

During the business sessions, members:

- were led in prayer moments by Rev. Precious Hawkins, the Rev. Dr. Ted Goshorn, and Rev. Teresa Edwards;
- were challenged by Mr. J. Knapp, conference lay leader: "South Georgia, it is time to put this 'disaffiliation distraction' behind us and focus on the mission and ministry to which we have been called. We have an opportunity to live into a new and reinvigorated vision of the South Georgia Conference. Our Conference is still here, still strong, and still making disciples for Jesus Christ!"
- celebrated Fully Connectional and Evangelistically Fruitful Churches;
- heard two John Wesley prayer moments led by Rev. Dave Hanson;
- heard an exciting update on the Bishop's Priorities with Mrs. Anne Bosarge, Rev. Abra Lattany-Reed, Dr. Ben Martin, and Dr. Ben Gosden. This update included disrupting and dismantling racism, clergy mental health, resourcing the local church for ministry, and church planting & revitalization;
- celebrated with three individuals who received denominational awards: Frances Asbury Award from Higher Education and Ministry: Rev. CJ Harp, Valdosta State University Wesley Foundation; One Matters Award from Discipleship Ministries: Rev. Jerry Hudson, Bemiss UMC; Harry Denman Evangelism Award from the Foundation on Evangelism: Mr. Johnny Updike, Georgia Southwestern University Wesley Foundation;
- approved one resolution lifting up church evangelism and church initiative in the South Georgia Conference;
- heard a report about the future of the South Georgia Conference, a future that is Christ-centered, connectional, collaborative, compassionate, and kind. Bishop Graves has put together a conversation group to help foster the conversation of how we're going to "keep dancing", and how we're going to keep going forward together as the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church;
- recognized and showed appreciation for our district administrative assistants: Jodi Atkinson, Sharon Wolfe, Jane Seaman, Gail Grantham and Cindy Rollins;
- received a special offering totaling more than \$8,000 for church planting and revitalization, \$2,140 for clergy mental health, and \$2,740 for the Fund for Special Relief.
- approved a budget of \$5,472,651 for 2024, which is a reduced budget of 29% compared to last year's budget so that more funds will be used for local church ministries.

2023

South Georgia Annual Conference Session

June 4-6, 2023
Tifton, Georgia



when they
PRAYED

2023 South Georgia Annual Conference Session “When They Prayed”

Worship Leadership

Along with Bishop David Graves, who preached the Opening Worship Service, worship leadership was provided by Bishop Sharma Lewis, resident bishop of the Mississippi Conference of The United Methodist Church, in the Ordination Service, and the Rev. Dr. Derek McAleer, retired South Georgia clergy, in the Memorial Service. Rev. Rebecca Duke-Barton and Rev. Michael Culbreth preached at the morning worship services.

Service of Ordination

During a Service of Ordination June 5, Joseph Carter, Mark Miller, and Matt Stout were ordained as elders in full connection. Reading from Ephesians 4:11, Bishop Lewis reminded those being ordained of all they are being commissioned for: “You are commissioned to the task of loving our neighbors as we love ourselves. You are commissioned to help the downtrodden by improving their lives in their communities. You are commissioned to utilize your spiritual gifts and talents within the body of Christ. You are commissioned to stand up and fight the injustices of poverty, homelessness, and food insecurity. You are commissioned to be an ambassador for Christ and not only to read and study the word but to embody the word of Jesus Christ. You are commissioned to bring sight to the blind and to set the captives free. You are commissioned to go to the highways and to the hedges and prepare folks to come into the house of the Lord so the Lord’s house will be filled. You are commissioned tonight by the Holy Spirit, and will be confirmed by the church through praying, fasting, and laying on of hands to be an instrument to carry the name of Jesus Christ. You are commissioned to go out and make disciples for the transformation of the world.”

Retirement Recognition

Clergy recognized during a retirement recognition service June 5 were: Kevin Baker, Sandi Conley, Hal Grimmatt, John Haney, Brenda Johnson, Derek McAleer, Steve Meguiar, Steve Patton, Ivelisse Quinones, and Gerald Reppert, Jr.

Fifty Years in Ministry

Clergy recognized for serving fifty years in ministry were: Wayne B. Anthony and David C. Seyle.

Service of Remembrance

Nineteen clergy and seventeen clergy spouses who died from April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023, were remembered during a Memorial Service on Tuesday, June 6.

A complete list of the 2023-2024 Clergy Appointments as well as full coverage of Annual Conference can be found at www.sgaumc.org.

When They Prayed

The spirit of the 2023 Annual Conference was one of excitement and hope as South Georgia United Methodists gathered to worship and conduct the business of the annual conference as Bishop David Graves led his second regular annual conference session in South Georgia. Held June 4-6 in the UGA Tifton Campus Conference Center, this year’s theme was “When They Prayed,” based on Acts 4:31.

“If ever there was ever a time for this scripture in my lifetime, it is right now,” said Bishop Graves. “A time where God’s people would come together and pray, where the Holy Spirit would begin to speak the Word of God with boldness, and where the place would shake - all because they had gathered.”

Bishop Graves encouraged those in attendance to be poised, purposeful, and prophetic as they move forward as God’s people and pray bold prayers.

“Friends, God is looking for those who want to be bold and courageous in these days to proclaim the Good News of Christ in ways we’ve never seen before,” said Bishop Graves. “I believe the best days of the Church are in front of us, but we have to do the work. We have to meet God where God is already at work.”

Delegates elected to General and Jurisdictional Conferences

South Georgia United Methodists elected delegates to fill vacancies on the South Georgia delegation. The current delegation was elected during the 2019 Annual Conference to serve during the 2020 General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Because of the pandemic and then scheduling challenges, the 2020 General Conference was postponed and will now meet in April of 2024 in Charlotte, North Carolina. Lay and clergy who were elected in 2019 and who remain part of the South Georgia Conference continue to serve on the General Conference delegation. These persons include: Richard Shinhoster (laity) and Doreen Smalls, Scott Hagan, and Alaina Harrison (clergy). Due to the lapse in time between election and service, conferences were allowed to hold elections to fill vacancies in its delegation. Elected during this year’s Annual Conference session are:

Laity

General Conference: Allison Lindsey,
Patsy Thomas, Karen Forrester
Jurisdictional Conference: John Ray,
Denise Rooks, Dana Goshorn,
Scott Cleaveland
Alternates: Scott Lewis, Mark Allen

Clergy

General Conference: Jimmy Asbell
Jurisdictional Conference:
Ben Martin, Michael Culbreth,
Tony Crosby, Stephen Grantham
Alternates: Ben Gosden,
Precious Hawkins