we suffer depression and often isolate ourselves. Samuel had experienced a most painful event. He had to inform Saul of his failure. Sharing this news seems to have hurt Samuel as much or more than Saul. This most likely was the last time Samuel and Saul met face to face. A second episode of sadness most likely occurred when Samuel realized that Saul was not changing, nor was his loss of the kingdom going to be reversed. Samuel has mourned, but now it is time to move onward.

After a period of mourning, there comes a time to move onward. Of course, the season of mourning is different for individuals, yet still one cannot holistically live in a constant state of grief. It is for Samuel’s good that he needs to move forward.

Notice, God always enters our sorrow. We never suffer alone. The text doesn’t say Samuel actively sought God; God comes to Samuel. There will come many “nudges” of God in the midst of our pain. As our grief begins to take an emotional toll, God, in a myriad of ways, will prompt us to move onward in life. When my sister took her life, I was overwhelmed by grief and suffered depression. One day, out of the blue, the thought came to me to write a book about our childhood and the pain that led to her death. I was to find a ray of hope and not allow death to win the day. The thought did not come out of the blue. It came from God; of that, I have no doubt. These taps on the shoulder from the Lord come to us all. They ask us to enter life again and to allow faith to triumph over pain and hurt.

Have you experienced, during a time of grief, a “Go” moment? If so, how do you believe God nudged you out of your grief? Notice, God has told Samuel to “get back into life,” for there was much yet to be done and experienced. Why do you think it is important, after a period of mourning, to get back into life? If you have experienced such a moment, what has God taught you from that moment? How has the Lord used you? How has God used your past pain to deepen your faith and compassion for others?

Notice the words “fill your horn with oil and go.” God is reminding Samuel that the Lord doesn’t abandon his people, and the divine will is always moving onward. There is another kingdom moving in the world. It will later be embodied in Jesus. The Kingdom of God is still moving in human history toward God’s redemptive end. The horn of oil refers to the anointing oil used for the consecration of a king. Saul’s failure doesn’t mean the end of kings for Israel. God has another king, already chosen by the Lord. A new day is coming. In our walk of faith, no matter how rough the adversity, a new day always comes.

How does the promise of a new day give you strength to face adversity? How do you think the resurrection of Jesus is related to the certain coming of a new day? Can you share a time when, after a struggle, “all things became new?” If you have had such an experience, how is your perspective of the world and God different than before the adversity and sorrow? How are you different?

Samuel was a well-respected prophet/judge. However, in his initial reaction to the call of God to confront Saul, we are allowed to see that he too has feet of clay. He feels fear. The Lord has commanded Samuel to take a heifer with him to the house of Jesse. A heifer was often used for sacrifice, and Samuel feared Saul would hear of his actions. He was afraid Saul would attempt to take his life. After all, the last message Samuel gave Saul was humiliating for Saul.

As stated above, we see Samuel's feet of clay in his reaction of fear. His fear also reveals his knowledge of Saul's instability. It was difficult to predict the reactions of Saul. Samuel's fear was not a sin. It was a natural human response in light of the circumstances. Yet, Samuel could not allow the fear to deter him from answering God's call. His initial reaction might have been one of fear, but his response to God's call reveals his faith. The text reads, he did "as the Lord said." Our natural human responses are not always sinful. They are responses, not choices. It is what we do with that fear that matters most. When we allow fear to keep us from obedience to God, then it becomes a lack of trust.

Are we often guilty of perceiving our leaders in the faith as void of humanity? In your journey of faith, can you affirm that there were moments when you acted impulsively? Do you believe Samuel's reaction was a sin? If not, why not? How do you understand "response versus sin" in this text? Can a response be void of sin and yet later become a sin? How? Can you give an example?

The house of Jesse dwelled in the small village of Bethlehem, a short distance from Jerusalem. Jerusalem was not the capital of Israel at this time. David would later capture Jerusalem from the Jebusites and declare it to be the capital of Israel. Saul's capital was at Gibeah during this time. Still, it is important to remember that the future Messiah would come from Bethlehem, Jesus' birth place. Thus, the New Testament reminds us that Jesus was from the "house of David," the younger son of Jesse. In this narrative, we are witnessing the beginning of "the David line."

The reaction of the people who met Samuel as he approached the village is noteworthy. They trembled! Why? Under Saul's reign life often became chaotic. When the house of Jesse saw Samuel, the prophet of God, they were terrified he had come to pronounce judgement upon them, or had come to warn them of approaching calamity. Again, this reaction reveals the instability of the times under Saul's reign. It also reveals the power and respect wielded by a prophet. The power of the prophet revealed that there were "two branches" of authority in Israel. There was the king, and there was the prophet. Samuel told them he came in peace.

Notice, in troubled times, God still speaks and calls his people. The entire Bible is the testimony of God breaking into human history in our most dire moments. The Kingdom of God is here and always will be. As the people of God, we must always prayerfully seek the call of God to use us, especially in adversity. We are to be the voice, face, hands, and feet of Christ at all times but especially in times of instability.

Samuel informed them he had brought a sacrifice and invited the house of Jesse to join him. This would have been a "fellowship sacrifice." In response, the house of Jesse joined Samuel, except for young David who was tending sheep. As the house of Jesse gathered, Samuel begins to eye the sons of Jesse, for among them would stand the next king of Israel. Jesse's oldest son, Eliab, appeared to be the perfect candidate. He was the first born and, like Saul, was tall and handsome. However, the Lord told Samuel that Eliab was not the one chosen. In 16:7 we read the important verse that reminds us the Lord does not look on outward appearance as we often do; God looks "on the heart."

Again, we see Samuel's feet of clay. He reacted to Eliab as the people initially reacted to Saul. In the choosing of the first king, Israel was looking for one who possessed the looks of a king. Now, Samuel was doing the same thing. One would think he would have learned from his experience with Saul. Though

Samuel was a godly man with a godly heart, it didn't mean he was void of his humanity. This again wasn't an act of sin; it was an act of impulse. It was an "assumption," and assumptions can lead us to conclusions that are destructive.

John Wesley identified sin in 3 ways. First, there were the sins of ignorance. We can engage in a harmful act without realizing it. One important facet of our Christian walk is that we learn what is sin and what is not. There were behaviors and thoughts I once believed sinful, yet today I do not perceive them as sin at all. Then there were things I easily accepted that today I would judge as sinful. Secondly, Wesley spoke of the sins of mistake. The sins of mistake are usually related to a reaction or impulse. Either we do not possess the wisdom to recognize the harm in our actions, or we are caught in a moment when there is little or no time to think our actions through. Though all sins are harmful and destructive, these sins usually reflect the human condition. We are frail, impulsive, and at times lack wisdom. However, the third understanding of sin is by far the most serious. These are the willful sins. We know they are wrong. Our faith has blessed us with the wisdom to know they are wrong. Yet, we choose to engage in the destructive action anyway. Though the first two categories are understandable, they are still sin. There is always a need for confession and forgiveness. Samuel's assumption was impulsive, yet his intent was good. Again, we still must be careful not to "rank sins." Sins are sins and are harmful. For purity of heart, we should always confess all manner of sin, for God is more than eager to forgive.

Does Wesley's three understandings of sin help you in your own faith? Do they help you to avoid judging another? How? What do you believe Wesley was saying about the relationship between our human nature, intent, and motivation as they relate to sin? Do you believe an unintentional mistake is a severe sin? If not, why? Do you think we are still in need of confession and forgiveness?

If we examine Simon Peter's walk with Jesus, we recognize all three. Initially, he was impulsive, making promises he could not keep. It was evident he was ignorant of God's Kingdom. Each time Jesus mentioned dying on a cross Peter recoiled in disbelief. Even after Pentecost his frail humanity and the remnant of the Jewish culture's belief still resided within him. His cultural upbringing and frail humanity made Peter's acceptance of Gentiles very difficult. It took the vision on the roof at Joppa to move Peter into the maturity that "what God has declared clean is clean." At the end of his life, we discover a serene acceptance in his life. Tradition claims he was crucified. He asked to be crucified upside down for he believed himself unworthy to be crucified as Jesus.

Samuel, though a prophet, could still react impulsively. He, too, could jump ahead of God and assume God's will. He knew the next king would emerge from the house of Jesse; thus, he assumed it was Eliab. He was wrong. Samuel's actions were not premeditated, they were impulsive and arose from a good motive.

Why do you think Samuel immediately assumed Eliab was certainly God's choice? What does Samuel's assumption teach us about human nature and the frailty of all people? Have you ever acted impulsively though your heart was pure?

After Eliab, Jesse's sons were paraded before Samuel one at a time. We can only imagine Samuel's uneasiness as each one was rejected. He might have thought, "Did I not hear God correctly?" "Has the Lord changed his mind?" The tension must have reached a climax after all of Jesse's sons were rejected. It was then that Jesse informs Samuel he has one more son, the youngest. Jesse, and the others of his house, would never consider David as the one Samuel sought. After all, he was young, and his trade was tending the sheep in the fields. It is beautiful to think the Messiah arose from the lineage of a shepherd.

Are we often guilty of “judging by appearance?” Can you share an experience when a most unlikely person became an answer to your prayers? Since we cannot see the human heart, how does prayer and fellowship help us in discerning our leadership?

It is at this point that the faith and determination of Samuel are again revealed. Samuel informs Jesse to send for David, for “we will not sit down until he arrives.” God sent Samuel on a mission. He was to anoint the next king of Israel. Samuel was not leaving - nor leave the place they stood - until the last son arrived.

In our culture of immediate answers and gratification how patient are we in waiting upon the Lord? Can you share a moment when you jumped ahead of God? What was the consequence? Can you share an experience in which you waited? What was the consequence of such patience? Have you ever felt a call from God so strongly you were undeterred? How did the call come to you? Can you share that experience?

As David approaches, we once again read of his “physical attributes.” David is handsome and vibrant. Still, the appearance has nothing to do with God’s choice. The Lord knew David’s heart. The young man most would disqualify based on age and station in life would become the king “after God’s own heart.” Throughout Scripture, God often chooses those who are overlooked. Israel was a weak nation leaving Egypt. Judges like Gideon claimed they were the weakest choice. Mary and Joseph were far from the ideal couple to bear the Messiah. They came from a working-class background and tiny village. Jesus was reared in a town far from the intellectual and spiritual center of Jerusalem. He was a carpenter.

Two important and powerful acts of anointing occurred during David’s consecration. First, he was anointed with oil upon his head. The anointing with oil was an action the people could see, and David could feel. The people believed Samuel had great power as God’s prophet, and, thus, had the authority to anoint a king. Still, there was another anointing that was unseen to the human eye but equally as real. The Spirit of the Lord came upon him powerfully. The reality of the trinity was unknown to the Old Testament people. “The Spirit of the Lord” meant the Lord’s power and blessing.

It is helpful to visit Jesus’ baptism. Jesus’ baptism was actually his coronation as the King of Kings. Jesus participated in John’s baptism, which the people could see and understand. It was a tangible act. His baptism wasn’t for repentance, for Jesus was without sin. When Jesus allowed John to baptize him, he was accepting his ministry of life, death, and resurrection.

After his baptism, the Holy Spirit descended upon him. The gift of the Spirit was the powerful anointing of God Himself. Thus, God says, “This is my son, in whom I am well pleased.” Jesus had accepted his ministry as Messiah.

As a baptized and confirmed member of the Church, we are also the called. Not every call is the same. In 1 Corinthians 12-14 we learn that the Holy Spirit has endowed all of us with certain gifts and graces. Together, we form the Body of Christ and become the living presence of Jesus in the world. David had been anointed as the king of Israel. However, he was also anointed and set apart for God’s special purposes in the world.

Do you believe you understand the relationship between your baptism, confirmation, and God’s call upon your life? Do you think the Body of Christ adequately expresses the presence of the Holy Spirit in baptisms and confirmations? If we fall short what can we do to help each other understand that baptism and confirmation are related to the Lord’s call upon our life? Do you believe the Lord has said of you, “I am well pleased”? If not, why not? How can we affirm God’s pleasure in us and others?

The Prayer

Almighty God, we confess our frailty and sin. Forgive us for the rash assumptions and judgements that have caused harm. Teach us the dignity of every person. Make us slow to judge and quick to pray. Grant us the gift of patience in seeking your Kingdom at work in our life. Thank you for forgiving our sins, for seeing our hearts, and calling us to serve. In Jesus name, Amen.

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

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Discipleship is the Path to Becoming

By Anne Bosarge

The average American sees 4,000 to 10,000 ads daily. Let that sink in. You might argue with that or even think it's not true because, while you see all those ads, you don't notice all the ads. You only notice less than 100 ads a day. What is the difference in seeing and noticing? It's the same as the difference between hearing and listening. Think about how many words a student hears in one day. And then think of how many words they actual listen to.

The difference in seeing and noticing, hearing and listening is true in our spiritual lives as well. Unless we make deep listening and intentional noticing a consistent spiritual practice, the habit of seeing and hearing without comprehension seeps into our spiritual lives as well. We come to believe the physical act of hearing good teaching or worship music will somehow transform our hearts. We assume that seeing scripture on a page or watching a Christian video will somehow magically help us become who we were meant to be. James says it this way in 1:23-24, "For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like." Unfortunately, there are many of us walking around who consume spiritual content but then walk away and forget what it says. Just seeing and hearing spiritual things doesn't mean you are being transformed by them.

But even a rhythm of deep listening and intentional noticing is not the end result. Becoming is. Once you listen and notice, take the time to do the work of understanding and contemplating what God is speaking to you. Internalize it, and then make it a part of your thinking, motivations, attitudes, and habits. Deep listening and intentional noticing are only effective on the spiritual journey of becoming if we move what we've learned from our eyes and ears to our minds and into our hearts. This process is the path of becoming more like Jesus. This is the process of making disciples.

As leaders who are tasked with the role of making disciples who make disciples, we must help people move past consuming thousands of bits of information about the Bible and multi-tasking our spiritually to see how much we can get checked off our spiritual to-do list. Getting people into the church building is not enough. Participation in church activities is not sufficient. We must teach people to take time for deep listening and intentional noticing that moves them to understanding and becoming. How? Here are four ways tips for getting started.

Get away. Step away from electronics for a specified period of time each day. Go to a place where you are free to just think. Even if you have just 15 minutes to give toward intense reflection, make the most of the time you have.

Ask questions. No yes or no questions for God to answer, but ask yourself questions that prompt thoughtful responses. Where have I seen God working today? How has God been made known to others through my

life? What is God saying to me today through His Word, through others, or through prayer? Don't let yourself off the hook without answering all three questions.

Talk to others. Ask them what they are learning about God. Listen to how God is moving in their lives. Pay attention to the work He is doing in the world around you.

Turn off the "noise." Seek out audibly and visually quiet places where you aren't tempted by additional inputs and your attention isn't being diverted from other stimuli.

Let's continue the conversation! Let me know how you personally engage in listening, noticing and understanding! How do you encourage this in your congregation as you grow together as disciples?

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



True Faith

WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN ANNE PACKARD

The following excerpts were written by Rev. Geo. G.N. MacDowell for the Wesleyan Christian Advocate dated September 3, 1881. Rev. MacDowell chronicled his journey while working with Rev. W.D. McGregor in the newly created Cobbtown Mission, which was formed in Emanuel, Tattnall, and Bulloch counties by the South Georgia Conference in 1879. This ministerial work reminds me that we are a people of true faith who went gratefully into the wilderness with nothing more than the belief in God's promise. What's Old Is New Again.

"The Cobbtown Mission was established December, 1879. It embraces parts of Emanuel, Tattnall, and Bulloch counties, covering an area of at least a thousand square miles. With the exception of a few missionary Baptist churches, this territory for many years has been under the influence and control of the Primitive Baptists, who are noted for their opposition to advanced education, Sunday schools, and to all other Christian Churches."

"On Sunday morning I preached in a pine grove to a congregation estimated at a hundred or more; some sitting in buggies, some on rude puncheons, and others reclining on the grass. At the close of the service brother McGregor organized a church composed of six members, three of whom were contributions from the church in Savannah. Brother Rustin was appointed class-leader and steward. After dinner I baptized some children and preached again at night."

"Two and a half miles distant from Rustin's, the Black Creek Primitive Baptist Church is located; said to be the largest and strongest church of that sect in the county. Across the road from this church is the Black Creek Academy owned by Mr. John B. Goodman, whose parents were Primitive Baptists. The good Spirit put it into the heart of this young man to give us that academy building and an acre of ground – for church and school purposes. I drew up the deed in accordance with the instruction of the Discipline and had it properly signed and witnessed."

"The establishment of Methodist preaching, right under the shadow of the Primitive Church – will doubtless stir up some animosity; and brother McG was laughingly told that he would either have to fight or run. He

will do neither; but preach the simple and pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, where it is sorely needed and seldom heard.”

“We traveled through the country, visiting and praying with several families, and I preached every day – sometimes twice a day – under the pines or in private houses, to small, but seemingly interested congregations. Brother McGregor is the right man for this work. He is highly esteemed by the people, and abundant in labors. He has one church in process of building, and the materials for another are being prepared, but his field is too large for one man and should be divided. While he has “boarded around,” he has received from his charge only thirteen dollars this year. But the Lord will provide for him, and I doubt not, will make him a blessing to the people.”

From this humble beginning in the early 1880s came many vibrant and wonderful churches. And whether the mission was called Cobbtown or Quince, whether it was in the Dublin district or the McRae district, or whether it was even mentioned in that year’s journal, these churches were built by strong and faithful farming families and led by devout Methodist preachers who simply believed in God’s promise of love and support.

The Ministry of Memory remembers the work of Eason’s Chapel, Collins, Mt.Carmel and Cobbtown, who at one time worked with the Cobbtown Mission, and all of the churches of the South Georgia Conference. May we also remember their abundant faith and also go gratefully into the wilderness believing in God’s promise.

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



Fussin’ Over You!

PATHWAY TO HIS PRESENCE

B.J. FUNK

She never stood a chance. Her dysfunctional home life claimed her soul at the crib, and by the time she was twelve, the lure of drugs added its own addictive claim. At fourteen, she entered a life of prostitution, following in the footsteps of her mother.

One weekend, doped and crazy, she and her boyfriend killed two people. Her weapon, a pickaxe, brought a conviction of murder. She was sentenced in 1984 and put to death fourteen years later. She gained international attention because she was the first woman executed in Texas since the Civil War. Karla Faye Tucker would not have been missed except for a few people who believed her conversion to Christianity was valid, and that she could do more good alive than dead. One of those people who believed was Beverly Lowry, whose story is depicted in the book and television movie, *Crossed Over*, produced in 2002.

Lowry visited Karla Faye because of her deep need to understand her troubled teenage son’s hit-and-run death. As these visits progress, an unlikely friendship formed. Lowry discovers in Karla Faye an unexpected gentleness. Karla Faye finds in Beverly Lowry the meaning of love. The most compelling statement in the movie came for me as Karla Faye expresses the shocked reality that someone loved her. “I guess there is something in me worth fussin’ over.”

Immediately, that statement rushed to my heart, shouting a loud truth. This is the message of the gospel: Each person has something in them worth fussin' over. No matter the coldness of their outer or inner appearance, there is a seed inside that begs the question, "Is there anything in me that counts? Could there be a chance that I, even I, have a chance of pulling out of my sin and into freedom? Do you see anything loveable in me?"

Without this hope, why would anyone bother with ministry to prisons, evangelizing of the lost, or missionary efforts? Without this hope, why would anyone ever bother with you?

The Bible brings alive many stories of people who are worth fussin' over. Love claims a soul worth noticing when angry Jewish men bring an adulteress to what they counted on as the Court of Jesus. Instead, Jesus dismissed court for her while bringing conviction straight to their own hearts. "If you don't have any sin, then you go ahead and throw a stone at her." No one dared. No one could. They got the message: Jesus thinks this woman is worth fussin' over."

Jesus recognized a life lived in continual defeat when he encountered the Samaritan woman at the well. He chose her. He chose her to recognize the defeated lifestyle she lived and to break free by offering her living water. Samaritans were hated by the Jews. Why would the Jewish Jesus even bother with her? Could it be because He saw something worth fussin' over?

I heard a moving testimony of a young man who came home late one night, as he had done so many other nights, long after his father's curfew. As he tiptoed onto the front porch, he heard loud sounds coming from the barn. It sounded like his daddy, but this boy knew his daddy would be long asleep at this early hour of the morning. He quickly moved toward the barn, hearing the voice grow louder. Indeed, it was his daddy, "standing his ground" with the Lord concerning his son's waywardness. Deeply touched that his daddy counted his son's salvation more important than a night's sleep, this young man listened to his father's pleadings. He became a changed man and eventually a Methodist preacher because his daddy thought his life was worth fussin' over.

Are you fussin' over anybody today? Does her outward appearance turn you against the possibilities of this daughter of yours? Have you given up on your brother whose life style is far from what your mother had in mind for him? What about that child in your classroom? No one else sees anything good in him. Why should you?

Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden. I see something worth fussin' over in you."

Yes, even in you.

The Rev. B.J. Funk is associate pastor of Central UMC in Fitzgerald. Email her at bjfunk@bellsouth.net.



Retired Clergy Birthdays – October 2022

- 10/01 – David Haygood, Sr.: 100 Lindsey Barron Dr., Apt. 215; Newnan, GA 30263
- 10/01 – E. Warren Williams: 761 Myna Dr., Unit 7084; Ellijay, GA 30540
- 10/02 – Ross Tracy: 3800 Shamrock Dr.; Charlotte, NC 28215
- 10/04 – Riley Middleton, Jr.: 5002 St. Francis Ave.; Columbus, GA 31904
- 10/05 – Ronald Johnson: 230 Banklodge Drive.; Douglas, GA 31535

- 10/05 – Earl Seckinger: PO Box 766; Springfield, GA 31329
- 10/05 – J.W. Womble: 2935 Cherokee St.; Waycross, GA 31503
- 10/06 – Donald Combs: 5572 New Jesup Hwy.; Brunswick, GA 31523
- 10/06 – Mike Ricker: 154 Palmetto Dr.; Rincon, GA 31326
- 10/09 – Karen Kilhefner: 7 Mistletoe Court; Savannah, GA 31419
- 10/10 – Hugh Baxter: 1272 Smith Bedgood Rd.; Harrison, GA 31035
- 10/10 – Uley Robbins: 130 Hall Road; Sylvania, GA 30467
- 10/11 – Bob Shell: 210 Castlegate Rd.; Macon, GA 31210
- 10/13 – Bill Neely: 1780 Snug Harbor Dr.; Greensboro, GA 30642
- 10/16 – John Bacher: 400 South Main Ave. 106; Pine Mountain, GA 31822
- 10/18 – Madison Morgan: 599 Cloy-Kildare Rd.; Cloy, GA 31303
- 10/19 – Billy Oliver: 135 Hines Terrace, Macon, GA 31204
- 10/21 – Stanley Harrell: 319 Crescent Road; Griffin, GA 30224
- 10/23 – John Brodess: 803 Moore Drive; Americus, GA 31709
- 10/23 – Frank Danner: 1415 Sunrise Ave.; Moultrie, GA 31768
- 10/24 – James Duke, Jr.: 102 Clarksville Ct.; Macon, GA 31210
- 10/24 – Evelyn Duvall: 10502 Regal View Loop; Clermont, FL 34711
- 10/24 – Carl Howard: 154 Ridgeland Dr.; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 10/24 – Willis Moore: 2378 Caladium Dr. NE; Atlanta, GA 30345
- 10/25 – Jimmy Cason: 1321 Kermit Dr.; Statesboro, GA 30458
- 10/25 – Gene Cochran: 4707 120th Blvd.; Lubbock, TX 79424
- 10/25 – Martin Loyley: 1544 Harris Ridge Rd.; Young Harris, GA 30582
- 10/25 – Craig Rikard: 3428 Brandon Dr.; Valdosta, GA 31605
- 10/27 – Bill Jackson-Adams: 17 Lands End Dr.; Greensboro, NC 27408
- 10/28 – Bob Hannah: 20 Putters Place; Savannah, GA 31419
- 10/31 – Bob Moon: 4760 Oxford Rd.; Macon, GA 31210



Scripture Readings – October 18 edition

October 23

Twentieth Sunday After Pentecost, Year C

Joel 2:23-32

Psalm 65 (UMH 789)

2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

Luke 18:9-14

October 30

Twenty-first Sunday After Pentecost, Year C

Habakkuk 1:1-4; 2:1-4

Psalm 119:137-144

2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12

Luke 19:1-10



Resource Roundup – Oct. Advocate

Small-group studies available for anti-racism podcast

The United Methodist Commission on Religion and Race has released small-group study guides for each episode in the first season of “Expanding the Table,” the agency’s award-winning podcast on practicing anti-racism. Additionally, the agency has added full transcripts for each episode to aid in accessibility. [View resource](#)

Tell your story

Telling your story as a church can be a vastly underestimated necessity. Telling this story well can make the difference between someone deciding to visit or move on to the next church. [Here are some tips to help you get that story on paper and ready for your community to hear and engage.](#)

Imagine a custom website for your church

A great website can bolster your church’s digital ministry and outreach. If your church doesn’t have one, United Methodist Communications’ Local Church Services team can build you a fully customized website experience at an affordable price. Services include:

- One year of web hosting and domain name registration
- WordPress online training and 1-on-1 coaching
- Email accounts, storage and ID protection

[Get started today](#)

The Return of the QR Code

Once upon a time, QR codes were a punchline to many an internet joke, but in recent years, they've gotten a second chance. If you are looking for a free way to share information about your church, reduce waste and save money, check out QR codes. Anyone with a smartphone can scan a QR code — those ubiquitous bar codes that look like a miniature maze — and be directly linked with detailed information. Churches are finding lots of ways to use QR codes, which are easy to create and share. [Learn more](#)

Get Customized Support for Your Ministry

People in your community are searching for love, acceptance and belonging. Is your church ready to connect with them? Whether you need help with social media or an updated church website or logo, United Methodist Communications is here to train, coach and support you as you engage your community with messages of hope. [Learn more](#)