

## **SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – APRIL 16 EDITION**

### **Rev. Doreen Smalls to join GA United Methodist Foundation staff on September 1**

The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Coppedge-Henley, President and CEO of the Georgia United Methodist Foundation, in collaboration with Bishop David Graves and the South Georgia Cabinet, announces the appointment of Rev. Doreen Smalls as the Foundation's new South Georgia Regional Vice President and Director of Lending. Rev. Smalls will begin her appointment at the Foundation on September 1, 2024.

Rev. Smalls will assume responsibilities previously held by Mr. Jim Pope, whose retirement from the Director of Lending position was announced in January 2024. She will also succeed the Rev. Dr. Laudis H. "Rick" Lanford, who will retire from his position as Regional Vice-President in June 2024.

Dr. Coppedge-Henley expresses her appreciation for Dr. Lanford's work with the Foundation since 2020.

"Rick has been an instrument of God's grace for Methodists in South Georgia for decades," said Dr. Coppedge-Henley. "Rick seems to know everyone in South Georgia. Not only does he know them, he loves them.

"In our short time of shared ministry, I have been inspired by a man of integrity and deep commitment to the cause of Christ. We wish Rick and his wife Kim many years of family, fishing, and fun," said Dr. Coppedge-Henley.

Bishop Graves adds his appreciation for both Dr. Lanford's work on the Foundation and also expresses his appreciation for the work of Rev. Smalls as a District Superintendent.

"Doreen is a highly capable person in our conference and has added tremendous value to the South Georgia Conference through her work on the Cabinet," said Bishop Graves. "I know she will continue to provide outstanding leadership as she transitions to the Foundation in September."

Rev. Smalls was appointed to serve as the Southwest District Superintendent in 2018. In 2023, she was appointed as the District Superintendent of both the Northwest and Southwest districts. In addition to serving several local churches in South Georgia, she previously served as Associate Director of the Office of Connectional Ministries as well as Conference Secretary of Global Ministries for the South Georgia Annual Conference. Rev. Smalls has served on the Georgia United Methodist Foundation Board of Trustees since 2020.

Prior to ordained ministry, Rev. Smalls had a career in healthcare finance. As both clergy and as an experienced finance professional, Rev. Smalls brings a valuable set of skills that uniquely align with the Foundation's ministry.

"Rev. Smalls is the perfect addition to the ministry of the Foundation, and I look forward to the financial and relational growth that her new role will help us unlock," said Dr. Coppedge-Henley. "She has not only the skill and expertise to advance our financial offerings and possibilities for partnership, but also the experience of and heart for church ministry. We are grateful Rev. Smalls has answered the call to this new ministry on behalf of Methodists in Georgia."

Rev. Smalls earned a bachelor's degree in management and finance from the University of South Carolina and is a graduate of The Interdenominational Theological Center/Gammon Seminary in Atlanta. She completed her theological studies with academic honors in 2005 and graduated with a master of divinity

degree in pastoral care/psychology of religion. She was ordained an elder in full connection in the South Georgia Conference in 2008.

*Rev. Smalls begins her work with the Foundation on September 1. Any announcements regarding a South Georgia Cabinet appointment will be announced by September 1.*



## **‘The Best Night of the Year’ at Wesley Glen Ministries**

By Kelly Roberson

It was a fun night of dinner and dancing for the residents, staff, and friends of Wesley Glen Ministries at Wesley Glen’s annual Abundant Life Gala on March 9, 2024 at Macon's Marriott’s Edgar H. Wilson Convention Center.

For Wesley Glen residents and staff, you will hear them refer to this night as “the best night of the year.”

“The Abundant Life Gala was an incredible celebration, not just of the funds raised, but of the remarkable individuals we have the honor of serving at Wesley Glen,” said Mr. Cameron Bishop, President and CEO of Wesley Glen. “We are immensely grateful for the community's overwhelming support, which will greatly enhance our efforts to assist people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It was truly a night of abundant joy, reflecting our mission to celebrate and uplift the lives of those we serve.”

Over 680 guests – the largest in history since its beginning in 2020 – gathered for the Gala. They were introduced to the residents of Wesley Glen, were given a glimpse into the purpose of Wesley Glen, and were able to celebrate abundantly by dancing and sharing laughter with those whom Wesley Glen serves. On this night, Wesley Glen helps to meet their financial goal by raising over \$462,000.

“We are so grateful for the tremendous outpouring of support we have received through our Abundant Life event from all who love Wesley Glen,” said Mrs. Julie Rogers, Wesley Glen’s Chief Development Officer. “It's not too late to participate. Please consider a gift today.”

Wesley Glen, a ministry of the South Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church, serves individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in Macon and St. Marys, Georgia. In a Christian environment, Wesley Glen empowers the people they support to reach goals and have experiences that enrich their lives, encouraging them to become as independent as possible.

“We feel so comfortable with everyone that’s here and with the program, and we’re very thankful,” said Beth, a parent to a daughter living at Wesley Glen. “Having a special needs daughter is just a wonderful experience, but it’s just so different in so many ways because you have to really prepare for their life after you’re gone.

“And we are so thankful and feel so blessed that we are here at Wesley Glen. We know she’s going to have a happy life, and that she loves everyone that’s here, and they’re very supportive. She feels safe, we feel safe, and she’s just happy!” said Beth.

Helping residents feel safe and happy is a priority for Wesley Glen’s staff.

“Seeing the people we serve and just knowing we’re making a big difference in their lives, making them feel comfortable, and safe and protected, and knowing they can trust the staff that works with them - that means a lot to me,” said Tina, who has worked at Wesley Glen for 17 years.

Along with the great staff of Wesley Glen, volunteers are instrumental to the work of this ministry.

“Wesley Glen is a better place because of our volunteers,” said Mrs. Vanda Asbell, director of donor relations. “They work on projects all year round, and we have those on stand-by in case they are needed from week to week. During events, they are indispensable. We would not have the successes that we do without their willingness to help.”

Wesley Glen is thankful for the support of their generous donors and the help of their volunteers, including those in the South Georgia Conference, all year long and especially during its Gala.

If you’d like a glimpse into the fun, visit [secure.qgiv.com/event/abundantlife/](https://secure.qgiv.com/event/abundantlife/). You can also donate to Abundant Life by clicking the Abundant Life button at the top of the website at wesleyglenministries.com.

## **MORE ABOUT WESLEY GLEN MINISTRIES**

Wesley Glen Ministries (WGM) serves people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) through residential and day programs.

WGM supports 40 people in their residential program. Many of the residents have lived at Wesley Glen for over 15 years, and some for over 22 years.

WGM has 10 homes in Macon - 7 on campus and 3 in neighborhoods around town. They also have one home in St. Marys, which serves 4 ladies. There are 4 residents per home with 24-hour rotating staff. The staff work in shifts and are awake in the home all night. Every person has their own room. At home, they eat their breakfast and evening meals together. The direct support staff cooks with them, and sometimes they choose to go out to eat.

WGM also has a day program, now in its twelfth year, which serves participants from the local community Monday through Friday. Activities range from choir and piano lessons to nutrition classes, exercise with walking clubs and team sports, and art classes and gardening.

WGM residents are very active in advocating for themselves and others with programs at Wesley Glen and across the state with Uniting for Change, including trips to the Georgia State Capitol to have their voices heard in support of the needs of the intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) community.

## **WHAT RESIDENTS OF WESLEY GLEN HAVE TO SAY**

“I enjoy being independent and living in my own apartment at Wesley Glen. I love being an advocate for others.” - Nandi

“I like the nice people at Wesley Glen. I have a lot of friends here. I like arts and crafts.” - Amber

“I like my house at Wesley Glen. I enjoy walking club, arts and crafts, and writing with my pen pal.” - Jim

“Wesley Glen is nice.” - Gary, who enjoys walking in the gym and going on outings.

“I think living at Wesley Glen is good. I like playing basketball and softball.” - Brian

“I’m growing mentally, physically, and spiritually...and that’s a blessing to me” - Stuart



## **Little Angels Attic: A dream fulfilled**

By John McIntyre

In April 2023, Marsha Bilbrey and John McIntyre - two members of Christ United Methodist Church in Warner Robins - presented to the church’s leadership board the possibility of starting a clothes bank specifically for children. The idea was to help parents and guardians provide for their children, newborn through high school, with clothes, shoes, accessories and more.

Marsha and John started meeting to lay out plans of what was needed - fixtures, hangers, signage, rules, tables, etc. - and exactly how to start accumulating the right types of clothes. With a rough template of what work needed to be done, what supplies were needed, how to communicate, and a timeline for opening, they decided to try and open, even if only in a limited way, in August 2023. This timeline would match the beginning of the school year.

Before opening, they needed a name for the clothes bank. They decided on Little Angels Attic, in memory of Ms. Flo Mitchell, retired elementary school teacher and deceased member of Christ UMC. Flo was an institution in the Houston County area and is remembered for her love of children and her devotion to helping children in need. Flo also helped direct Christ UMC’s cherub choir in the 1990s and early 2000s, calling this group “My Little Angels”; thus, the name Little Angels Attic.

Starting with nothing but two rooms—one for the clothes and one as a work room—Marsha and her husband, Steve, and John and his wife, Sharon, started putting the plan together. Little Angels Attic opened on Tuesday, August 15, 2023. Unbeknownst to the two couples until opening day, this was Ms. Flo’s birthday - truly, a sign from God!

Little Angels Attic has now expanded to include a baby section with diapers, bedding items, baby bottles, baby powder and more. They also have jewelry, a section for socks, underwear, and tights as well as another section for personal care items such as hair care, toothbrushes/tooth paste, soap/body wash, body lotions, and deodorant.

Little Angels Attic is open on the first and third Tuesdays of each month from 2pm – 4pm and on special occasions. This past December children and parents with children were able to pick out free toys. In March, Easter baskets were given to all who came.

The ministry is growing and continues its mission to serve and nurture children. Thanks be to God!

*Article submitted by Christ United Methodist Church.*



## **New Connectional Ministries Resource Alert: The Learning Corner**

Does learning really take place if it doesn't lead to application and transformation? Have you really taught something if no one ever puts into action what they have heard? Sometimes the emphasis in teaching and learning is on receiving information instead of the application of it. Teaching only happens when someone learns enough to apply it and be changed in some way because of the application.

In South Georgia, our goal is to provide learning and training options that do more than just give you a certificate for completion. We want to help facilitate application and transformation in our local churches and within our leaders. That is where Connectional Ministries' new [Learning Corner](#) comes in. This new resource aims at helping church leaders - both clergy and laity - equip themselves with the knowledge to lead well and incentivize application that leads to transformation.

Flexibility is built into The Learning Corner. We know you are busy. Sometimes it's hard to make time for learning when our days are so full of ministry. But we all know in order to be more effective and efficient at making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, we must take time to learn and grow so we don't just keep repeating the same things over and over.

Each of the learning modules can be done on your own time individually or with a team. The courses are structured to include learning videos, application activities, and a reporting page where you can let us know what you have learned, how you have applied it in your setting, and earn CEUs for your participation in the course.

At the launch of The Learning Corner, we are featuring four courses with more on the way:

1. **Creating a Healthy Volunteer Culture:** How healthy is the culture of your volunteer teams? Do your volunteers come excited, expectant, and ready to serve? Or do they seem to look at their service area as a "have to" instead of a "get to"? Let's spend some time learning about how to create a healthy volunteer culture, applying it through a team workbook and the Start, Stop, Continue exercise, and then let us know how what you have learned is making a difference in your context. Earn 1 CEU for completing the whole course.
2. **Small Group Leadership Basics:** Small groups are the best place for deep discipleship, care and community to happen in the life of the local church. No matter what name you give your small groups (Sunday School, Accountability Group, Life Group, Bible Study, etc.), these smaller gatherings are essential to the life of a believer. If they are so critical in our spiritual and corporate growth and development, how can we be equally intentional about creating and cultivating healthy small group environments in our churches? In this series you will learn the basics of healthy small group leaders, apply what you've learned in a leadership gathering to assess the effectiveness of your groups, and then let us know how this has made a difference in your context. Earn .5 CEU for completing the whole course.
3. **Resetting our Thinking:** We often spend a lot of time talking about challenges and problems that will lead us to creative solutions no one else has ever tried or thought of before. Often when we get to the implementation phase, we get frustrated that the solution we tried didn't give us the results we had hoped for. So we meet together again to try something else. Many times the change that needs to be made isn't a change in programming, but a change in mindset. In this series of trainings, we will learn several strategies for resetting our thinking, adjusting our mindsets, and moving from surface-level problems to root-level problems. You will be given prompts to use with your leadership teams to help you make the shift in your thinking to move your mission forward. Then fill out the form and let us know how this has transformed and changed your ministries. Earn 1 CEU for completing the whole course.
4. **Transformational Teaching:** It's the desire of every leader and teacher that what they teach and communicate to learners will end up making a difference in the lives of the hearers. As church leaders, the message we communicate is transformational by the power of the Holy Spirit, but what if

we could improve the way we deliver this transformational message so it could be more easily understood and applied? That is what this course is all about - Teaching to Change Lives, a book by Howard Hendrix. In this course we will explore the 7 laws of teaching, then download a reminder sheet with quick questions to help us remember and apply them to our teaching. Finally you will have the opportunity to share with us how this has transformed your teaching. Earn 1 CEU for completing the whole course.

Here's how you can be part of The Learning Corner:

1. **As a leader and learner:** Go through the courses individually or take your team through with you and use these conversations to help you change your culture and become more effective in accomplishing your mission.
2. **As an evaluator:** Let us know what was most or least helpful for you. If you would like to see a course on a particular topic, reach out and let us know.
3. **As a contributor:** If you have something you'd like to teach and share with the rest of the conference, reach out and we will work together to come up with a training course you can lead and share. We want this to be a connectional place for learning and sharing.

Check out the Learning Corner at [www.sgaumc.org/thelearningcorner](http://www.sgaumc.org/thelearningcorner). Have any questions or suggestions? E-mail Anne Bosarge at [abosarge@sgaumc.com](mailto:abosarge@sgaumc.com).



## Conference unites in prayer for General Conference

When people pray, God listens.

And John and Charles Wesley believed “that God does nothing apart from believing prayer.”

In a focused effort to prepare for the upcoming General Conference session, the South Georgia Conference is launching a month-long Conference-wide prayer initiative, “Hear Our Prayers.” It will begin the day after Easter - April 1 - and run through the General Conference session, scheduled [April 23-May 3 in Charlotte, North Carolina](#).

Psalm 4:1 says: “Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.” Each day laity and clergy will be asked to pause and pray for our church’s mission and for the upcoming conference at 4:01 pm.

The Hear Our Prayers initiative provides an opportunity for South Georgia United Methodists to be united in purpose through prayer, said Kelly Roberson, director of communications/conference ministries.

Daily prayers will be posted on the conference website at [www.sgaumc.org/hearourprayers](http://www.sgaumc.org/hearourprayers) and on the Conference social media channels ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)).

“There is power in our connection and in prayer, and during this time of uncertainty, what better way to be in ministry together!” said Allison Lindsey, chair of the conference nurture team and member of the delegation. “In the words of Oswald Chambers, ‘We have to pray with our eyes on God and not on the difficulties.’ Hear Our Prayers gives us an opportunity to do just that, to come together in prayer with our focus on God.”

Bishop David Graves begins the prayer initiative, inviting all to pray this prayer:

*With the hope of Easter People, help us face the obstacles and opposition in our lives with the same enthusiasm we embrace opportunities. Help us move faithfully forward, confident that God's power is greater than all life will present us realizing that the worst thing is not the last thing. In Christ alone!*

Rev. Doreen Smalls, chair of the South Georgia delegation to General Conference, says the delegation has been preparing and praying and is thankful for the prayers of the conference.

“As we prepare to do our work this month, and then as we travel to Charlotte and work each day representing South Georgia while we are there, we covet your prayers,” said Rev. Smalls. “God has great plans for the people called United Methodists, and I’m thankful this delegation has a voice in helping shape our future as we act with confidence and hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

View the outline for the prayer initiative at [www.sgaumc.org/hearourprayers](http://www.sgaumc.org/hearourprayers).



## **Preparing for General Conference**

With General Conference set to begin this month away, the South Georgia Conference delegation has been meeting to pray, study, and discuss legislation as they continue to prepare for the global gathering, set for [April 23-May 3 in Charlotte, North Carolina](#).

General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church, which meets once every four years. However, because of the pandemic, the last regular session of General Conference was nearly eight years ago. The conference can revise church law, as well as adopt resolutions on current moral, social, public policy, and economic issues. It also approves plans and budgets for church-wide programs.

More than 1,000 legislative petitions will be before the lay and clergy delegates when they meet for the denomination’s assembly. The theme for the international gathering, which draws delegates and other church leaders from four continents, is [“...and know that I am God” from Psalm 46](#).

A [General Conference Primer](#) is available to help communicate about General Conference in your local church.

The [South Georgia Conference delegation to General Conference](#) is chaired by Rev. Doreen Smalls. There are 862 delegates to the postponed 2020 General Conference from around the world. Of the elected delegates, 55.9% are from the U.S., 32% from Africa, 6% from the Philippines, 4.6% from Europe (including Russia) and the remainder from concordat churches that have close ties to The United Methodist Church. The South Georgia Conference has 8 voting delegates.

In a focused effort to prepare for the upcoming General Conference session, the South Georgia Conference is launching a month-long Conference-wide prayer initiative, “Hear Our Prayers.” It will begin the day after Easter - April 1 - and run through the end of the General Conference session - May 3.

Psalm 4:1 says: “Answer me when I call to you, my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.” Each day laity and clergy will be asked to pause and pray for our church’s mission and for the upcoming conference at 4:01 pm.

Daily prayers will be posted on the conference website at [www.sgaumc.org/hearourprayers](http://www.sgaumc.org/hearourprayers) and on the Conference social media channels ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)).

Rev. Doreen Smalls, chair of the South Georgia delegation to General Conference, says the delegation has been preparing and praying and is thankful for the prayers of the conference.

“As we prepare to do our work this month, and then as we travel to Charlotte and work each day representing South Georgia while we are there, we covet your prayers,” said Rev. Smalls. “God has great plans for the people called United Methodists, and I’m thankful this delegation has a voice in helping shape our future as we act with confidence and hope in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

.....

## **The Road to General Conference: Infographics & Primer**

The road to General Conference begins with each United Methodist and culminates with a worldwide quadrennial legislative gathering. Gain a better understanding of The UMC with this information detailing the church's structure from the local church, to the district, through the annual conferences and beyond. [View or download](#) these easy-to-understand infographic. Also, check out this [General Conference Primer](#) to help communicate about General Conference in your local church.

.....

## **Annual Conference special offering to benefit college campus ministries**

Incredible things are happening on campuses across the state of Georgia! Last year the weekly student reach (discipleship+worship) averaged over 4,000 students per week. Think about that for a moment: 4,000 young adults (18-22) were part of the United Methodist movement on campus. Over 90% of those are experiencing United Methodism for the very first time!

Here’s your chance to support the ministry taking place! The 2024 Annual Conference special offering will benefit the United Methodist colleges and Wesley Foundations of the South Georgia Conference through the Commission on Higher Education and Campus Ministry. The UMC Commission provides support, funding, administration, and long-term vision casting for these campus ministries and United Methodist schools.

Your gifts will help support the following South Georgia Ministries:

- Andrew College
- Coastal College of Georgia Wesley
- Columbus State Wesley
- Georgia Southern Wesley
- Georgia Southwestern Wesley
- Valdosta State Wesley
- Macon Wesley (serving Mercer & Middle Georgia State University)
- Wesleyan College

For more information about the special offering and a bulletin insert to use in your local church, visit [www.sgaumc.org/specialoffering](http://www.sgaumc.org/specialoffering). Congregations are encouraged to collect and present their offering during the annual conference’s opening worship service on June 2.



[You can also give online by clicking here.](#)

Additional mission opportunity at Annual Conference:  
[Mission emphasis to support our conference agencies](#)

.....

## **Speedwell UMC makes quilts with love**

*Submitted by Jo Robinson, member of Speedwell UMC*

Speedwell United Methodist Church in Savannah, Ga. was looking for an outreach ministry where they could make a difference in the community. They were eager to love their neighbors and to love God. Beginning in September 2021, members of Speedwell UMC began donating items such as kitchen utensils, toiletries, laundry items, toys, etc. to the Thomas Austin House, a 12-unit transitional housing apartment for homeless families in Savannah. They discovered that love always seeks to uplift. So, last winter they went a little further in their mission to the families displaced by life’s unkind circumstances by sewing handmade quilts. The members of Speedwell UMC rallied around this effort by donating the cloth, thread, and batting. Mrs. Jo Robinson created each one of the quilts as the materials came in for the project. The donations resulted in beautiful handmade quilts for the eleven babies and toddlers at the Thomas Austin House. When the quilts were completed, Rev. Debora Shinhoster Richards, pastor of Speedwell UMC, along with the congregation prayed God’s blessings over the quilts. “Speedwell is blessed to be a blessing “and “most of all God is pleased that we are at work with Him.”

.....

## **Young Clergy Fellowship offers scholarship, exploration of calling**

Are you or someone you know exploring a call to ordained ministry? The Young Clergy Fellowship is designed to create experiences that assist college students in discerning their sense of calling to full-time ministry or missions, gaining broad experiences in a local ministry, and experiencing intentional discipleship through one-on-one mentoring.

"The Young Clergy Academy provided me with a sanctuary to explore my calling to ministry," said Sarah Hazelrig, Associate Director at the Wesley Foundation of Macon, as she reflects on her own experience. "Through my placement at the Wesley Foundation of Macon, coupled with mentorship, networking, and training, my time in the Fellowship was an invaluable period of growth, learning, and discernment."

This 9-month Fellowship – running August 1, 2024 through April 30, 2025 – will allow selected fellows to be immersed in a vocational ministry setting with intentional opportunities to deeply discern their call to clergy as a vocation with their specifically assigned mentor. The Fellowship is designed for each ministry fellow to develop leadership skills for effective ministry as they partner with clergy and laity in a local church or ministry.

The Young Clergy Fellowship is funded by the James Leon and Myrtice Peed Scholarship Fund and administered by the United Methodist Commission on Higher Education and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

The Peed YCF Scholarship includes 25 hours per week working in a UM-related church or ministry setting, a fellowship orientation retreat, a mid-year gathering, and a fellowship debriefing retreat and includes a \$9,000 scholarship (\$4,500 paid directly to the school each semester).

Applicants must be enrolled at least half-time at an accredited college or university, maintain at least a 2.75 GPA, and be connected to a South Georgia United Methodist Church, Wesley, or Chaplaincy. Two recommendations from a chaplain, District Superintendent, pastor, or Wesley Director are required. Candidates should possess a willingness to grow in areas of leadership, spiritual disciplines, self-awareness, and understanding of ordained ministry, coupled with a commitment to representing Christ in daily life.

“The cohort prepared me emotionally and spiritually to faithfully step into a Masters of Divinity program and a full-time Associate Director position within the Wesley Foundation,” says Hazelrig. “I am so grateful for the opportunity to grow as a part of the Young Clergy community!”

For more information and to access the application, visit [Young Clergy Fellowship Application](#).



### **Denman Award Nominations deadline is April 22**

The South Georgia Annual Conference is now accepting nominations for The Harry Denman Evangelism Award for Clergy, Lay, and Youth.

The Harry Denman Evangelism Award program recognizes United Methodists in each annual conference whose exceptional ministry of evangelism – expressed in Word (what), Sign (why), and Deed (how) – brings people into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ.

Evangelism happens in many contexts and many settings; impacts and engages all generations; and requires relationship among a variety of persons. Persons who demonstrate the spirit of this award are ones whose life and ministry exemplifies the teaching of Christ and the Great Commission.

Recipients of these awards, nominated by individuals, churches, or districts and selected by the Conference Witness Team, live their call to “Offer Them Christ” daily as modeled by Dr. Harry Denman, founder of The Foundation for Evangelism that sponsors these awards.

Neither the size of the local church with which the person is affiliated, the age or gender of the person, nor the length of their service limits a person’s eligibility. What is important are the persons whose lives have been changed by the life and ministry of the nominee. (Note: the youth award is limited to individuals who would be considered students - college age or younger.)

The award is named for the late Dr. Harry Denman, who was a distinguished lay evangelist. The awards are made possible by The Foundation for Evangelism, which was founded in 1949 by Dr. Denman, who felt it was the business of every Christian to be an evangelist. It is most fitting that annual conferences today honor persons who carry on the spirit of Harry Denman.

To learn more about the award or to download nomination forms [click here](#) or contact the SGA Conference Witness Chair, Rev. Danita Knowles, at [danitaknowles52@gmail.com](mailto:danitaknowles52@gmail.com).

Nominations must be received no later than Monday, April 22.

.....

## April 'One Matters' Resource Toolkit: How do I bless my neighbors?

Connectional Ministries understand the importance of making disciples and nurturing spiritual growth within local congregations. Transformation is happening every single day across the South Georgia Conference.

We've loved hearing the feedback from our first two resource toolkits: [February \(Who is your one?\)](#) and [March \(Whose burdens are you carrying?\)](#) and are excited to roll out a new toolkit for April as we continue to put focus on our theme of "One Matters." These toolkits are designed to empower clergy and laity in their sacred mission of cultivating meaningful connections and fostering transformative discipleship. A single challenge question will be presented, followed by accompanying resources tailored to address that specific challenge.

[April toolkit hit inboxes of clergy and lay leaders at the beginning of the month.](#) April's challenge question is: **How do I bless my neighbors?** Can changing the world be as simple as loving your neighbor? It's so easy, yet the breakdown occurs when it comes to actually doing it. Praying and asking God to see the opportunities before you, listening to the needs of others and meeting those needs, sharing a meal together, and pointing it all back to the One who changed your life - easy, right? This month let's focus on blessing those around us and maybe, just maybe, the world will be changed.

To go along with the challenge question, a step-by-step resource – [5 Ways to B.L.E.S.S.](#) – is available to use as a small group resource, as a supplement in your church bulletin, or for your own personal reminder. This handout breaks down the 5 ways to B.L.E.S.S. your neighbors: Begin with Prayer, Listen, Eat, Serve and Story.

In addition, an [11-minute training video led by Anne Bosarge](#), she talks about how we, as disciples, can help our neighbors and those we are discipling by sharing five simple ways to make a positive impact on the people we meet every day. You are also encouraged to check out this month's book recommendation: "[B.L.E.S.S.](#)" by Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson.

[View April's Toolkit here](#) | [Sign up to receive the monthly toolkit](#)

.....

## We're having dinner near you in April! Come join us!

Do you love a good potluck? Have you seen the amazing power of a meal to bring people together at the table? Are you interested in doing church and community in a new way? Dinner Church is a way to provide a spiritual environment for people who might never step foot into a traditional church model. Over a meal and a casual conversation, Dinner Church allows people from all walks of life to discover Jesus in community. We hope you will join us this April at a location near you. Click the link below to register. Questions? Contact Anne Bosarge at [abosarge@sgaumc.com](mailto:abosarge@sgaumc.com).

- [April 18 - Trinity UMC, Warner Robins](#)
  - [April 19 – United Methodists of Thomasville, Thomasville](#)
- .....

## **April 21 Lesson: Faith of an Anointer**

### **Spring Quarter: Examining Our Faith Unit 2: The Measure of Faith**

#### **Lesson 8: Week of April 21, 2024**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

**Lesson Scriptures: Luke 7:36-39, 44-50**

**Key Verse: Luke 7:50**

#### **Lesson Aims**

- Identify what “saved” the woman.
- Compare and contrast the mindset of Jesus, the Pharisee, and the woman.
- Evaluate his or her own mindset in light of those three.

#### **Introduction**

According to the lesson’s writer, the smiley face killer (so called because of notes he sent to the police) was a self-appointed vigilante. As depicted in the TV documentary series “Forensic Factor,” he seemed determined to put an end to prostitution in his town by murdering those who engaged in that immoral trade. By the time this otherwise ordinary citizen was caught, he had murdered 13 women.

The investigation into the murders was initially hampered because there wasn’t much concern from the general public over the fate of missing prostitutes. In the first place, few people noticed that the women were missing. Second, most people seemed to view prostitutes as the dregs of society.

Today’s text features a law-abiding citizen and a sinful woman who both met the merciful Savior. Jesus’ interaction with them reveals an important link between forgiveness and love.

#### **Lesson Context**

Just prior to the events of today’s lesson, Luke summarized two viewpoints toward Jesus that had emerged. Those viewpoints are revealed by reactions to John the Baptist. On the one hand, “All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John” (Luke 7:29).

On the other hand, the Pharisees and the experts in the law reject God’s purpose for they had not been “baptized by John” (Luke 7:30). Rejection of John the Baptist, the Christ forerunner (Luke 1:15-17; 3:1-20), meant rejecting the Christ as well (Matthew 17:12). This set the stage for a contrast between those who held these polar-opposite viewpoints.

As an oversimplification, we can see the tax collectors as a demographic that represented the first view. These Jews had chosen to work with the Romans to extract taxes from their fellow Jews, thereby earning great scorn as collaborators. Tax collectors could become wealthy by overcharging taxes (see Luke 19:2).

The Pharisees, by contrast, can be seen as primary representatives of the second viewpoint. Pharisees advocated strict and scrupulous observance of the Law of Moses. Over time, this resulted in human traditions being added to that law. See Jesus’ critique of this fact in Matthew 23:1-36 and Mark 7:1-23.

The first-century Jewish historian Josephus estimated that there were only about 6,000 Pharisees throughout the Roman empire. Perhaps no more than a few hundred lived in the Villages of Galilee. Yet they exerted an influence out of proportion to their number, as witnessed by their being mentioned about 100 times in the New Testament. (By contrast, Sadducees are mentioned only 14 times).

Today's lesson takes us to an early point in Jesus' ministry when things had gotten serious enough for Pharisees to come from "every village" of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem to investigate him (Luke 5:17). The nearest example up to the point of today's lesson is Jesus having been in the village of Nain, about 25 miles southwest of Capernaum (7:11). Combining that fact with information in Luke 8:1, 22, and 26, we conclude that a village in Galilee was the location of today's lesson.

### **Three People (Luke 7:36-39)**

This is one of three times in Luke that "Jesus was" invited to a meal at the home of a Pharisee (see Luke 11:37; 14:1). On whether the Pharisee's invitations included other guests see 7:49.

The motive behind the invitations seemed to be that of scrutinizing Jesus more closely, noting any violations of the Law of Moses as interpreted by the Pharisees. In so doing, they were asking the wrong question of themselves. That question was: "Is Jesus on the side of truth, as we know it?" But their question should have been: "Are we on the side of truth as Jesus is witnessing it?"

Where the NRSV says that Jesus "took his place at the table," the Greek says he "reclined." Jews had adopted the Greco Roman practice of eating a formal dinner or banquet while reclining on couches with the head next to the table and the feet sticking out. That is why the woman can approach Jesus' feet. Her actions are emotionally charged and bold. She enters a home where she is not welcome, disrupts the banquet, and publicly behaves with improper intimacy.

Since Jesus is a public figure, the door to this meal likely remains open so that interested people can enter, sit on edge of the room, and hear the discussion. The rebuke in verse 39 is not because the woman has come to the meal, but because she did not stay on the sidelines.

The fact that the woman, only identified as a sinner, has brought a jar of ointment shows that she has planned to anoint Jesus—a sign of her love (see Luke 7:47). That act reflects great sacrifice for such perfume was costly. If she used Nard, for example, the cost would be about 300 denarii a pound, an average person's annual wage.

As the woman stood weeping behind Jesus, she began to wash his feet with her tears. In a spontaneous act, she let down her hair and began to wipe the tears from Jesus' feet and then anointed them with the perfume. As I mentioned, the woman's act expresses love and gratitude, but it also violated social conventions. Touching or caressing a man's feet could have sexual overtones, as did letting down her hair in public. Moreover, the woman was known to be a sinner. Assuming she was unclean, she would have made Jesus unclean by touching him. The sinner has, therefore, created a scene at the Pharisee's dinner, and he is scandalized. But how will he respond? And how will Jesus respond? In the Pharisee's eyes, the woman's act represents a challenge both to his honor and to Jesus'!

The scandal factor of the situation was multiplied by the fact that the woman "lived a sinful life." Such a reputation probably suggests (but does not require) that the woman was a prostitute. Prostitution and prostitutes are mentioned about 100 times in the Old Testament and a dozen times in the New Testament.

Identities of local prostitutes were likely well known since the activities of such persons could not be secret for long in small villages. If the woman was indeed a prostitute, it explains why the Pharisees was

scandalized that Jesus would not recognize her as a “sinner.” The Pharisee himself recognized her immediately.

The Pharisee’s unspoken thoughts condemned both the woman and Jesus (contrast Luke 7:16). The Pharisee reasoned from a certain presupposition that he wouldn’t allow to be overturned: if Jesus doesn’t fit the Pharisee’s idea of how a prophet should conduct himself, then Jesus can’t be one. Jesus was thought to have carelessly allowed the woman’s touch. Again, the Jews’ understanding of what made them unclean was often tied to touching (example: Numbers 4:6; 19:11). In general, touching anything considered unclean made the teacher unclean as well (see Isaiah 52:11; Haggai 2:13). Pharisees were obsessed with the avoidance of anything unclean on violations of the Law of Moses. This woman was the living embodiment of everything they warned against. The contrast between the woman, who expresses her love for Jesus, and the Pharisee who views her with disdain could hardly be sharper.

In the verse not included in today’s lesson (Luke 7:40-43), Jesus told Simon a parable about a money lender pardoning debtors. While Jesus turns to the woman, he still speaks to Simon, but he is getting ready to make the parable a reality.

**Question! When have you been reduced to tears in Jesus’ presence?**

### **Different Actions (Luke 7:44-50)**

An awkward situation ensued: Jesus “turned toward the woman,” but his words were for the Pharisee. We also learn that the Pharisee’s name was Simon, a common Jewish name. The use of the name is a sign that the conversation is moving to a more personal level. It also helps the audience to think of the man as an individual and not just as another Pharisee.

Next, Jesus uses a parable which can provide an imaginative bridge leading hearers to judge a situation from a new angle. Jesus asks Simon to make a judgment about the two debtors in the parable (v. 43, not in our text today) testing to see if Simon agreed so far. Then Jesus turns back to the woman whom Simon called a sinner and asks him to look at her again: “Do you see this woman?” (v.44). Simon addressed Jesus as “teacher” in verse 40, and since that time Jesus had acted as teacher. But the woman can also be Simon’s teacher, if he is willing. From here he can learn about the powerful love that comes from forgiveness.

Jesus now gives a series of contrasts between the treatment he received from the woman and from Simon. The narrator has withheld, until this climactic point, both Jesus’ reaction to the woman’s striking behavior and information about Simon’s reception of Jesus. At this point, Jesus makes three contrasts between the woman’s reception of Jesus and Simon’s.

Foot-washing was a centuries-old cultural practice (Genesis 18:4; 19:2; 43:24; etc.) It was an act of hospitality for guests in one’s house. Footwear of the era did not keep dust and dirt out. Walking on unpaved roads resulted in feet getting filthy quickly, thus the experience of the foot washing courtesy—or at least providing water and a towel for the guest to do the foot-washing himself. Yet Simon had not even provided those to Jesus! Simon’s actions were cold and calculated; both he and Jesus knew it. What a contrast to the woman, whose actions were those of spontaneous gratitude.

As difficult as it may be for us to understand the ancient cultural practice of foot-washing, understanding the significance of a kiss (v.45) is scarcely any easier. The missing “kiss” at issue here would have been an expression of greeting and welcome, customarily offered by a host to his guest (see Luke 15:20; compare Romans 16:16; contrast Luke 22:47-48). As with the absence of foot-washing water, the lack of a kiss indicates something less than full acceptance of the host.

The kissing of “feet” rather than the cheek was not a part of hospitality expectations, but its presence here shows the woman’s humility and her desire to serve Jesus.

To kiss feet eagerly indicates total devotion. The one whose feet are worthy of being kissed is special. It’s certainly uncomfortable to display affection in a way that breaks cultural norms unless the esteem of the object of one’s love requires it, as the woman in this story reveals.

**Question! Has there ever been a time when your level of devotion to Jesus caused you to exceed your “embarrassment threshold” in an act of loving service to him?**

To offer one’s “head” to be anointed “with oil” (v.46) also seems strange to us, something we would never expect when visiting a friend’s house. But this, too, was a gesture of hospitality in first-century Palestine. The practice communicated favor (see Psalms 23:5; Ecclesiastes 9:8). Simon had withheld this level of courtesy as well.

The oil to which Jesus referred was olive oil, the multipurpose liquid used for cooking, fueling lamps and medicinal purposes. By contrast, the woman anointed the feet of Jesus with “perfume” from her alabaster container. This might have been Nard oil, which was highly prized and expensive in Palestine—much more so than household olive oil. The contrast of anointing the feet rather than the head demonstrated the great humility of the woman. Her actions were unsolicited.

**Question! How does your hospitality honor Jesus?**

The crux of this story is in verse 47. There’s the fact that the woman has taken extra steps to greet Jesus. But there is a reason for her love—her many sins now stand forgiven. The one who is forgiven little, on the other hand, loves little. To understand Jesus’ point, the parable and his remarks must be put together. According to the parable (verses 41-43, not in today’s text), the basis of love is a previously extended forgiveness that produced a response of love. So, Jesus indicates that the woman’s actions reflect her experience of forgiveness from him. The Lord’s declaration to her and forgiveness of sins serves to confirm what the parable has already indicated.

Important! The woman’s loving act is evidence that she has been forgiven much. By implication, the woman’s preparation in bringing the alabaster flask in the first place suggests that she has experienced acceptance and forgiveness prior to this event. So, did the woman love because she had been forgiven or was she forgiven because she loved Jesus? I think the lesson points to the former—the woman loved because she had been forgiven.

At the end of the scene Jesus turns to the woman showing that he is not just concerned with Simon, for whom the woman can provide a lesson, but also with the woman herself. Jesus’ statement in verse 48, “your sins are forgiven” may be puzzling at this point, for the story assumes that the woman’s grateful love shows her previous experience of forgiveness.

Nevertheless, reassurance of forgiveness may be important, since the woman must face people who share Simon’s negative attitude. Jesus also speaks about her faith (v.50). As in Luke 5:10-20, faith was demonstrated in bold action.

Now, this is not the first time that Luke records controversy resulting from Jesus’ forgiving “sins.” In the story of a paralyzed man of lesson 6, Jesus both healed the man and pronounced his sins to be forgiven. The audience of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were outraged. But they spoke better than they knew with their rhetorical question, “who can forgive sins but God alone?” (Luke 5:21).

Similarly, Simon and his other guests in today's lesson are startled by Jesus' declaration. The pronouncement of forgiveness of sins in both texts forces a choice on the religious leaders: if Jesus indeed had the power to forgive sins, then he is God-in-the-flesh. But if Jesus did not have such power, then he was guilty of blasphemy.

In verse 56, Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

The story ends with a final two-part word from Jesus to the woman. First, he clarifies the underlying reason for her forgiveness: her "faith" which is the source of her love. By devoting herself to Jesus, she has yielded her heart to him in repentance.

Second, Jesus telling her to "go in peace" reminds us of his words to a sinful woman caught in adultery. After that woman's accusers left the scene, Jesus said to her, "Go now and leave your life of sin" (John 8:11). Neither woman would have found peace if they had departed only to resume lives of sin.

### **Conclusion**

Simon's viewpoint was one of complete rejection of the sinful woman, thinking of himself more highly and being confident of his own righteousness (compare Luke (18:9-14).

But Simon was not completely sinless. As a student of the Law of Moses, he should have realized, as the Pharisee Paul did, that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23; compare Acts 23:6). Another way to look at it is to imagine a survey being taken in Pharisee Simon's village. The survey question is, "Who needs to be forgiven, Simon or the immoral woman?" The villagers would predictably respond overwhelmingly to "the immoral woman." But this is really a trick question since it presents a false choice. It is not a matter of "either/or," but one of "both/and." They both needed to be forgiven of sin. They both needed a humble faith that would bring them to God with hearts full of love. They both needed to follow Jesus, love God, and serve others. The tragedy of this story is that only one of these people left the banquet forgiven. Simon's apparent pride in seeing himself superior to the woman blocked any realization of needing forgiveness.

No question, Christians are to flee from sin and obey God. We show our love for God when we keep his commandments (1 John 5:2-3). But does this justify us when we reject and condemn those who struggle with sin? Are sinners welcome in our fellowship if they are seeking to love Jesus? Or must they cleanup their sinful lives before they enter the doors of our church? Jesus taught that even the vilest of sinners can be forgiven if they turn to him in faith and love. So, are we willing to follow him in his love for sinners and help them as they strive to follow Jesus, however imperfectly?

I'd like to close with this. Someone has said that there are three great witnesses remaining in the world to show humankind the Savior. And God is depending on these three witnesses to get His message of salvation and forgiveness to the world.

First, the Bible! It is God's love letter to the human family. William Gladstone observed, "There is only one great issue and that is to get the truth of the Bible into the hearts of the people."

Second, the church! The thousands of church buildings which span our communities are testimonies themselves to the world that God loves humankind. That he leads his followers to provide places for worship, study, fellowship and ministry. Yes, of course, the church is God's serving community expressing His love to everybody.

Third, this is the witness of the committed – the forgiven, and agents of forgiveness! The late Thomas Merten, one of our great Christian thinkers, has said that the purpose of the indwelt life is to be a place God



has chosen for his presence, his manifestation to the world. “And you will be my witness,” Jesus said (Acts 1:8).

### **Action Plan**

- How do you guard against both excessive pride in your own efforts and debilitating awareness of your sin?
- If Jesus told you to “go in peace,” how would that impact your daily activities?
- What makes a good dinner guest?

### **Resources For This Lesson**

- “2023-2024 NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, International Sunday School Lessons,” pages 289-296.
- “Abingdon New Testament Commentaries Luke” by Robert C. Tannehill, pages 234-138.
- “The NIV Application Commentary Luke” by Darrell L. Bock, pages 201-204.
- “The New Interpreter’s Bible, Volume IX Luke/John,” by Alan Culpepper pages 169-170, 172.

*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](http://halbradyministries.com)).*



## **April 28 Lesson: Faith of a Canaanite**

### **Spring Quarter: Examining Our Faith**

#### **Unit 2: The Measure of Faith**

#### **Lesson 9: Week of April 28, 2024**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

#### **Lesson Scripture: Matthew 15:21-28**

#### **Key Verse: Matthew 15:28**

#### **Lesson Aims**

- Summarize the interaction between Jesus and the Canaanite woman.
- Explain Jesus’ response in verse 24.
- Brainstorm situations where a parent should and should not intervene on behalf of a child.
- What have you learned in this lesson about great faith? Explain!

#### **Introduction**

Have you ever felt like an outsider? Sure you have—we all have.

As a college freshman, our daughter attended an out of state college where she didn’t know anyone. After going through the stressful period of what the sororities and fraternities call “rush” week, our daughter did not receive a bid from the sorority of her first choice. Though the only student from Georgia, she made the best of the situation. However, speaking of that time, she said later that she truly felt like an outsider. If the truth be known, we all did.

As you read today’s lesson, consider which character in the story with whom you most identify. Do you align with the (outsider) woman or the (insider) disciples? Either option will affect how you view God’s gracious and generous blessings.

## **Lesson Context**

The Gospel of Matthew does not explicitly identify its author. The early church, however, attributed authorship to Matthew, a tax collector who became one of the Apostles (Matthew 9:9; 10:3). Other Gospels mention this person by his given name: Levi (Matthew 2:14; Luke 5:27-28), named after one of the sons of Jacob (see Genesis 29:34; 35:23).

As a tax collector, Matthew worked with the foreign occupiers of Palestine: the Romans. During the first century AD, tax collectors were despised by their fellow countrymen (example: Luke 18:11). They were seen as traitors to the Jewish people because they assisted the Romans in taking tax money. They were also held in low regard because they frequently enriched themselves at the expense of others (example: Luke 19:2,8).

The only other information we have about this apostle is that he was the “son of Alphaeus” (Mark 2:14). The apostle James was also the “son of Alphaeus” (example: Matthew 10:3). These two may have been brothers, but none of the Gospels make that relationship apparent like they do with other sets of brothers (example: Matthew 4:21).

Matthew’s Gospel contains the most quotations from the Old Testament of the four Gospels. The Gospel of Matthew has about 65 Old Testament quotes; Mark has about 30; Luke has about 26, and John has about 16. As such, students frequently call Matthew the “most Jewish” of the four Gospels. It is thought that Matthew intended his Gospel to be received by a primarily Jewish audience.

Although this Gospel emphasized the Jewish context of Jesus’ ministry (see Matthew 10:6; 15:24), its message reveals that the gospel of Jesus Christ was intended for both Jews and Gentiles. Matthew is the only Gospel to record the visit of the Gentile Magi (Matthew 1:1-12). It’s also the only one to include Jesus’ commission to his disciples that they “make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:16-20).

The events leading to today’s Scripture reveal the intended expansion of the gospel message. As Jesus’ ministry in Galilee drew to a close, it became evident that his people would reject him and his mission (see Matthew 13:53-58). His disciples displayed little faith regarding his identity. They also failed to understand his teaching. Even the religious readers were offended by Jesus’ message (Matthew 15:1-9). The people most expected to accept Jesus and his mission failed to understand. Mark 7:24-30 is a parallel account of Matthew 15:21-28.

## **First Request (Matthew 15:21-24)**

Following his confrontation with the Pharisees and the Scribes (Matthew 15:1-20) Jesus and his disciples withdrew to the far borders of Israel, northwest toward Gentile territory, in the direction of the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon.

Jesus frequently “withdrew” from crowds of people so that he could pray in solitude (examples: Matthew 14:23; Luke 5:16). He also removed himself from those who might misunderstand his ministry (example: John 6:15).

“Tyre and Sidon” were two prominent cities located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea north of Galilee, in the region that is modern-day Lebanon. Tyre was about 125 miles north of Jerusalem, with Sidon being an additional 25 miles farther. The cities are mentioned together as “Tyre and Sidon” about 30 times in the Bible.

Because of their access to maritime trade, the cities attained great wealth—especially Tyre (see Zechariah 9:3). However, their prideful leaders had acted unjustly (see Ezekiel 26-28). As a result, the Old Testament prophets strongly condemned the cities (see example: Amos 1:9-10).

Jesus mentioned these cities in his indictment of the Jewish truce of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum (Matthew 18:20-24; Luke 10:13-14). His contrast to the Gentile cities was to a lesson-to-greater argument. If Gentile cities would have repented from sin and thereby avoided judgment how much more should the Jewish town do the same.

The Law of Moses taught the Israelites to avoid following the pagan practices of other people groups (see Leviticus 18:3). By withdrawing into the “region” near those cities, Jesus ensured that no Jewish person would follow him into a Gentile region.

The point is Jesus needed a break! In Matthew 14 when Jesus tried to rest, the crowds found him, followed him, and hounded him all the more. This time, Jesus didn’t just leave town, he left the country! So Jesus didn’t go there to minister to people; he went there to rest.

**Question! How do you decide whether or not to withdraw from a situation for your own spiritual or physical or emotional health?**

A gentile woman acknowledged Jesus as the Son of David. She is a woman who wears the label of Israel’s notorious ancient enemy—Canaan. As we are informed, this encounter between Jesus and the Canaanite woman is situated in every way “on the border”—on the boundary between the old and the new, between male and female, between Jew and Gentile, between friend and enemy, between the holy and the demonic. At any rate, the woman begs Jesus for mercy, her voice raised to an urgent shout (the word translated “shouting” in Matthew 15:22 can also mean “scream” or “shriek” and is employed in Revelation 12:2 to describe the cries of a woman in labor pains). Just as she groaned in pain when her daughter was born, she now cries out again for her daughter, lifting her voice in desperate hope to Jesus, whom she calls both “Lord” and “Son of David.” Thus, one of the main themes of the story can already be seen—the woman’s amazing faith. In contrast to the Pharisee and scribe who find fault with Jesus and keep their distance, this foreign “enemy” woman recognizes, in the depth of her need, Jesus is the royal and messianic Son of David, the Lord, the Savior.

The designation “Son of David” comes from the hope that a descendant of Israel’s King David would someday rule with peace and justice. During the time between the Old and New Testament, the Jewish people had strong expectations of this individual. They hoped the Son of David would come as a political leader to cleanse Jerusalem.

Because this designation reflected a uniquely Jewish expectation, it is shocking that a Gentile woman used it about Jesus. She would have been the most unexpected person to recognize Jesus as the long-awaited descendant of David (Matthew 12:23). This woman spoke in a way that reflected her genuine belief about Jesus’ identity and mission.

The way that Matthew’s Gospel presents the woman’s request is notable. She did not explicitly ask Jesus to heal her daughter, thus freeing the daughter from demon possession (contrast Mark 7:26). Instead, the mother desired to experience “mercy” herself. She was likely her daughter’s primary caretaker, and the weight of that work had become an unbearable burden.

**Question! What steps can we take to increase our faith in God before we see him act?**

One further notation here before moving on. Jesus never directly applied the designation “Son of David” to himself, but he did so indirectly (Matthew 22:42); Mark 12:35; Luke 20:41).

In verse 23, Jesus’ refusal to answer the woman might seem cruel, but his silence reflects some cultural differences of his day. At that time, it would be considered inappropriate for a Jewish rabbi to “answer” a woman—and a Gentile woman, no less (compare John 4:9)!

His silence could also be considered a test of the strength and quality of the woman’s faith. Jewish teachers and rabbis sometimes tested their students, and Jesus was no exception (examples: John 5:6; 6:6). The strategic silence created space for the woman to continue talking and explaining her desires.

The disciples apparently take Jesus’ silence as his way of rebuffing the woman’s request. So, they urge him to “send her away, for she keeps crying out after us.” In other words, the woman had become a nuisance to Jesus’ disciples.

And perhaps these disciples remember Jesus’ charge that included the direction about not going to Gentiles but only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6). Indeed, in this Gentile region Jesus maintains his commitment to fulfill that mission for which he was sent as he says, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 15:24).

“Lost Sheep of Israel” does not mean the lost sheep “among” Israel as though some were lost others not. The expression indicates the lost sheep “who are the house of Israel.”

Jesus’ primary mission before his resurrection focused on the people of Israel. They were like “lost sheep” without a shepherd (examples: Numbers 27:17; 1 Kings 22:17; Ezekiel 34:5-6; Matthew 9:36). As a result, Jesus came as a shepherd for the people. He provided spiritual care and guidance like a shepherd caring for sheep (examples: Ezekiel 34:23; Luke 15:1-7; John 10:1-13, 27-30). Central to Jesus’ mission as a shepherd was his preaching on the need for repentance and the presence of God’s kingdom (Matthew 4:17). This mission was first revealed to the people of Israel. God’s blessing would be offered first to them. Then through them would blessing be available (example: Isaiah 49:6,7).

Let’s be clear! Matthew’s Gospel is not conveying an anti-Gentile sentiment. Old Testament prophets proclaimed that the messiah’s mission would include Gentiles (example: Hosea 2:23; Zechariah 14:16). With a few exceptions (example: Matthew 8:5-13), Jesus’ earthly ministry focused on the people of Israel. He acknowledged, however, his mission would reach Gentiles (example: Matthew 24:14; 28:19-20). John Bunyan said that when he came to the full realization that Christ was now his friend, savior, and Lord he went home singing a hymn at the top of his lungs. “I knew not how to contain myself,” he wrote. “I felt I could have spoken of his love to the very crows that sat upon the plowed fields before me.”

## **Second Request (Matthew 15:25-28)**

At this point, it is apparent that the woman was facing at least three obstacles: the silence of Jesus, the annoyance of Jesus’ followers, and a definition of the mission of the Messiah that included “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” but not her and her daughter. Under similar circumstances, most people would have retreated in dismay or disgust. However, this is a woman of “great faith,” and she is not dissuaded. Despite all these rejections, this woman responds to Jesus in reverence and worship. The woman’s worship of Jesus further develops the motif of her great faith and sets up the second exchange in which she repeats her plea for help (Matthew 15:25).

Jesus finally breaks his silence toward her, but his word comes across as a harsh rebuff: “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.” The meaning is clear! The people of Israel are the children; “Gentiles are “dogs;” and what Jesus has to give is intended for the “children.” Some have tried to soften the blow by pointing out that the Greek word for “dogs” actually means “little dogs” or “house dogs,” but the sting remains. To call Gentiles “dogs” was a common and well-known term of scorn.

So, what then are we to make of Jesus’ retort? Is Jesus being careless of this woman’s need?

No, we must be careful not to apply modern standards of delicacy and politeness to the language of this passage. Despite the blunt tone, Jesus’ words are, in sharp and stark terms, an expression of his true identity. By the use of the metaphor of the children and the dogs, Jesus is graphically reaffirming what he said to the disciples. He is Israel’s Messiah, and he has been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As we have been informed, before anything else can be said of him, this must be acknowledged. In his statement, then, Jesus simply highlighted expectations regarding the order of the mission of God.

In verse 27, the Gentile woman accepted that Jesus was sent to Israel. But she did not accept that he was “exclusively” sent to Israel, and she did not take Jesus’ answer as a “no.” Instead, she built on his words, pointing out that “dogs” did not have to take food from children in order to receive the blessing of the crumbs.

### **Question! What are some dangers of using these comparisons?**

Now, this woman understands the program of God to go to Israel first, but she persists. In a sense Jesus is testing her. Will she see through the salvation-historical distinction between Israel and the Gentiles and recognize that God ultimately desires to bring healing to all people? She passes with flying colors because she acknowledges that the Messiah of Israel, Jesus, is the Master of all, and he will care for the needs of all, whether Jews (“children”) or Gentiles (“dogs”). Her response is called by Jesus an exercise of “great faith,” which is rewarded by having her daughter healed that very moment (Matthew 15:28).

Even though God has a program, he responds to true faith. The privileged people of Nazareth did not respond in faith and so could not receive Jesus’ healing ministry (Matthew 13:58). But this Gentile woman has an openness to Jesus that allows his healing ministry to operate. Here we understand that faith is essentially accepting the revelation and will of God as one’s own reality and purpose for life.

Here’s a parallel point between this story and Jesus’ healing of the Roman Centurion’s servant in Matthew 8:5-13. In both instances, the healing occurred from a distance. The woman’s “daughter was healed at that moment” (v. 28), and the centurion’s servant was healed (Matthew 8:13) without Jesus being in the immediate proximity of the ailing person.

Those two occasions and Jesus’ healing of the son of a certain official in John 4:46-54 are the only times in the Gospels when a distance healing occurred. Further, all three instances may each describe the healing of a Gentile. As such, these accounts prefigure the apostles’ ministry to the Gentiles described in Acts 13:14-52; 17:1-4, 12, etc.

### **Conclusion**

The woman in today’s text was the ultimate outsider to a first-century Jewish audience. She was aware of the biases against her if she approached a Jewish teacher. Despite that awareness, she came to Jesus anyway. Her desperate situation—and her suffering daughter—necessitated a bold response.

The woman’s behavior revealed a persistent and great faith. As a result, she received mercy from the Son of David. She was considered an “outsider” to some people, but she was an “insider” because of her faith.

This Scripture invites us to desire a life of great faith. And a life of great faith requires steadfast confidence that God will show mercy to everyone.

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 belief and action.”

**Question! Considering this quarter’s title “Examining our Faith.” What’s the most important thing you can do to complete a self-examination of your faith?**

### Resources For This Lesson

- “2023-2024 NIV Standard Lesson Commentary, International Sunday School Lessons,” pages 297-304.
- “The NIV Application Commentary (Matthew)” by Michael J. Wilkins, pages 538-541.
- “Matthew’s Westminster Bible Companion” by Thomas Long, pages 173-177.

*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](http://halbradyministries.com)).*

.....

## The Tortoise and the Hare

What’s Old is New Again

By Anne Packard

*“Much of the steadfastness and solidarity that Methodism has since exhibited to the world is due to the just and balanced judgement which restrained him (John Wesley) and his adherents from playing the part of revolutionary agitator or wild fanatics.”* Episcopal Address 1918 General Conference Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia

The General Conference meeting in 1808 greatly changed the roles of bishops in the Methodist movement. Fearing that the episcopacy had too much power, the delegates limited their ability to affect change by denying bishops the right to introduce motions or resolutions, participate in debates, or cast votes. To counteract this change and keep bishops from becoming “ornamental dummies,” Bishop William McKendree introduced his own change at the next general conference meeting by adding the Episcopal Address in 1812. This would allow the episcopacy an opportunity to reflect on the progress of Methodism and propose a future with more opportunities. It is thought that Bishop McKendree didn’t ask Bishop Asbury’s opinion before introducing the Episcopal Address because Asbury would not have approved of the addition and McKendree would have rather asked forgiveness than permission.

The General Conference meeting in 1918 faced tremendous challenges including the rights of women in Methodism, the Temperance Movement, the reunification of the MEC and the MECS, and World War I. As is so often the case, there were Methodists on both sides but diligent work was undertaken to affect positive change. During the meeting it was announced that Jacksonville, Florida was “dry” and this was met with great enthusiasm but, as we know now, this change would be temporary. The delegates also agreed that if the MEC could create an approved reunification plan quickly, the MECS would hold a special called general conference to approve it, but, in reality, reunification wouldn’t occur for another twenty years. The most heartbreaking written statement for me regarded the support of World War I, a controversial topic during this time. “While we of course long and pray for peace, yet we trust that when it comes it will be a peace full of

justice and righteousness. Anything less than that would be a delusion and a snare and would leave the possibility, if not the certainty, of endless wars in the future. It will be better to fight on and suffer on than to capitulate to a despotism whose methods recall the worst chapters of heathen barbarity” (Episcopal Address 1918 General Conference). No matter how hard these Christians tried, World War II would occur and the worst chapters of heathen barbarity would be sadly redefined.

So, does this mean that the work undertaken at General Conference has little meaning to affect positive change in our communities? I think not. As Bishop Hoss so rightly noted, “the steadfastness and solidarity that Methodism has since exhibited to the world is due to the just and balanced judgement which restrained him (John Wesley).” It was the deliberateness of John Wesley’s methodical ways that allowed early Methodists to affect meaningful change in the world. Wesley was not changing fast enough for many, especially American Methodists, but the steadfastness and solidity of his change made Methodism a reliable and sustainable organization. Bishop Hoss goes on to write in the 1918 Episcopal Address that, “It was better for the cause every way that he should go too slow than too fast. Conservatism may occasionally vex us by the deliberate gait with which it moves, but it carries with it some of the greatest moral values in the world.”

And, so, the Methodists continue to meet, and pray, and sing, and speak, and listen. Change is made, often times more slowly than we’d like. Some changes hold fast throughout the years while others are temporary pauses in the march of time. Some changes are successful in meeting their end goal while others are not able to bring the desired outcomes. Maybe the gift of Methodism isn’t in the results of votes but in the act of meeting. The deliberate gait, steadfastness, and solidity might just be what the world has needed and continues to need. Just maybe, Methodists win simply because they meet.

*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](mailto:apackard@epworthbythesea.org).*



## Conference Updates & Happenings

**ERT Trainings:** Two disaster response trainings are scheduled for April. A basic ERT Training is set for Saturday, April 20 from 8:30 am - 4:30 pm at Richmond Hill UMC. Another basic ERT Training & Chainsaw Safety Class is set for Friday, April 26 from 6 pm - 10 pm and Saturday, April 27 from 8 am to 12 pm in Midland, Ga. [Click here for more details](#). For more information, contact Luis Morales at [ert@sgaumc.com](mailto:ert@sgaumc.com) or 478-216-7729.

### Post-General Conference clergy lunch gatherings

The post-General Conference clergy lunch gatherings are set for the following dates. These gatherings will be a time for Bishop Graves and members of the delegation to report factual information around any decisions made at General Conference.

- May 13 - Tifton First UMC in Tifton at 10 am | [Register now](#)
- May 14 - St. Paul UMC in Columbus at 10 am | [Register now](#)
- May 23 - Goshen UMC in Rincon at 10 am | [Register now](#)

**Post-General Conference Laity Webinar – May 14:** A laity webinar has been scheduled to provide local church lay members with information following General Conference. The date for this webinar is May 14, 2024, at 6 pm. [Register now](#). If this date is not convenient, South Georgia laity are invited to take part in the [Alabama West-Florida Laity Webinar](#) on May 20 at 6 pm EST.

**Summer Camp 2024:** Registration is now open for Camp Connect! There is 1 week of senior high camp, 2 weeks of junior high camp, and 2 weeks of elementary camp. [Find out more information and sign up today!](#)

**Annual Conference – June 2-4:** The 2024 Annual Conference Session is set for June 2-4 in Tifton. [See all the details here.](#)

**Lay Servant Ministry:** [Lay Servant Ministries & Certified Lay Ministry dates & registration](#)

- Online Basic Lay Servant Ministries: August 13, 15, 20, 22
- Online Advanced Lay Servant Ministries: Sept 10, 12, 17, 19

[View Full Conference Calendar](#)



## Resource Roundup – April 2024

### Financial Ethics for Pastoral Leaders

Introducing a new online teaching series designed to help strengthen the financial practices of your church! A collaborative work of Discipleship Ministries and the leadership of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, these 6 self-paced sessions will help guide you in your role as the pastoral leader in finance and administration in your local church. [Learn more and register today](#)

### The Practical Guide to AI for Local Churches

There is so much information circulating right now about AI that you may not be sure what to use and how to find it. Whether you're not sure where to start or you feel like you've been wasting time with ineffective AI tools, MyCom contributor and author Jeremy Steele will guide us through an hour of what we need for practical use in and for our churches. This free webinar is set for Apr 10 at 1pm. [Register here](#)

### 10 Essential Ways Leaders Build Relationships with Their Team Members

(Lewis Center) Dan Reiland says investing in relationships is the make-or-break factor that determines the success of your leadership. He provides ten helpful tips for interacting with others that will help nurture positive relationships that will keep things running smoothly. [Learn more here](#)

### 8 strategies for churches to reach Gen Z

How can congregations build meaningful connections with young adults? Brandi Nicole Williams, director for the African American Church Evangelism Institute, offers eight practical strategies for bridging the generational gap and fostering relationships with Gen Z, people born between 1997 and 2012, to build a more relevant church community.

[Read commentary](#)

### Could your church use a communications audit?

This is a great time to assess your church's marketing and communications efforts. Get an audit of your social media, your website, branding/logos and potentially even your on-site signage. [Learn more](#)



## Retired Clergy Birthdays - April 2024



- 4/01 – Ed Chance: PO Box 524; Wrens, GA 30833
- 4/01 – Danny Treadway: 1417 Peabody Dr.; Maryville, TN 37803
- 4/03 – Jennifer Sherling: 2447 Tuxedo Place; Albany, GA 31707
- 4/05 – O.C. Dean, Jr.: 265 Three Oaks Dr.; Athens, GA 30607
- 4/05 – Kay Stanaland: PO Box 905; Murrells Inlet, SC 29576
- 4/07 – Jim Hamlin: 322 S. Houston Springs Blvd.; Perry, GA 31069
- 4/07 - Cindy Reichard: 92 Kane Blvd; Bridgeville, PA 15017
- 4/08 – Terry DeLoach: 209 Dixie St.; Brooklet, GA 30415
- 4/09 – Sandra Henry: 111 Laurel Overlook; Canton, GA 30114
- 4/09 – Glenn McCranie: PO Box 493; Grandy, NC 27939
- 4/12 – Tim Bagwell: 192 Barrington Hall Dr.; Macon, GA 31220
- 4/12 – Gerald Goodman: 1572 Fluker Kiel Rd.; Coffeeville, AL 36524
- 4/15 – Leigh Ann Raynor: 212 Torrington Blvd.; Thomasville, GA 31757
- 4/16 – Wesley Kaylor: 855 Choake Rd.; DeSoto, GA 31743
- 4/16 – Barbara Nelson: 1106 Merrill Dr.; Dublin, GA 31021
- 4/16 – Tom Nichols: 619 Tattnell St.; Savannah, GA 31401
- 4/16 – Jimmy Sharp: 2225 Teate Rd.; Vienna, GA 31092
- 4/18 – Frances Howell: PO Box 658; Midway, GA 31320
- 4/22 – Howard White: 9577 English Ivy Court; Fortson, GA 31808
- 4/24 – Willie Lucas: 607 Holloway Ave.; Albany, GA 31701
- 4/28 – Bert Alexander: PO Box 964; Pine Mountain, GA 31822
- 4/28 – Carol Smith: 1931 4<sup>th</sup> Street Lane NW; Hickory, NC 28601
- 4/29 – Sam Watkins: 1937 E. DeRenne Ave., Savannah, GA 31406
- 4/30 – Don Kea: 5300 Zebulon Rd., Garden Home 20; Macon, GA 31210



**Obituary: Edith Arlene Dowdy Obituary**

Arlene Dowdy, widow of Rev. William "Bennie" Dowdy, passed away peacefully Monday, April 1, 2024 at her home at the age of 87. Born in Crisp County, she was the daughter of the late Cecil Sanders, Sr. and Ruby Williams Sanders. She was also preceded in death by her loving husband, Rev. Bennie Dowdy and her precious granddaughter, Alicia Lynn Stewart. Arlene is survived by two daughters and their husbands, Lynn and Jerry Hayslip and Carla and Jeff Baker; four grandchildren, Shea (Michael) Wells, Bo Baker, Billy Joe (Chelsea) Baker and Heather (William) Moore, and five great-grandchildren, Sawyer Lee Wells, Sadee-Lynn Wells, Sophie Baker, Madelyn Moore and Eva Moore; a brother and his wife, Cecil (Margaret) Sanders Jr.; and two sisters, Cecile Bunn and Faye Adkins. Arlene loved the Lord and joyfully served him as a minister's wife in the Methodist Church for over 30 years. As an active member of Midway Methodist Church, she faithfully dedicated her musical talents to the Lord. She loved her family dearly and was a devoted wife, mother, grandmother and a special Mia. Funeral services for Arlene Sanders Dowdy of Cordele will be held at 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 3, 2024 at Midway United Methodist Church. The interment will follow in the church cemetery.



**Obituary: Rev. Claude Haugabook, Jr.**

Rev. Claude Green "Ceegie" Haugabook, Jr., age 96, of 215 Walters Street, Plains, died Thursday, April 4, 2024, at Phoebe-Sumter Medical Center in Americus.

He was born in Montezuma on February 20, 1928 to the late Claude Green Haugabook, Sr. and Elizabeth Forehand Haugabook.

Ceegie graduated with a degree in business from the University of Georgia in 1950 and returned to Montezuma to the work in his father's oil business. Upon the death of his first wife, Joyce Parks, he felt called to the ministry and enrolled in the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, graduating in 1954. After graduation, he joined the South Georgia Methodist Conference and was appointed to serve Salem Methodist Church and other churches in the Americus circuit. He moved into the parsonage in the New Era Community where friends Ellen and John Ansley McNeill introduced him to Allene Timmerman of Plains. On July 20, 1955, they were married and together served churches throughout South Georgia for 34 years. Upon retirement in 1987, they returned to the house of Allene's birth in Plains.

Ceegie was a quail hunting southern boy who grew into a deeply spiritual man. He was famous for whistling hymns instead of singing them, primarily because he could not carry a tune. He contracted polio as a child and was left with a significant limp but never let that stop him from enjoying a good game of golf or tennis. He was an organizer and a man who was never without a project. His technological skills far surpassed his age. He used this gift to leave a legacy of his faith and documented family and community histories. He was instrumental in formatting the book, History of Plains, Georgia, and the Plains Historical Preservation Trust newsletter, which he named the Plains Echoes. He was devoted to the study of religion and published two books of his theological beliefs, Call Me Ishmael and Biblical Methods for Developing Personal Faith. One of his greatest joys as a pastor was establishing a radio talk show in Ocilla called, The Place. This provided a format for youth to discuss the meaning of current hit music. As a videographer he filmed oral histories of the Haugabook and Timmerman families as well as his grandchildren's activities, leaving his family hours and hours of entertainment.

He was active at Plains Methodist Church and in is retirement, filled the pulpit as a substitute pastor for local Methodist churches.

Survivors include his wife, Allene Timmerman Haugabook of Plains; his daughters, Beth NeSmith (Bill) of Americus and Amy Lockwood (Tom) of Decatur; his grandchildren, Thomas Lockwood (Anna), Daniel Lockwood and Dallas NeSmith; his brother-in-law, Edwin Timmerman (Sarah) of Cairo; his sister-in-law, Janice Haugabook of Montezuma; several nieces and nephews.

His only brother, Dick Haugabook, preceded him in death.

Funeral services will be held at 2 PM Monday, April 8 in Plains Methodist Church with interment following in Lebanon Cemetery.



## **Scripture Readings – April 16 edition**

**April 21**

***4th Sunday of Easter, Year B***

- Psalm 23
- Acts 4:5-12
- 1 John 3:16-24
- John 10:11-18

**April 28**

***5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, Year B***

- Psalm 22:25-31
- Acts 8:26-40
- 1 John 4:7-21
- John 15:1-8