

SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – MAY 16 EDITION

Ministry strategy team announced, conference leadership focuses on future

The South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church is writing a new chapter in its story as it looks ahead to mission and ministry in this next season.

Bishop David Graves, episcopal leader of the South Georgia Conference, has expressed his great hope for the future of the South Georgia Conference. While it may be smaller in number, he says, he knows that numbers do not tell a full story nor define a church's ability to bear witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ.

“It is time to put the word disaffiliation behind us and begin to write the next chapter in the story of this great conference,” said Bishop Graves in a [recent video message to the conference](#).

Bishop Graves believes the South Georgia Conference will be stronger as clergy and laity partner together to focus on reaching new people with the gospel message.

To aid in this, Bishop Graves has formed a ministry strategy team to help cultivate new expressions of ministry and help established churches vision and seek new ways of sharing Christ with new people.

Bishop Graves is excited to announce that the Revs. Jeremy Alexander, Stephanie Smith, and Matt Waldron will serve the conference as ministry cultivators. These three cultivators will continue to serve an appointment in the local church in addition to this ministry strategy work. They officially began their work May 8, 2023.

“The Cultivators will be a team of gardeners for new things growing up in South Georgia,” said Mrs. Anne Bosarge, Director of Leadership Strategies and Local Church Resources. “They will be investing in people who are hearing God prompting them to do new things and helping nourish these new seeds into health and life. We look forward to the cultivators equipping leaders who are starting home churches, Fresh Expressions, missional communities, digital ministries, new church starts, and whatever else God has in store for South Georgia in this new season.”

These three cultivators join the Connectional Ministries and Congregational Development team in the work they are already doing to resource and guide local churches. Bosarge will give oversight to the cultivators and has already begun the work of helping to develop and support fresh expressions and new faith communities popping up all over the conference.

“We have highly relational, high-capacity staff who love the work they do with laity and clergy all throughout South Georgia,” said Mrs. Kelly Roberson, Director of Conference Ministries & Communications. “Each person on our staff is uniquely gifted to live out their calling to love, serve, resource, and meet the needs of our local churches. Even in a challenging season, our staff is ready to move forward and focus on the future as we pray boldly, seek to make disciples, and work to strengthen our United Methodist connection here in South Georgia. We are excited for Jeremy, Stephanie, and Matt to join our team.”

Bishop Graves and Conference leadership previously announced a [plan for a new district leadership model](#). In this new configuration, the six districts will remain in place, but there will be three regions with two districts in each region. Rev. Doreen Smalls will oversee the Northwest and Southwest districts; the Rev. Dr. Paula Lewis will oversee the North Central and South Central districts; and the Rev. Dr. Scott Hagan will

oversee the Coastal and Northeast districts. Dr. Jay Harris will assume an expanded role as the Superintendent of Clergy and District Services.

“While I will continue my role in providing clergy services through both the Board of Ordained Ministry and the Episcopal Office, I will also provide services to the Districts by leading the team giving support to the superintendents and helping free them up in other ways so they focus their attention on the mission of the local churches under their care,” said Dr. Harris.

In addition, Mrs. Meredyth Earnest will move to a full-time role with the Annual Conference to provide streamlined management and coordination of all data and online forms, tools, and processes to assist the districts and local churches. Cindy Rollins will offer administrative support to the districts in a full-time capacity. The Communications Office, under the direction of Mrs. Kelly Roberson, will take on communications for the districts, and the Administrative Services office, under the direction of Mrs. Suzanne Jones, will work with the districts to provide financial services and support.

“I want our district superintendents to live into their role of being chief missional strategists,” said Bishop Graves. “By putting a strong support team around them our intent is to move District Superintendents away from administrative maintenance and on to mission. Our Conference staff will be meeting together to work on a number of elements that shift the superintendent role to being a missional strategist so their focus can be on their local churches.”

These intentional efforts by the Bishop and conference leadership and staff to move forward in creative ways are all done with the intention to engage and energize local churches to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

“We have incredibly gifted staff who have worked under some hard circumstances these past several years,” said Bishop Graves in expressing his gratitude for the South Georgia team. “These staff members as well as our conference leadership, our clergy, and the laity of our local churches give me energy and the promise of a new day in this conference.

“Our focus moving forward will be on mission and ministry, starting new churches in places where there is no longer a United Methodist presence, and working with our existing churches to reach their communities in new and innovative ways. May we all join together in praying for one another and for these servant leaders as they guide this critical work of the conference. We have a great future with hope!” said Bishop Graves.



The General Church Membership Roll: staying connected to the present and future ministry of The UMC

Disaffiliations from The United Methodist Church in the past year have left some faithful United Methodists who want to stay part of the denomination without a church home. In response, South Georgia Conference leadership has worked to make sure there is a place to call “home” - at least temporarily.

If the church where someone currently holds their membership is disaffiliating from The United Methodist Church and they have not yet found a new church, the Conference has created a mechanism to move membership to the General Church Membership Roll. The General Church Membership Roll is designed for those individuals who wish to remain active in The United Methodist Church by supporting it with their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness.

“Our district superintendents and conference staff have worked hard to make sure there is a place to hold membership ‘in the meantime’ and to stay connected to the present and future ministry of The United Methodist Church,” said Kelly Roberson, Director of Conference Ministries/Communications. “We have heard from so many as they find themselves not exactly sure what to do after their church has voted to disaffiliate. The general church roll gives them space to discern their next steps while still remaining part of The UMC.”

If you wish to remain connected to The United Methodist Church, contact your [District Superintendent](#) to begin your membership transfer to the General Church Membership Roll. Your District Superintendent will then contact Mrs. Meredyth Earnest, Conference Secretary, who will add your name to the roll and write a letter to the church you are leaving.

“My own family has utilized the General Church Roll after going through disaffiliation at two different churches,” said the Rev. Dr. Paula Lewis, South Central District Superintendent and dean of the cabinet. “They have since joined a church but were hesitant to do so right away because they did not want to go through this again. It has also allowed them as well as others who are part of new UMC groups to be a part of district and conference leadership because their membership remains in the South Georgia Conference.”

The Cabinet and Conference staff will be reaching out to those on the General Church Membership Roll to offer support and care. [Click here for more information.](#)



Annual Conference Special Offering to benefit church planting and revitalization

In January 2023, Bishop David Graves, episcopal leader of the South Georgia Annual Conference, announced a new priority for the conference: [church planting and revitalization](#).

“God has opened up new windows of opportunity to plant and revitalize churches,” said Bishop Graves. “With a renewed sense of commitment, I believe God is calling the South Georgia Conference to new and abundant life.”

During the 2023 Annual Conference session, South Georgia United Methodists will have the opportunity to support this renewed initiative to plant and revitalize congregations all across the South Georgia Conference through a special offering.

Offerings will help with three objectives: planting new United Methodist Churches in areas where there are not UMC churches, strengthening churches nearest to those areas, and inviting and equipping all the churches of the South Georgia Conference to experience revival and renewal in Jesus Christ.

“The time is here for churches in South Georgia to do new things to reach new people in new ways,” said Mrs. Anne Bosarge, Director of Leadership Strategies and Local Church Resources. “We want to move from maintaining what is to thriving in our mission to making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

“I have already met so many people, both clergy and laity, who are ready to start and be part of the new things God is doing. We already have new things in the works, and I can’t wait to be a part of more of what God is already doing here in South Georgia.”

Bishop Graves, conference staff, and the Committee on Congregational Development are committed to this area of priority and are excited to see where God leads.

“As we move forward, 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,” said Bishop Graves. “God is at work in great ways, and I look forward to how we, together as the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church, can change our corner of the world.”

For more information about the special offering, visit www.sgaumc.org/specialoffering. Congregations are encouraged to send and present their offering during Annual Conference’s June 4 opening worship service.

Additional mission opportunity at Annual Conference:

- [Mission emphasis to support our conference agencies](#)



Book of Recommendations & Reports for the 2023 Annual Conference Session now available

Business items for the 2023 Annual Conference session are contained within the *Book of Recommendations and Reports* (BOR). Inside the BOR delegates will find helpful annual conference information, detailed reports from conference ministries, pension and benefits recommendations, conference budgets, and much more. One of the purposes of the BOR is to allow delegates to read the recommendations, reports and resolutions before the annual conference session. As it's always been, the BOR will be a critical resource prior to and during the Annual Conference session.

The BOR can be purchased for \$8 (plus tax and shipping) as a professionally bound book [through lulu.com*](http://through.lulu.com).

The *Book of Recommendations and Reports* is also available as [a free PDF download](#). Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to download the file(s). If you don't already have it installed, visit www.adobe.com and follow the instructions. If you are viewing the document electronically, the page numbers have been formatted to match the printed version, enabling you to easily find a page when referenced during the Annual Conference session.

Full version of the 2023 *Book of Recommendations and Reports* for printing/Electronic Viewing:

- [Book of Recommendations and Reports](#) (128 pages)

Section versions of the 2023 *Book of Recommendations and Reports* for printing/Electronic Viewing:

- [Section 1 - Preparing for Annual Conference](#) (20 pages)
- [Section 2 - Recommendations](#) (47 pages)
- [Section 3 - Consent Calendar](#) (Reports) (69 pages)

Business items that did not make the BOR printing deadline, such as the conference nominations report, will be placed on the [conference website](#) and an email sent alerting members when it is available.



Bishop James Swanson named Bishop-In-Residence at United Theological Seminary

Bishop James Swanson, most recently bishop of the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC), has been named Bishop-in-Residence at United Theological Seminary. Following his retirement from nearly 20 years as a bishop in the United Methodist denomination, Bishop Swanson is now using his spiritual gifts to encourage students as they prepare for ministry.

“Bishop Swanson’s highly effective pastoral leadership in local congregations and episcopal leadership in two different annual conferences will bring a wealth of experience, knowledge and inspiration to the United community,” says Dr. Kent Millard, president of United Theological Seminary. “We are delighted to welcome him as Bishop-in-Residence at United this spring.”

Throughout his career in ministry as a pastor and district superintendent in the South Georgia Annual Conference and then bishop in the Holston and Mississippi Annual Conferences, Bishop Swanson has found a passion and a talent for helping people embrace their God-given gifts. At the same time, he is deeply committed to encouraging people to develop rich relationships with Christ.

During 14 years as pastor of St. Mary’s Road UMC in Columbus, GA, he saw the congregation grow from 16 active members to 950 and an average worship attendance of 525. He says it was an experience that demonstrated to him the impact of empowering laity in the work of ministry.

Previously Bishop Swanson has taught at several of United’s Doctor of Ministry intensives, and he looks forward to continuing to engage with students in his role as Bishop-in-Residence.

“I’ve been impressed with United’s emphasis on both the academic and practical aspects of theological education,” Bishop Swanson says. “I hope I can encourage students to strengthen their relationship with Jesus Christ, to know that their call is genuine, and to see even in their weakest moments that God is using them.”

As Bishop Swanson began his new role at United Theological Seminary on April 1, Bishop Emeritus J. Michael Lowry continues to serve as a member of the Board of Trustees and will serve as Bishop Emeritus at Large for United Theological Seminary.

About United Theological Seminary: [United Theological Seminary](#) is a graduate professional school of The United Methodist Church. For more than 150 years, it has prepared men and women to become faithful and fruitful Christian leaders who make disciples of Jesus Christ. On-campus and online learning options provide access to master’s and doctoral theological degrees or continuing education.



2023 prayer emphasis: May prayer guide, district prayer days, book studies

May Prayer Guide

The South Georgia Conference is centering itself around prayer in 2023. May’s prayer guide, written by Reese McCurry, Alison Evans, Angela Gilbert, and Gail Springstead, is now available at www.sgaumc.org/year-of-prayer.

District Prayer Days

This year for Annual Conference our theme is, "When They Prayed." During the six weeks leading up to Annual Conference each district has been assigned one week to pray for our Annual Conference. Laity and

clergy from each district are gathering over Zoom and spending time praying through scripture, liturgy, response, and silent individual prayer. There are still three opportunities to join us. Simply choose one of the dates below and fill out the registration form. If you would like to participate and you can't make your assigned date, join another district! The most important part is that we all pray!

- **Week 4:** [May 17- Southwest District](#) – 12:00 noon
- **Week 5:** [May 24 - Northeast District](#) – 12:00 noon
- **Week 6:** [June 1 - Coastal District](#) – 6:30 pm

Next Book Study - May 22

In addition to the prayer guides and prayer days, book studies centered on prayer and hosted by Connectional Ministries, will expand our minds, challenge our hearts and encourage our prayer walks. [Click here for a synopsis and links to register for these fruit-filled conversations.](#)

Book Two: “Praying with Our Feet” by Lindsey Krinks

Book talk hosted by Rev. Abra Lattany-Reed on Monday, May 22, noon-1pm

Additional book studies to note:

Book Three: “From Burned Out to Beloved” by Bethany Dearborn Hiser

Book talk hosted by Grace Guyton on Monday, Aug. 21, noon-1pm

Book Four: “Dynamite Prayer” by Rosario Picardo and Sue Nilson Kibbey

Book talk hosted by the author, Rosario Picardo, on Monday, Nov. 27, noon-1pm

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Immersion Certified Lay Ministry Class set for June 19-23

The Office of Connectional Ministries is excited to announce a summer week-long immersion class June 19-23, 2023, at St. Simons United Methodist Church. This course is designed to dig into the basics of ministry, including worship, discipleship, preaching, leadership, pastoral care, and so much more. This is a great time for leaders who don't have extended time during the year to join together for a quick and thorough walk through of the materials. To learn more or register for this event, visit www.sgaumc.org/certifiedlayministrytraining. For questions, contact Anne Bosarge at abosarge@sgaumc.com.

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7-part video resource for local churches: discerning your mission and values

Is your local church starting something new and needing to solidify the foundation of your ministry or congregation before you get started?

Has your local church experienced mission drift and find you are in need of a way to get your leadership team refocused and back on mission?

If your local church finds itself in either of these places, the Office of Connectional Ministries has developed a 7-part video series to guide you through the process of determining your mission statement and values and aligning your church for maximum effectiveness. [Click here to learn more.](#)

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May 21 Lesson: An Ethiopian is Baptized

Spring Quarter: Jesus Calls Us
Unit 3: The Birth of the Church
Lesson 12: Week of May 21, 2023
Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scriptures: Acts 8:29-39, 40

Key Verse: Acts 8:38

Lesson Aims

1. Recite from memory the passage from Isaiah studied by Philip and the Ethiopian.
2. Analyze the importance of biblical knowledge for recognizing Christ as the Messiah.
3. List one or more hindrances to recognizing the Spirit's leading in cross-cultural evangelism and suggest ways to overcome them.

The desire to travel to places of religious significance is ancient and yet still strong. Historically, we refer to travel to a sacred site as “making a pilgrimage.” Many pilgrimage sites dot our world. For Christians, these include St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City, Mount Sinai in Egypt, and the locations around where Jesus is thought to have been crucified.

People often testify that a visit to a holy site had such a profound impact on them that they were changed forever. They never forget it. Our story today concerns a religious pilgrim who journeyed to Jerusalem to visit the temple some 2,000 years ago. His pilgrimage to Jerusalem may well have been a once in-a-lifetime journey, taking several weeks. We know little of his lasting impression of the holy city, but we learned of an encounter with Philip that changed his life forever, and he surely never forgot it.

Lesson Context: The Evangelist

A central figure in today’s text is a man referred to as “Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven,” in Acts 21:8 (compare 6:3-5). That distinguishes him from “Philip the Apostle” – they were not the same person. In addition to today’s text, other passages refer to Philip the evangelist (example, Acts 8:5-6). And the same is true of the apostle of the same name (example, John 1:43-46, 48). Regarding the designation “evangelist,” see also Ephesians 4:11 and 2 Timothy 4:5.

Like his colleague Stephen, the Philip of today’s lesson moved from a ministry of feeding widows (Acts 6:1-5) to preaching the gospel (Acts 8:4-8). Philip was the first to take the gospel to the Samaritans in fulfillment of Jesus’ directions in Acts 1:8. This happened as a result of persecution in Jerusalem (18:1b). During a highly productive ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:25), an Angel of the Lord directed that Philip “Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Goza” (Acts 8:26), the location of today’s text.

Lesson Context: The Ethiopian

Acts 8:27-28 reveals several facts regarding the man whom Philip encountered in today’s text. First, he was from Ethiopia, a kingdom in Africa that is south of Egypt. This kingdom is also known as Cush (Isaiah 11:11).

Second, he was a eunuch. Though some were born eunuchs or chose this status (Matthew 19:12), the word most commonly refers to a castrated man. Eunuchs were found in royal courts throughout the ancient world (example, Isaiah 39:7). The Greek historian Xenophon (430-355 BC) wrote that Cyrus the Great (about 600-530 BC) preferred eunuchs in his court because he found them to be more reliable in general and trustworthy around women in particular. The Law of Moses restricted such men from participation in the assembly (Leviticus 21:16-23; Deuteronomy 23:1). One theory is that this individual had purchased a copy of Isaiah because of its promise of inclusion of eunuchs, those who sometimes described themselves as a “dry tree” (Isaiah 56:3-8).

Third, he was a servant to royalty. In particular, he served the queen of the Ethiopians as one having charge over the treasury. He was indeed a person of influence and wealth. He would have had to be wealthy to purchase a copy of Isaiah. The Great Isaiah Scroll, written in Hebrew and discovered among the Dead Sea Scroll, measures about 9 inches in height and 24 feet in length.

I. Evangelist Running

The action role of the “Holy Spirit” is characteristic of the book of Acts. Philip might have been intimidated by the splendor of the eunuch’s “Chariot” and thought any approach would be scorned. God’s Spirit, however, knew that the heart of the man in the chariot had been prepared by his reading of Isaiah, and so prompted “Philip” to approach him.

The chariot, for its part, was not a vehicle designed for war, but for travel. It may have been more like what we would call a carriage or wagon, allowing the traveler some comfort while reading. Horses would have been pulling it at a walking pace, allowing Philip to run and catch-up to it easily. It is unlikely the man intended to ride this all the way back to Ethiopia, hundreds of miles distant. It is more likely that he had purchased or hired the chariot to get him to a part on the Red Sea; thus, he would have been able to get a boat ride home.

Philip could hear the man reading. This half verse (30a) tells us two things about the reading. First, the man was reading aloud even though there was no audience. People in the ancient world did not typically read silently to themselves like we would in a public setting. Reading, even for oneself, was done voicing the words out loud. Second, the man had a copy of “Isaiah the Prophet,” which indicates a high level of education to be able to read it and the wealth to purchase such a huge scroll.

Philip, trusting the Holy Spirit, interrupted the man with a simple question. To be able to read the text is one thing; to understand it is another. Philip’s question to the man about his understanding, however, got the response he needed to share the good news with him: “How can I, unless someone explains it to me?” The man’s answer showed why God had thought it worthwhile to bring Philip from Samaria to teach him. Here was a thoughtful and reverent student of the Word, seeking for truth. He was untaught in the gospel, but he was anxious to learn. With true humility, he was willing to accept help from whatever source it might come.

Question! How can you be better prepared to be a faithful guide to others who are struggling with Scripture?

II. Gospel Preaching Acts 8:32-35

In God’s providence, the eunuch’s encounter with Philip coincided with his reading a passage from Isaiah that presents one of the clearest prophetic visions of the coming Messiah! Verses from Isaiah 53 are quoted or alluded to nearly 40 times in the New Testament, making it a key text for understanding Jesus as the Messiah. The part before us is from Isaiah’s fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). That text presents the

Messiah as one who would suffer in accordance with God's will rather than serve as a military leader who would fight for political independence of Israel (as many Jews expected, Acts 1:6).

The imagery of "sheep and lamb" depicts the suffering servant as one who would not fight or protest while on the way to death. Luke's account of Jesus' trials presents him like this silent sheep, especially when he appeared before Herod Antipas (Luke 23:8-9; compare Mark 14:61).

The key to the Isaiah passage is the word "humiliation," a blanket word to describe the horrendous treatment that Jesus would undergo during his trials and crucifixion. Jesus was denied "justice." Even though the Roman governor, Pilate, declared that there was no valid charge against Jesus (Luke 23:4), Pilate still consented to the execution. That made it a case of murder (Luke 23:23-24). Jesus, as the suffering servant of Isaiah's prophecy, seemingly had no hope of being the father of future "descendants."

In attempting to answer his own question, the eunuch reasoned that Isaiah must be talking about a specific and identifiable person. In that light, the prophet may have been speaking of "himself." That is possible, given that Isaiah sometimes spoke his own experience (compare Isaiah 6). But the Ethiopian probably realized that the passage did not quite fit the prophet's situation. Therefore, he likely suspected that "someone" else might be intended. At any rate, his careful reading of Scripture enabled him to come to the place where he was open to hearing about Jesus.

E. Stanley Jones once said, "The Bible then is not the revelation of God. It is the inspired record of revelation. Otherwise, the revelation—the word becomes flesh—would be printer's ink. The revelation is seen in the face of Jesus Christ." The eunuch was getting there.

Note in verse 35 that the very verses that had puzzled the reader served as the springboard to preaching Jesus. The Ethiopian must have had with him the rest of Isaiah 53 too, where the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death is presented. Matthew and John specifically apply Isaiah 53 to Jesus' healing ministry (Matthew 8:17 on Isaiah 53:4 and John 12:38 on Isaiah 53:1), whereas Luke presents Isaiah 53 as being fulfilled in the suffering of Jesus.

We can easily see Philip using other verses in his presentation to the eunuch. He uses references to the Messiah as "a man of suffering" (Isaiah 53:3) and one who "bore our suffering" (Isaiah 53:4), as well as Isaiah's statement that God intended to make "his life an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10).

The violence against the Messiah as predicated by Isaiah was a matter of historical record by the time of Philip's preaching. It is possible, we are told that the Ethiopian, as a recent visitor to Jerusalem, had heard some of these facts. But as we know there is more to preaching Jesus than telling the story of the Good Friday crucifixion. We must say also that Jesus has risen from the dead, as Peter did in Acts 2:32, 36; that Philip did so as well is a safe assumption.

William Sangster, that noted preacher from another generation, wrote a short note to his daughter. This was toward the end of his life when his vocal cords were paralyzed and he was unable to speak. It was on Easter morning just before he died. He wrote these poignant words: "How terrible to wake up on Easter and have no voice to shout, 'He is risen!' but it is far worse to have a voice and not want to shout."

III. Water Baptizing

Acts 8:36-40

It is the Ethiopian who suggests baptism when they come to some water (v.36). Philip may have discussed baptism with the Ethiopian, or he may have already known about it because it was the initiatory rite for Gentiles who converted to Judaism. Philip takes another bold step in baptizing the eunuch (v.38).

Considering all the signs of divine leading he had received, Philip must have been convinced of the genuineness of this conversion. Thus, just a few moments after the eunuch's decision for Christ, Philip baptized him.

Only after Philip was assured of the eunuch's faith did he agree to baptize him. There is no mention of repentance, but we assume the man's familiarity with Scripture extended to knowledge that repentance precedes forgiveness (example Jeremiah 36:3). Baptism is of no value without belief and repentance. As it has been said, "An unrepented unbeliever who is baptized is no more than a 'wet sinner'."

A special note about footnote 37, [Philip] said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." The eunuch answered, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

This verse does not appear in the oldest manuscript of the New Testament. But the fact that it repeats teaching on confessing Christ as found elsewhere indicates that its content is genuine (Matthew 16:16; John 6:69; 9:35-38; 11:27; 1 John 4:15; 5:5). One thing had to be certain: that the man sincerely believed that "Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

Philip is taken away suddenly by the Spirit of the Lord. But the newfound joy of the Ethiopian cannot be dampened by his disappearance (v.39). It is not illegitimate to attribute this to the Holy Spirit in his life, for the connection between the Spirit and joy is evident in Luke's books (Luke 10:21; Acts 13:52). We do not hear of the Ethiopian again in the Bible, though Irenaeus, writing in the second century, says that he became a missionary to the Ethiopians.

Philip next appears in Azotus, some 20 miles north of Gaza, and continues traveling north, preaching incessantly until he reaches Caesarea (v. 40). It is there that we find him again about twenty years later, now the father of four unmarried prophetesses (Acts 21:8). Luke, who probably visited him on this occasion, describes him as "Philip the evangelist" – a most appropriate title for one who was so mightily used in evangelism.

Conclusion

When Isaiah 53 is read in light of the events of Jesus' life, we should be struck by the remarkable fact that there are more than seven centuries between the two records! Those who have a yearning for deep, comprehensive knowledge of Scripture and its connections may be given opportunities to witness to unbelievers today in some manner like the Holy Spirit gave to Philip 2,000 years ago. Our Christian generations must raise up those who are trained in understanding the Bible – our "Philips" – so that they can explain it effectively and accurately to others. Prayerfully, that will be true for us as well.

Action Plan

1. How can you be better prepared to be a faithful guide to others who are struggling with Scripture?
2. What Old Testament passages do you find most helpful when witnessing about Jesus?
3. What concerns do you have or feel if someone makes a seemingly hasty decision to follow Jesus?
4. How do you understand baptism?

Resources For This Lesson

1. "2022-2023 NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, Uniform Lesson, International Sunday School Lessons," pages 321-328.
2. "The NIV Application Commentary (Acts) by Ajith Fernando, pages 282-285.
3. "Standard Bible Commentary (Acts)" edited by Orion Root and John W. Wade, pages 59-62.

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).



May 28 Lesson: Saul of Tarsus

Spring Quarter: Jesus Calls Us
Unit 3: The Birth of the Church
Lesson 13: Week of May 28, 2023
Dr. Hal Brady

Lesson Scriptures: Acts 9:9-17

Key Verse: Acts 9:17

Lesson Aims

1. Summarize Ananias's objection and the Lord's response.
2. Explain the significance of blindness as a possible spiritual metaphor.
3. Cultivate an attitude that seeks clearer spiritual sight.

John Newton was an eighteenth-century Englishman who served as captain for ships that transported captured Africans to North America as slaves. The horrendous nature of that occupation included not only the acceptance of slavery but also the imposition of the inhumane conditions on the ships. To do this, one needed a callous soul.

In 1748, Newton was in a terrifying storm in a ship off the coast of Ireland. Fearing for his life, he began praying in a way that led to his conversion to Christ, eventually becoming a minister in 1764.

A few years later, he began writing about his faith, and in 1772 he published the words to "Amazing Grace," a semi-autobiographical account of how God had "saved a wretch like me."

Without doubt, one of the most memorable lines in that hymn is "[I] was blind but now I see." While this phrase is drawn from the story of Jesus' healing of the blind man in John 9:25, it also fits the story of Saul in Damascus.

Lesson Context: Damascus

Even in Paul's day, Damascus was an ancient city, having been inhabited for at least 3,000 years (see Genesis 14:15). It figures prominently in Old Testament narrative, mentioned there 44 times in Hebrew. It lies about 150 miles north of Jerusalem.

As for the New Testament era, the book of Acts mentions the city of Damascus 13 times. It was a city of many ethnicities. It had become part of the Greek world after the conquest by the forces of Alexander the Great (356-323 BC). Under later Roman influence, Damascus was designated as one of the cities of the Decapolis, meaning "10 cities" (see Matthew 4:25; Mark 5:20; 7:31). Jesus performed miracles near those cities although not in Damascus itself. Greco-Roman ruins are still existent in Damascus today. These include a section of an impressive boulevard that is likely "Straight Street" of Acts 9:11.

Damascus had many Jewish residents and synagogues in the first century AD. The historian Josephus (AD 37-100) records that thousands of Jews were killed by the Romans in Damascus during the first Jewish

Revolt (about AD 61). This testifies to a large presence with many houses of worship in that city. It is no wonder that Saul would travel there expecting to find synagogues where Jews had embraced Christianity.

We are not told how or where or when the gospel message reached Damascus. A reasonable speculation is that it occurred as a result of the Day of Pentecost, as people returned home (see Acts 2:5-11). By the time of today's lesson, at least a couple of years had passed since that event of the stoning of Stephen and the beginning of Paul's persecution.

Lesson Context: Saul

We first meet Saul—later known as Paul, beginning in Acts 13:9 when he acted as a witness to the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7:58; 8:1 (see also 22:20). He is presented elsewhere as an ambitious young man who was building a career in the rabbinic tradition of Jerusalem and as a trusted servant of the temple officials and religious leaders (Galatian 1:14; Philippians 3:4-6). He could never have been a priest, because he was from the tribe of Benjamin rather than the priest tribe of Levi (see Deuteronomy 18:1; Hebrews 7:5, etc.). But he could have become one of the greatest of the Pharisees, like his teacher Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; 22:3).

The climb up this career ladder accelerated when Saul oversaw a direct assault on believers in Jerusalem, where he searched for them house to house and threw into prison those he found (Acts 8:3). He apparently did effective work at that, for the high priest agreed to authorize him to go to Damascus to find Christians and bring them back to Jerusalem for trial and punishment (Acts 7:1-2; 22:19; 26:9-11). So, it was his ambitious trip to Damascus that was the occasion of the resurrected Jesus appearing to Saul and asking, "Why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4).

Now, this Damascus Road story is told three times in Acts: once as narrated by author Luke (Acts 9:1-19) and twice as told by Saul/Paul himself (22:3-16; 26:9-18). As today's text opens, Saul had been struck blind by the Lord on that road. Subsequently, Saul was led by the hand into the city (9:1-8).

I. Saul's Waiting (Acts 9:9-12)

In Damascus the blinded Saul follows the most intense type of fast, spending three days without eating or drinking (v.9). People engaged in such fasts only if they were repenting or seeking God's face. Both are involved here (v.11), where Ananias is told Paul is praying.

Luke, the author of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, uses the word "disciple" dozens of times in his two works. In Luke's Gospel, a disciple is a dedicated student of Jesus the teacher. In Acts, a disciple is a committed follower of the risen Lord. In that regard, "Ananias" may be much like many Christians today who serve the Lord faithfully in relative anonymity.

We learn a bit more about this "disciple" in Acts 22:12. There Paul (formerly the Saul of today's lesson) describes Ananias as a "devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there." And we take care not to confuse this Ananias with two others by the same name in Acts 5:1 and 24:1.

How surprised "Ananias" must have been to experience a "vision" in which the "Lord" communicated with him personally! The word "vision" implies a supernatural origin. It involves seeing things not normally seen, but it may also consist of hearing things not normally heard, as in the calling of Samuel (1 Samuel 3:1-14). The same may be the case here. But unlike the calling of young Samuel, Ananias recognized what was happening immediately. So he answered, "Yes, Lord," implying that Ananias was listening.

"The Lord" may refer to God in the general sense that does not distinguish among members of the Trinity. In this case, however, it refers to the risen Jesus in particular, as Acts 9:17b makes clear.

In verse 11, the instructions are detailed—there can be no doubt regarding where and to whom Ananias is to go. As I previously mentioned, Straight Street is the grand boulevard of Damascus. And this may indicate that this particular Judas, the homeowner, is a well-connected person of some wealth.

Saul's hometown of "Tarsus" was a well-known city about 250 miles north-northwest of Damascus and 355 miles due north of Jerusalem. Tarsus became the capital city for the Roman province of Cilician in AD 72 (about 40 years after the event under consideration). Saul (as Paul) would later mention his civic pride in his hometown (Acts 21:39).

The Lord introduced each of the two men to the other in the same ways—a vision. Saul had preceded Ananias in that regard, even though Saul had been blinded (Acts 9:8-9). Ananias learned something else as well: he was to be God's chosen instrument for Saul to restore his sight.

Now the outcome of this could have been determined by the Lord himself in some other way. But he chose instead to work through a human as he often did—and still does.

Christian author John Purdy says that, "If we had to select one and only one way of picturing the life of a Christian, it would be the image of one who has heard and keeps hearing a persistent summons to believe and action."

II. Ananias's Objection (Acts 9:13-16)

Obviously, Ananias had never met Saul, but he certainly knew of Saul's reputation as a persecutor of Christians. Admitting you were a Christian to Saul was like signing your own death warrant. A parallel today might be admitting you are an American to a terrorist in Afghanistan. And Ananias was exactly the type of person Saul had come to arrest and haul back to Jerusalem.

We note in passing that Ananias referred to Jesus' disciples as "holy people and all who call on your name" rather than "Christians" at this point in time; the latter designation was not to become reality until Acts 11:26. Ironically, the designation "holy people" eventually became a favorite of Saul's (when better known as Paul) when referring to Christians in his letters (example Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2).

Acts 22:19 and 26:9-11 shed additional light on what "to arrest all who call on your name" entailed. Saul entered synagogues to find believers in Jesus in order to have them beaten, imprisoned, and/or put to death. So zealous was Saul that he went out of his way to punish this new and (to his prior way of thinking) heretical sect.

Ananias's protest is understandable, considering what Saul had done to the "saints" in Jerusalem and had been planning to do in Damascus (vv. 13-14). But his willingness to obey immediately after the Lord's explanation (vv. 15-16), is commendable. Henceforth, Saul was to be a "chosen instrument" to the Lord rather than a vessel of the religious authority in Jerusalem. That reassignment would involve being the apostle to "the Gentiles," including "their" kings (Acts 25:13-26:23). The book of Acts ends with Paul's awaiting his hearing before the Roman Emperor himself.

Even so, the regular practice of Saul (as Paul) would also be to try to convince his fellow Jews – "the people of Israel" – that Jesus was their promised Messiah. Indeed, preaching Jesus to fellow Jews would be his first order of business wherever Saul went (13:46-48; 18:5-6).

By contrast, we are told that the task of the Apostle Peter was something of a mirror image of that practice: Peter was the designated apostle to the Jews (Galatians 2:8-9), although he witnessed also to Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11).

As if receiving a vision from the Lord was not enough of a shock to convince Ananias in and of itself, the revealed mission to the Gentiles was probably incomprehensible to him. Even more so was the predicted mission to kings who were all Gentiles.

III. The Lord's Healing (Acts 9:17)

This 17th verse ties things together and clarifies. The "Lord of Visions" has been none other than "Jesus" himself. It was none other than he who had appeared to Saul on the road (compare Acts 9:5, 22:8, 26:15) and who had spoken to Ananias in Damascus.

As Saul was just about to see "again," Ananias announced something we have not yet read about in the visions from the Lord: Saul was to be "filled with the Holy Spirit." This phase occurs eight times in the New Testament, all in the writings of Luke (examples John the Baptist, Luke 1:15; his mother and father, Luke 1:41, 67).

Saul's first action after having his sight restored was to be baptized even before he broke his three day fast from food (see Acts 9:18-19). He was strengthened in his soul and in his body.

What a change! He is still Saul of Tarsus, but now he is Brother Saul. He is not the enemy, but a brother. Any person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ is a brother or sister to everyone else.

The late Dr. Karl Menninger, the well-known psychiatrist, said that the most tragic word in the known human language is the word unloved – there's nothing worse than that, nothing more devastating, nothing more destructive.

On the other hand, Dr. Menninger said that "Love has the power to cure...both the ones who give it and the ones who receive it." And he's right.

Brother Saul! I repeat, any person who loves the Lord Jesus Christ is a brother or sister to everyone else.

Conclusion

Conversion, call, or both? The story of Saul's experience on the way to Damascus is usually portrayed as his "conversion." And that is a valid description in that the episode shows a life transformed from an unbeliever into a believer, one who was baptized and received the Holy Spirit. However, as the author of the Lesson asked, "But was that Luke's intent in documenting this story? Is Saul's conversion experience, with its spectacular visions and drama, intended to be some sort of model or expectation for conversion today?" Certainly, numerous conversions over the centuries have been dramatically sudden and powerful. We have all heard the stories. But the author of the lesson said that he had never heard of an unbeliever being called in a vision to the sort of mission to which Saul was called. Neither have I.

Simply stated, Saul was a young man whom Jesus simply had to have as his servant. Jesus did not have to stir up passion in Saul's heart; he was already passionate. Jesus did not have to infuse Saul with a great knowledge of Scripture; he already had it. Jesus did not have to put an obedient spirit in Saul; he already had one. Unknown to Saul, he had been preparing his whole life to be redirected and used by Jesus.

Point? Jesus can still redirect a person's life while using all that person's life experiences in kingdom service. And we in the church should be on the lookout for such people! Think of the people you know or have heard

about whose lives were transformed by the gospel and redirected to do great things for Christ. And how does our life intersect with theirs? How should it?

Action Plan

1. How do you express your availability for God’s unexpected ministry?
2. When have you been part of God’s answer to someone else’s prayers?
3. What fears still hold you back from bold obedience to God?
4. What experiences illustrate the Holy Spirit’s bringing you from spiritual blindness to sight?

Resources For This Lesson

1. “2022-2023 NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, Uniform Lesson, International Sunday School Lessons,” pages 329-336.
2. “The NIV Application Commentary (Acts) by Ajith Fernando, pages 299-300.
3. “Standard Bible Commentary (Acts)” edited by Orion Root and John W. Wade, pages 66-68.

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).



Wesley Glen is Growing!

A Word from Cameron Bishop, CEO, Wesley Glen Ministries

Following a cold winter, the campus of Wesley Glen Ministries is coming to life. The flowers are blooming, the grass is turning green, and leaves are returning to the trees that will soon provide us shade from the summer heat. But it is not just mother nature that is bursting with new life. We too are experiencing incredible growth at Wesley Glen. Not only are the individuals we serve growing spiritually, physically, and socially, our agency is growing in capacity!

We have successfully completed MAJOR steps towards opening our new home as we received our license from the Department of Community Health! Now that we have this license, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities has worked to provide us with the necessary approvals required for us to move in! Ultimately, this home will enable us to serve four new individuals.

In addition to our new home, we have added a new program that provides the individuals we serve and those in the wider community with specialized supports to help them engage in more activities. For example, one of our guys, Jim, has a desire to play tennis. Through this new program, Jim has a mentor who takes him to play tennis each week. But the true benefit is far more than what takes place on the tennis court. It is truly the connection between Jim and his mentor...a friend, someone he can depend on, someone who cares for him and supports him in achieving his hopes and dreams.

Achieving hopes and dreams ...this is the heart of Wesley Glen. While our mission is to support individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, our goal is to bring that mission to life by creating opportunities for people like Jim to feel fully supported in their lives, to know they are loved, and to grow in their faith and connection to others so that they can live an Abundant Life! Thank you for being a part of helping us fulfill this all-important mission of serving God’s people!

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.

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Change Takes Prayer

What's Old Is New Again Anne Packard

My sins were a heavy burden. I was tempted to believe there was no mercy for me. I cried to the Lord both night and day. One night I thought hell would be my portion. I cried unto Him who delighteth to hear the prayers of a poor sinner; and all of a sudden my dungeon shook, my chains flew off, and glory to God, I cried. My soul was filled. I cried, enough for me--the Saviour died. Now my confidence was strengthened that the Lord, for Christ's sake, had heard my prayers, and pardoned all my sins. I was constrained to go from house to house, exhorting my old companions, and telling to all around what a dear Saviour I had found. I joined the Methodist society, and met in class at Benjamin Wells's, in the forest, Delaware State. John Gray was the class-leader. I met in his class for several years.

--Rt. Rev. Richard Allen in The Life, Experience and Gospel Labours of the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen

Richard Allen was admitted as a Methodist preacher in 1784 at the Christmas Conference held in Lovely Lane Chapel, Baltimore, Maryland. He and Harry Hosier were the only two people of color at that historic meeting. Allen led services at St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia until he led his congregation out of the segregated church to form the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first fully independent Black denomination in the United States. He purchased ground on Sixth Street in Philadelphia on which to build the church, now known as Mother Bethel AME. This sacred land is the oldest parcel of real estate in the United States that has been owned continuously by African Americans. From 1797 until his 1831 death, Bishop Allen and his wife Sarah operated a station on the Underground Railroad for fugitive enslaved people fleeing from the south in the slave and border states of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. But this success doesn't fit easily with how his life began.

Allen was born in Delaware on February 16, 1760, as a slave owned by Benjamin Chew. He and his family were then sold to Stokley Sturgis, but because of financial problems, Sturgis sold Allen's mother and two of his five siblings away from the family. Left with only his older brother and sister, the Allen family started to attend Methodist society meetings with both freed blacks and slaves. Richard Allen taught himself to read and write and soon started preaching, which angered local plantation owners. To help alleviate this criticism, Allen worked even harder for Stokely Sturgis so slave owners couldn't claim enslaved people with religion did not work hard enough. How did this child born into slavery create new organizations to better serve God and free blacks from the evils of slavery? The answer is simple – prayer.

After the American Revolution, Rev. Freeborn Garrettson, a well-known Methodist minister and founder of the new Methodist movement, began preaching in Delaware about the evils of slavery. Sturgis was touched by Rev. Garrettson's evangelism, contemplated his part in the horrific business, and changed his mind regarding his ownership of fellow human beings. Sturgis allowed his slaves to buy their freedom through their hard work thus enabling Allen to leave slavery behind forever. When he had, Allen changed his name from Poor Richard to Richard Allen.

This isn't a story of one person praying one prayer on one day to elicit radical change. Poor Richard could not have become the Rt. Rev. Richard Allen with the power of only his prayers. The radical change occurred when all of the participants prayed and then acted to better walk in the way of Jesus. His enslaver Stokely

Sturgis, the traveling circuit rider Freeborn Garrettson, and all of his fellow Christians in the Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church played pivotal roles in transforming a life to better serve our just and loving God. Just imagine what the power of our combined prayers can do to transform lives in the South Georgia Conference to better serve our just and loving God? And we all say together: thanks be to God.

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



Conference Happenings

2023 Lay Servant Ministries & Certified Lay Ministry

Check out the [dates & registration for the 2023 classes](#).

Clergy Mental Health Retreat - May 18

In a season of high anxiety, we realize that those called to meet the needs of others are in need themselves. To help address the needs of our clergy, the South Georgia Conference Clergy Mental Health Task Force is putting together a series of retreats to support clergy in their mental health. The first retreat, Anxiety: Enemy or Ally, is set for May 18 from 10am-4pm at [Wesley Gardens](#) in Savannah, Ga. Led by Jason Mehl and Christian Swails, this one-day retreat will focus on what anxiety is and is not, how to work through anxiety, and how to speak to fear. The cost for this event is \$20 (lunch is included). To register, click here: <https://sgaumc-reg.brtapp.com/ANXIETYEnemyorAlly>. Please note: this retreat will be capped at 30 participants. Additional clergy retreats are being planned for the Fall.

Called Annual Conference Session – May 21

A special called session of the annual conference has been set for Sunday, May 21, 2023. The meeting will begin at 4 pm using the Zoom Webinar platform in conjunction with an online voting system. The sole purpose of the special called session of the Annual Conference is to complete the process of ratifying the current requests for disaffiliation of local churches who have met the requirements outlined in ¶2553 of the Book of Discipline and who have met the published South Georgia Conference deadlines. [Click here for more information](#).

Annual Conference Session – June 4-6

The 2023 South Georgia Annual Conference session will be held Sunday, June 4, 2023, through Tuesday, June 6, 2023. The conference theme will be: *When They Prayed*, based on Act 4:31. [Click here for full Annual Conference details](#).

SUMMER CAMP!!

Camp Connect, the camping ministry of the South Georgia Conference, gives children and youth from rising 4th grade through rising seniors in high school the opportunity to spend a week away from normal everyday life in the beauty of God's creation. Diving into scripture and sharing life stories will show campers they are created in God's image and for a purpose.

Five camps are scheduled for the summer; one week for high school students; two weeks for middle school students and two weeks for elementary students. Held at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island, the week-long camps run from June 12 through July 21.

Our prayer is that every camper will have the opportunity to encounter Christ in a powerful, life-changing way during their week at camp! For more information, visit www.campconnectumc.org.

2023 United Women in Faith Mission u – July 14-16

Each year, United Women in Faith members and friends prepare for faithful living and action by engaging in transformative educational experiences at its annual Mission u retreat. This year's retreat is set for July 14-16, 2023, at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Mission u is centered around curricula designed to motivate, inform, and enrich the UWF's commitment to global ministry. [Click here to register and learn more.](#)

2023 Georgia Pastors School – July 17-20

Georgia Pastors School is set for July 17-20, 2023, at Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island. This spiritual formation event for pastors will feature Rev. Juanita Rasmus, co-pastor of St. John's United Methodist Church in Houston, TX, and Johnny Sears from The Upper Room as this year's teachers. To register and for more information, visit www.georgiapastorsschool.org.

Lay Planter's Training - Fall 2023

Here in South Georgia, we are seizing the opportunity to start new things for new people in new places. We are seeing a resurgence of grassroots efforts among our laity to dive deeply into disciple-making using new models for church planting like home churches, fresh expressions and more. Can you imagine what it will be like in a few years when laity across the conference will be engaged in leading discipleship efforts across the conference? These discipleship groups and home churches will be able to meet in all kinds of places, made up of all kinds of people. Coming up on July 22, we will have an informational zoom session to find out more about an online Lay Planter's Course we will be offering this Fall to interested laity. Coming to the meeting doesn't commit you to the course; it's an opportunity to hear more about it. [Learn more](#)



Resource Roundup – May 2023

8 ways to connect young adults to the church

(UMCom) Young adults have a lot to offer, especially if they are taking a summertime break from school or their new job. Consider creating opportunities for them to engage with your church and community. Here are some suggestions to get you started. [Read more](#)

10 ways to engage online worshippers

(Lewis Center for Church Leadership) In this time of hybrid worship, church leaders may overlook or not give enough intentional thought to the people who are worshipping online. This article offers 10 tips for congregations to strengthen engagement and build relationships with online worshippers. [Read commentary](#)

4 tips for putting the fun in fundraisers

(UMCom) Fundraisers are valuable tools for achieving missional visions that create community and bring hope and healing to the world. This article offers four tips for churches to take the next step in advertising their fundraisers online. [Read story](#)

Email: Still Relevant After All These Years

(UMCom) Even though email is well into "mid-life crisis" age, it's still going strong. Almost every year, usually around the time people decide to clean out their inboxes, a thought tends to creep into our minds. We wonder if email works anymore. Guess what? It does, and surprisingly well! Thanks to having targeted messages that cater to one's interests, there is almost no other medium that individual recipients choose when it comes to mass communications or marketing. [Read more](#)

Hands-on social media assistance

(UMCom) Social media can get complicated. Between the forever-changing algorithms and the continuous march of new platforms popping up, it's OK to ask for some assistance. United Methodist Communications is here to help. [Find out more](#)

Facebook groups aren't just for the neighborhood watch

(UMCom) Most of us are part of a Facebook group, whether it's for town information or the area "free-cycle" treasures. But did you know that you can utilize Facebook groups for your congregation? Facebook Groups is a tool that provides a way for your church members to connect and engage outside of the church building. Since most of your church is already on Facebook in some form or fashion, why not utilize an infrastructure that is already there? [Read more](#)

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Retired Clergy Birthdays – May 2023

- 5/01 – Jacque Asbel: 4116 Amberley Trail; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 5/01 – John Beck: 1210 Tribble Rd.; Ft. Valley, GA 31030
- 5/01 – Rick Mitchell: 325 Providence Trace; Statesboro, GA 30461
- 5/03 – Wayne Rogers: 126 Baynard St.; Pooler, GA 31322
- 5/03 – Rick Turner: 798 Mallery St., Apt. 11; St. Simons Island, GA 31522
- 5/06 – Eddie Morrison: 1610 Kings Way; Savannah, GA 31406
- 5/12 – Reese Nelson: 2804 Willow Wood Circle; Valdosta, GA 31602
- 5/14 – Kenneth Watkins: 170 Sanford St.; Wadley, GA 30477
- 5/15 – Dan Smith: 5462 Whittlesey, Apt 517; Columbus, GA 31909
- 5/19 – Ronnie Howell: 32 Vanceville Co. Line Rd.; Tifton, GA 31794
- 5/20 – Franklin Pierce: 602 Ft. King George Dr.; Darien, GA 31305
- 5/21 – Karen Ziegler; 868 McBride Circle; Sylvania, GA 30467
- 5/23 – Jeri Pruette: 2188 Peacock Rd.; Quitman, GA 31643
- 5/24 – Columbus Burns: 201 East 63rd St.; Savannah, GA 31405
- 5/24 – Robert Beckum: 5031 Spyglass Court; Columbus, GA 31909
- 5/26 – Faye Burgamy: 165 S. Burgamy Rd.; Warthen, GA 31094
- 5/27 – Cile Mitchell: 130 Hitchiti Ridge Rd.; Juliette, GA 31046
- 5/28 – Richard Newton: 1823 Kaufman Circle; Lady Lake, FL 32159
- 5/29 – Marsha Emery: 3855 Dennis Creek Road; Talbotton, GA 31827
- 5/30 – Luanne Kemper: 1412 Sapling Dr.; Orange Park, FL 32073
- 5/31 – Mike Brown: 4444 GA Hwy. 15; Vidalia, GA 30474

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Scripture Readings – May 16 edition

May 21

Seventh Sunday of Easter, Year A

- [Acts 1:6-14](#)
- [Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35 \(UMH 792\)](#)
- [1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11](#)
- [John 17:1-11](#)

May 28

Pentecost Sunday, Year A

- [Psalm 104:24-34, 35b](#)
- [Acts 2:1-21](#)
- [1 Corinthians 12:3b-13](#)
- [John 20:19-23](#)
- [John 7:37-39](#)

June 4

Trinity Sunday, Year A

- [Genesis 1:1-2:4](#)
- [Psalm 8](#)
- [2 Corinthians 13:11-13](#)
- [Matthew 28:16-20](#)