



The *South Georgia* Conference  
of The United Methodist Church

## **SOUTH GEORGIA ADVOCATE – MAY 2 EDITION**

### **South Georgia historian writes detailed report for General Conference**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

Historian Gary L. Roberts, a South Georgia United Methodist, has devoted more than 50 years to studying the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre, a battle in which United Methodist pastor-turned-commanding officer Colonel John Chivington led a regiment of the U.S. Cavalry in an attack on unsuspecting Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians.

Nearly 200 Indians were killed, many of them women, children, and the elderly. Col. Chivington and his men scalped and committed other atrocities on the dead.

At the 2016 General Conference session, which meets May 10-20 in Portland, Ore., delegates will receive a 173-page report written by Roberts titled “Remembering The Sand Creek Massacre: A Historical Review of Methodist Involvement, Influence, and Response.” It can also be found in Volume 2, Section 3, beginning on page 1233, of the Advance Daily Christian Advocate (ADCA). [Click here to view the ADCA](#). Roberts will present the report at General Conference and discuss the conclusions he found while researching the project.

His report and presentation will help shed light on a dark spot in Methodist and American history.

A Tifton, Ga. native and member of Tifton First United Methodist Church, Roberts began researching the Sand Creek Massacre as an undergraduate in 1964. Knowing his interest in the American West, a professor encouraged Roberts to write his research paper on the battle, which took place in the southeastern part of the Colorado Territory.

“He knew my interest in the West and said that we didn’t need another research paper on Chickamauga or Gettysburg,” Roberts said. “So I’ve been involved in one way or another with Sand Creek ever since.”

A retired history professor at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, Ga., Roberts did his doctoral dissertation on the Sand Creek Massacre at the University of Oklahoma and has continued investigating it through the decades, getting to know Cheyenne and Arapaho leaders in the process.

Chosen to write the report for General Conference by a committee co-chaired by Mountain Sky Episcopal Area Bishop Elaine J.W. Stanovsky and Otto Braided Hair Jr., a Northern Cheyenne descendent of Sand Creek Massacre survivors, Roberts said that being a United Methodist was irrelevant to the work he did in producing the report.

“Members of the (Cheyenne and Arapaho) tribes and a couple of other historians on the committee knew my work and that I have been working on Sand Creek for a very long time, and they are the ones who recommended me for the task,” he said. “They based it on the fact that I have probably studied Sand Creek longer than anybody else.”

Though he has studied the Sand Creek Massacre for more than 50 years, before researching and writing this report Roberts didn’t have a deep historical knowledge of the history and evolution of The United Methodist Church in the United States.

His goal, as he studied and wrote, was always to look at the facts and to find out what happened.

“My intent was to look at this from a purely historical perspective. I am a historian; I am not a theologian.”

Part of his work in writing the report was to delve into Col. Chivington’s character and find out his role and motivations, learn of Governor of the Territory of Colorado John Evans’ responsibility, and to find out the Methodist Church’s role in the Massacre.

Both Col. Chivington and Gov. Evans were prominent Methodists, and the Methodist Church didn’t denounce the Massacre nor Col. Chivington or Gov. Evans’ role in it after it happened.

Roberts’ conclusion is that both Col. Chivington and Gov. Evans were responsible for the Sand Creek Massacre, but that the Church’s responsibility is harder to articulate.

“The Church reflected the attitudes of the people that were around them,” he said. “In other words, they shared the fears and the prejudices of the members of their congregations and the other citizens of Colorado, and so they rationalized what happened.”

Researching and writing about a subject as complex and intense as the Sand Creek Massacre raises as many questions as it answers, and the issues that people of that generation faced are ones people still face today: fear, ambition, and racism.

As a man of faith, Roberts learned a great deal about The United Methodist Church and what he holds dear, and it has reinforced in him the belief that the Church needs to return to the core principles of the faith.

“There’s a difference between a spiritual life and what you might call a religious life. You could be a religious person and not be very spiritual at all. That was one of John Evans’ problems.”

While Roberts stressed that it wasn't his role to tell The United Methodist Church how it should respond or react – he says his opinion is stated pretty clearly in the report, however – he does believe that lessons can be learned from the Sand Creek Massacre.

“We aren't called to reflect society's values or popular opinion,” he said. “It's not hard to figure out what we're supposed to do. If we read Micah, the Lord has already told us what is good, and this is what he requires: to do what is right, to love mercy, to walk humbly with your God.”

Doing what is right is pretty simple, Roberts said.

“Love God and love others. That's where the gospel starts, and everything we do as a Church ought to proceed from those two things. We are called to live lives where we love God and are mindful of others and care about and respect and involve them.”

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## **General Conference Reflections**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

A friend from North Georgia once told Flo Sapp Martin that her middle name should be “Connectional.”

Martin loves The United Methodist Church. She loves its people and the connectionalism she experiences through it.

That love and her desire to serve are what have motivated her to attend and serve at five General Conference sessions, four as a South Georgia Conference delegate: in 1988, 1992, 1996, and 2000.

Serving on the Conferences Committee, the General Conference legislative committee that deals with, among other things, all petitions and resolutions relating to the composition and activities of the General, Jurisdictional, Annual, Provisional, Missionary, and District Conferences, Martin was able to get to know delegates from across the country and around the world and form relationships and friendships that continue today.

“It's that connectional piece that, for me, is so critical and affirms who we are and that, wherever we are, we're just one step away from each other,” said Martin as she recalled running into a fellow 1996 General Conference delegate as their children were graduating from Duke University.

“It was just wonderful to meet people and work in committees and small groups with them and then see them beyond General Conference.”

It's in those small groups and committees, Martin said, where stereotypes are broken and true connections are made.

“We tend to sometimes classify people by where they’re from rather than for who they are, and by being in smaller groups and committees, that’s where you get to know people and find that, even if you’re disagreeing on something, you find other points of agreement ... and agree to disagree and stay at the table,” she said. “I know that the people I served with on committees, we probably wouldn’t have voted the same way on every issue, but we were able to work together on the issues that we knew were for the good of the church.”

In the midst of their intense, rigorous schedules, General Conference delegates still find time for reflection and rest. Martin recalls an especially meaningful moment she and fellow South Georgia delegate Bill Hatcher shared during the 1988 General Conference session.

Both were participating in the Disciple Bible Study in their local churches and had their books with them in St. Louis, so during lunch one day they sat down and did their lesson together.

“That was a fun, special thing, sitting and opening our Disciple study manuals and reading, studying, and praying together,” she said.

Martin said that she would attend every General Conference session if she could.

“I really am passionate about who I am as a Christian and as a United Methodist,” said Martin, whose husband, Rev. Tommy Martin III, is a retired pastor serving Sunshine and Haddock UMCs in the North Central District. “It’s a fit for me and I love the church, I love the people of the church and I love being connected.”

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## **Book of Recommendations & Reports for the 2016 Annual Conference Session now available**

Business items for the 2016 Annual Conference session are contained in the *Book of Recommendations and Reports* (BOR). One of the purposes of the BOR is to encourage delegates to read the recommendations and reports prior to arriving at conference. A good delegate is a prepared delegate.

The 2015 Annual Conference session voted that all 2016 Annual Conference materials, including the *Book of Recommendations and Reports*, be made available online on the conference website and through other electronic means. The BOR is now available for download as a PDF file at no cost in its entirety or in sections. You can also purchase it for \$5 (plus tax and shipping) as a professionally bound book through lulu.com. Additionally, a version has been designed specifically for those wishing to utilize the information in electronic form only.

A complete conference agenda may be found in the BOR (please note that it is subject to change). Please check out “AC 2016” regularly on the conference website as we get closer to annual conference. There are some reports that will appear on the website which are not included in the BOR. These reports

will be important to have with you during the Annual Conference session. Please download onto your digital device, or print out, all the materials that you wish to have with you, because wireless internet capabilities may be limited in the Conference Center.

**Option #1: On-demand printing of the 2016 *Book of Recommendations and Reports* through LULU.com.**

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The *Book of Recommendations and Reports* is also available as a free PDF download. Adobe Acrobat Reader is required to download the file(s). If you don't already have it installed, visit [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com) and follow the instructions.

**Full version of the 2016 *Book of Recommendations and Reports* for printing:**

**[2016 Book of Recommendations and Reports](#)** (138 pages)

**Section versions of the 2016 *Book of Recommendations and Reports* for printing:**

**[Section 1 - Preparing for Annual Conference](#)** (30 pages)

**[Section 2 - Consent Calendar](#)** (Reports) (84 pages)

**[Section 3 - Recommendations](#)** (46 pages)

**Option #3: Digital download / free PDF for Viewing Electronically**

The *Book of Recommendations and Reports* is available as a free PDF download in a format specifically designed for those wishing to only view the document electronically. The page numbers in this file match the printed version of the BOR so that when a page number is referenced it can easily be found.

**[2016 Book of Recommendations and Reports for Electronic Download/Viewing Only](#)**

*\*The Conference is using [www.Lulu.com](http://www.Lulu.com), an online print-on-demand publishing company, to print the 2016 Book of Recommendations and Reports. Orders will be made and processed via their secure website and shipped directly from their facility.*

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## **Musician Buddy Greene to perform free concert honoring Kings during Annual Conference**

**By Kara Witherow, *Editor***

On Thursday evening, June 9, musician Buddy Greene, best known for co-writing the Christmas favorite, “Mary, Did You Know?” and for touring with gospel greats Gloria and Bill Gaither, will perform a live concert at 7 p.m. at the University of Georgia Tifton Campus Conference Center. This free event is open to the surrounding community and all are encouraged and welcome to attend.

The “Evening of Entertainment” will be held during the South Georgia Conference of The United Methodist Church’s Annual Conference session and will honor its episcopal leader, Bishop James King and his wife, Mrs. Rose King, for their eight years of ministry with and to the South Georgia Annual Conference. The 2016 Annual Conference session will be their final before retirement.

“Bishop King loves music, especially instrumental music, so we are excited to honor him in such an appropriate way,” said Dr. Jane Kimbrel, Annual Conference Worship Committee Chair. “The concert will provide an opportunity for the Conference to show support and appreciation to Bishop and Mrs. King for their ministry among us, and to enjoy an evening of entertaining music.”

Born and raised in Macon, Ga., Greene brings a wide variety of southern Americana influences to his music to create a unique hybrid of country, bluegrass, folk, gospel and traditional blues music. In addition to his solid reputation as a singer-songwriter and guitarist, Greene has established himself as one of Nashville's finest harmonica stylists. His live concerts are equal parts hymn sing, jam session, revival, and journey through his own musical history.

In 1991, Greene collaborated with Mark Lowry to write “Mary, Did You Know?,” which quickly became a modern-day Christmas standard, recorded by many of today’s top recording artists, including Pentatonix, Clay Aiken, Kathy Mattea, Kenny Rogers and Wynonna Judd, Natalie Cole, Glen Campbell, and Kathleen Battle, to name a few.

“Buddy has said that he always loves playing in his home state, and is excited to be able to spend some time with the South Georgia Annual Conference,” Dr. Kimbrel said.

A reception for Bishop and Mrs. King will follow the concert.

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## **Kina S. Mallard inaugurated as 20<sup>th</sup> President of Reinhardt University**

Kina S. Mallard, Ph.D. was inaugurated this month as Reinhardt University’s president.

The daylong events on April 15 included a prayer service, the inauguration ceremony, and an evening gala which also recognized Reinhardt's alumnus of the year, Dr. Brian V. Hightower ('83), who was recently named Superintendent of the Cherokee County (Ga.) School District.

The inauguration ceremony, held at Reinhardt's Falany Performing Arts Center, was the official installation of Dr. Mallard who became President of Reinhardt University on May 15, 2015.

"Thank you to the selection committee who, last February, chose me for Reinhardt. It is hard to believe it has been over a year since I started thinking, dreaming and planning for this university," Mallard said. "While I have the honor of standing before you, this inauguration is not really about me. This inauguration is a celebration of Reinhardt University and the many dedicated servant-leaders whose courage, innovation and sheer will has brought us to this day."

Alumnus Mathew Pinson ('05), lay leader of the North Georgia United Methodist Conference, gave the invocation, followed by the welcome and guest recognitions by William G. Hasty Jr. ('67).

"President Kina Mallard arrived on campus a year ago with goals and objectives to take Reinhardt University to new levels. As a result, there already exists a positive ambience at Reinhardt that is being recognized and valued as representation of good things to come," said Hasty, who chairs Reinhardt University's Board of Trustees. "It is only fitting that we take time to acknowledge Dr. Mallard's good works and her aspirations as our president for Reinhardt's future."

Hasty introduced Dr. Mallard as the 20<sup>th</sup> President of Reinhardt, and the Rev. Timothy Emmett, pastor of Waleska United Methodist Church, located on campus, led the Investiture of the President. Dr. J. Thomas Isherwood, who held the university presidency for 13 years prior to Mallard, presented her with the presidential medallion.

Mallard addressed those in attendance about the work she and her team have done over the last year and the plans laid out for the future, including the creation of a Center for Effective and Innovative Teaching and Learning which, according to Mallard, "will bring experts to campus to facilitate robust, innovative, high-impact conversations and professional development of our faculty."

"Reinhardt's future depends solely on how well we do our work in the present," Mallard said. "Who Reinhardt will be in the next 10, 20, and 30 years is being determined by the vision-casting, strategic planning, personnel-hiring, decision-making, fundraising, curriculum-development, and campus and facilities planning we are doing right now."

Mallard came to Reinhardt University from Carson-Newman University where she served as executive vice president and provost. She holds a Doctorate in communication and a Master of Arts in organizational communication from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and a Bachelor of Science in speech and theatre from Middle Tennessee State University. She and her husband, Steve Dietz, have five children and one grandchild.

**About Reinhardt University**

*Founded in 1883, Reinhardt University is a private, comprehensive university grounded in the liberal arts and affiliated with The United Methodist Church. Reinhardt offers 46 graduate and undergraduate programs, ranging from business and education to music and theater.*

*Reinhardt's main residential campus is located in Waleska (Cherokee County), Ga., and offers selected programs in other regional centers including Alpharetta, Cartersville, Canton and Woodstock, as well as online programs. Additional attractions on the Waleska campus include the Falany Performing Arts Center and the Funk Heritage Center.*

*For more information, contact Reinhardt at (770) 720-5600 or see [www.Reinhardt.edu](http://www.Reinhardt.edu).*

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**Learn the ins and outs of Annual Conference during free webinar**

An Annual Conference Informational Webinar, "Experience Annual Conference 2016," is scheduled for Tuesday, May 3 at 7 p.m.

The Annual Conference Session can be daunting for those attending for the very first time. What's the Book of Recommendations and how do I use it? How do I prepare? Will I have to vote on anything? What do I need to report back to my local church?

This webinar, led by Dr. Jay Harris, Conference Secretary, helps navigate the 2016 Annual Conference Session and assists you in making the most of your role as a delegate.

If you have attended Annual Conference before, this year promises new highlights to celebrate ministries within South Georgia along with honoring Bishop King's legacy as he retires this year.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

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**Who's in control?**

**FROM THE BISHOP  
JAMES R. KING, JR.**

Hello, beautiful people of South Georgia!

We are in a season where it is difficult to find people who are not anxious about the future, angry about the status quo, or generally find it difficult to have a deep sense of peace and joy about life.

I believe the reason is because we are a society that is filled with change. It is challenging to have a sense of certainty in the world today. There are changes in the church and threats of more change. There are issues with governments and how well they represent the people. The speed and availability of information keeps one mindful that something new is happening right now or it is in the forecast. So many factors contribute to a world filled with uncertainty.

Change has always been and will always be. Change tells us something new is about to occur, and for some this is great news and for others this is very threatening. Even good news can also be threatening because it disrupts our sense of comfort that predictability provides.

For example, when the Hebrew children were freed and headed toward a land of promise, the unpredictability of their current status in the wilderness nudged some to consider going back to slavery where at least they had clear rules and a certain routine to count on each day. (Exodus 13:17) Yes, control is the issue. Who likes to feel out of control? It is like being in a whirlwind where you are being tossed about without anything to hold onto as you spin in all directions.

I would suggest that there are two healthy responses to anxiety that is fueled by uncertainty about the future.

- The first is to ask yourself, is this something that is in my control? My father was great at distinguishing what was in and outside of his control. He would say to me on many occasions, “you cannot stop me from thinking.” You can be in jail and have peace and joy, for these are internal spiritual gifts. In other words, focus on the things that are within your control and do what you can!
- The other response is your total reliance on God. Do you believe that ultimately God is in control? That at the end of the day things will go as God declares through the Bible? God wins! Put your faith to work and allow your communion with God to fill you with trust and peace that the world can neither give nor take away.

In a world where there is so much uncertainty, you can be in control of you and believe that God will take care of you because His certain and predictable love never ends.

In other words, you can control what you think, what you do with the space and time available, and what you believe. Peace.

*I'm tweeting messages to encourage you!* Read them at [www.twitter.com/BishopJamesKing](http://www.twitter.com/BishopJamesKing).

In addition to sharing thoughts and photos on Twitter and my blog I'm now sharing devotional thoughts called [My Devotional Takeaway](#).

Read our Advocate ([www.sgaumc.org/advocate](http://www.sgaumc.org/advocate)), follow me as I tweet at [www.twitter.com/BishopJamesKing](http://www.twitter.com/BishopJamesKing), or visit my blog at [www.bishopking.org](http://www.bishopking.org).

Until next time, remember – God's will for us is good. We must do the rest.

*Growing a Christlike world.*

With love,

Your Bishop,  
James R. King, Jr.

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## **General Conference: A Time to Listen?**

### **GROWING IN GRACE**

**BEN GOSDEN**

*“The entire assembly fell quiet as they listened to Barnabas and Paul describe all the signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles through their activity.” (Acts 15:12)*

It seems like the lead up to our General Conference every four years mirrors that of each presidential election cycle – it gets loud, divisive, angry, and ugly. I think much of that is due to the fact that there’s a direct correlation between the two events. Both events seem to ask us to “take sides.” Both events lend themselves to a spirit of competition because they require votes where someone “wins” and someone “loses.” Both events try to call us to our best angles, longing for high, moral, and even holy things.

And yet this pursuit for something seemingly good tends to be expressed through our worst demons like anger, bitterness, and division. Every four years, whether it’s General Conference or a presidential election, it seems we’re led to believe that we’re on the brink of death and destruction.

Sometimes I wonder what God thinks of it all. Is this really the way God would have us pursue the higher good for our country or, in the case of General Conference, holiness of heart and life through our denomination?

All the noise seems to be vying for our attention: “Support this stance...Stand up for this issue...Don’t compromise!” It’s exhausting sometimes. At some point we have to make a point to unplug the computer and television, sit, and try to listen to God in the deepest places of our soul. And this doesn’t come easy in a world that values talking over silence and arguing over contemplation.

In Acts 15, we find the apostles holding a general conference of their own. Word has gotten out that Paul and Barnabas have been a part of some incredible, Holy Spirit stirrings among Gentile believers. The believers who come from the Jewish tradition take issue because they find out that these new Gentile believers are not following the tradition of being circumcised first. Jerusalem serves for the early church in Acts 15 what our modern-day Portland will serve for United Methodists – a venue where law, polity, and faithfulness in ministry is debated.

Now this may also be the point where readers are expecting me to follow the predictable trail of “just as the early church bent their laws for mercy and inclusion, so must we United Methodists do the same”...only, not so much. I’m not a delegate to General Conference. And the longer I live out my ordination through service in ministry, the more I admire those who are called and elected to serve. What a tough job!

The most striking part of Acts 15 for me is twofold: 1) Peter’s acknowledgement that it is God, and God alone, who knows people’s deepest thoughts and desires (Acts 15:8) and 2) the church’s response to hearing this – they “fell quiet and listened” as Paul and Barnabas told them about the “signs and wonders” God was doing among these people who fell outside of the typical church crowd.

It’s God who is our ultimate authority in how we relate to and love others. And we should, from time to time, fall silent and listen for the voice of God because God is usually always working in the most unexpected places and in the most surprising ways.

Among my prayers for General Conference 2016 is that we learn to listen more and talk less. And maybe even more, I pray we learn to have eyes to see and ears to hear the mighty work of God taking place in surprising places among unexpected people. More than winning arguments, I pray we search for where the kingdom is breaking in and breaking down walls of division we’ve established (walls BOTH SIDES work way too hard to keep up). And most of all, I pray for wisdom – wisdom for our delegates, wisdom for me as an elder leading a local church to be more faithful, and wisdom for our denomination that we learn to let go of our stances and let God lead us to new life.

*The Rev. Ben Gosden is the senior pastor at Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Savannah. He can be reached at [bgosden1982@gmail.com](mailto:bgosden1982@gmail.com).*

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## **John Wesley preaches at his home church**

### **JOHN WESLEY MOMENTS**

#### **DAVE HANSON**

John Wesley had his “Heart Warming Experience” on May 24, 1738, on Aldersgate Street in London at a German prayer meeting. It transformed his understanding of salvation. Soon he was preaching all across England and Scotland in churches, parks, and wherever a crowd could gather.

He returned to Epworth, his home town, and attended St. Andrew Church, his home church. His father, Samuel served this church for 39 years. John was baptized in St. Andrew Church. He offered to preach there, but the rector who had replaced John’s father said, “No!” So John worshipped in the pew. The pastor preached against “Enthusiasm.” The sermon was directed at John Wesley.

At the conclusion of worship, a friend announced that Rev. John Wesley would be preaching in the afternoon in the church cemetery. That afternoon a large crowd gathered. John climbed atop his father's grave which was an elevated tomb. He proclaimed the good news of God's love and forgiveness in Jesus Christ.

John preached there for two weeks to large and increasing crowds. He said that he did more good in those two weeks at Epworth than he had done in the two years he had served with his father earlier. He said the reason was that when he was there earlier, before his Aldersgate Experience, he did not think the people had any need to repent.

How many of us today have forgotten how to call people to repentance and faith?

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## **Grateful Faith**

**Spring Quarter: The Gift of Faith**

**Unit 3: The Fullness of Faith**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of May 8, 2016**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

**Lesson Scripture: Luke 17: 11-19**

The key focus of this lesson is how people respond to Jesus. While the disciples are still struggling to understand Jesus, a rather unexpected person becomes the model for how to respond to the coming of the Kingdom in the person of Jesus

In reality, the story before us today is rather simple. Jesus is traveling through Samaria when a group of lepers call out to him for help.

Samaria lies between Galilee (the region in which Nazareth is located) and Judea (where Jerusalem is). So going through Samaria is the logical path for Jesus to go to Jerusalem.

However, this miracle before us contains a couple of levels of cultural tension. The main character is both a leper and a Samaritan. Lepers were culturally isolated, required to stay out of the main area of cities and were excluded from normal life. On the other hand, Samaritans were disliked by Jews for their religious defection and for being racial half-breeds. The notion of a Samaritan leper receiving God's help was undoubtedly shocking to many, since they had written off people in either category as being beyond help.

These 10 lepers desperately desire to be healed. The fact that they draw near to Jesus says much, since lepers were expected to isolate themselves from people. But what they know about Jesus tells them that he is approachable.

Notice these lepers address Jesus as a person with power, calling him “Master.” In Luke, the title often suggest that Jesus has miraculous power (5:5, 8:24, 45; 9:33). By using this title, these lepers identify themselves as his subordinates; he is one who has power over them.

The request of these 10 lepers is also of interest, they ask for mercy or compassion. However their request is really for healing. Therefore, this healing is more than an exercise of power; it is an act of compassion.

But rather than healing these lepers immediately, Jesus tells them “to go show themselves to the priests.” At this point, there is no pronouncement of healing, no contact with them and no prayer for them. They are simply told to go show themselves to the priests.

Scholars tell us that lepers were re-admitted to full community life only after they had received a clean bill of health from a priest.

Now, Jewish lepers would not need to go to Jerusalem to do this. Priests only served part of the year in the Temple. The rest of the time they would be in their hometowns. Often, they would be teachers of faith or perhaps employees of a local synagogue. In these places they would also perform duties for which a person needed a priest (such as inspecting lepers). Thus, Jesus is not requiring a lengthy trip, simply sending them to receive confirmation of their healing.

So, these 10 lepers start their trip to the priests before they are healed. Consequently, they are healed only as they are on their way. All 10 lepers had enough faith to begin the trip to the priests without having received this healing. A real plus here is that all 10 lepers acted on the faith they had.

The story continues! As they had acted on Jesus’ word, suddenly they find themselves cleansed. This event definitely points to God’s marvelous grace. You see, these healings allow these men to return to a normal life. All 10 lepers should have been on their knees thanking God.

The fact is, however, that only one of them stops, returns, and gives thanks to God. And he proclaims his thanks in a loud voice – he yells his thanks to God. So full of praise for God, he falls at Jesus’ feet and gives Jesus thanks.

Scholars point out that we should not miss the parallel between the man thanking God and now thanking Jesus. The posture Luke describes is that of worship. He bows to the ground before Jesus, thanking him for this wonderful gift.

Then Luke surprises his hearers! He states that this one grateful leper is a Samaritan. As noted earlier, Samaritans and Jews did not get along. For one thing, Samaritans were descendants of the people who had been left behind when the nation of Israel fell in the eighth century B.C. These people then intermarried with the other native peoples of Palestine and with the Assyrians, who were brought in when the people of Israel were exiled. The Jewish people wanted nothing to do with these Samaritans who they considered to be half-breeds and vice versa.

Jesus then notes that 10 men were healed, but only one, “this foreigner,” a word often meaning “pagan” or “heathen” has taken the time to stop and praise God for his work. “Where are the other nine?” Jesus asks.

So the hero of our story is an outcast. By pointing out that he is “a foreigner,” Jesus is actually shaming those who had not stopped to thank God. If they are people of God, they should be the ones who honor God, but it is this outsider who gives thanks and becomes the model for how to respond to God’s blessings.

Essentially, Jesus does two things here. He commends the example of gratitude in the Samaritan and he also shows that response to him is possible from those outside the nation. Sometimes those people outside the nation are actually the most sensitive to the gospel.

Jesus then issues a final encouraging commendation. He tells the grateful leper that his “faith has made him well.”

Scholars explain that throughout the story, various words are used to refer to the healing. But here at the end, Luke uses a Greek word that means “saved.” Then we are informed that New Testament writers often use “saved” to speak of a healing, yet this is the first time Luke uses it in this story. Consequently, the suggestion here is that the man has received more than those who did not return to give thanks. Faith and salvation come together.

### **Receiving God’s Blessings**

It is important to realize that all 10 of the lepers recognize the power of Jesus. Luke wants us to see them as people who believe that the power of God works through Jesus. Though we are not sure how they know about Jesus, they believe he has the power to heal. These lepers see him as the one with the authority to send away the thing that afflicts them with pain and isolation. So they ask Jesus for mercy, and Jesus’ quick response stresses that they trust him. And this trust is honored in that they are all healed.

Here’s a point to remember! This healing comes through their recognition of who Jesus is. He is the One who wields the power of God. He is the One who grants mercy, even to strangers. And He is the One who can overcome all the things that diminish our lives.

### **Only One was Grateful**

Only one of those who is healed thanks God and returns to thank Jesus. His actions single him out as the one who knows best who Jesus is. He returns to bow before Jesus. This posture of worship suggests more than that Jesus exercises the power of God. The intimation is clearly that Jesus is an appropriate object of worship.

By contrast, when John tries to bow like this before an angel in the Book of Revelation, he is told not to do it because such adoration is only due God (Revelation 22:8, 9). And something similar happens to Cornelius in Acts when he bows before Peter. Peter advises Cornelius to quickly stand up because he is only human (Acts 10:25, 26).

But before Jesus, bowing is the appropriate thing to do. The healed man glorifies God and gives thanks to Jesus as he bows before him. As Luke clarifies, this man who is healed recognizes the presence of God in Jesus.

I repeat, this one grateful leper becomes the example of how people should respond to Jesus and the gifts they receive through him. Just as soon as he knows he is healed, this one grateful leper gives thanks to God. He knows that he owes his healing and regaining of his life to Jesus, so he makes it his priority to offer God thanks.

One more time, this grateful leper serves as an example for how we are to respond to the blessings we receive from God. Knowing that these blessings come through Christ, this leper honors Christ and glorifies God. And he knows that to glorify God means more than just an offering of our private thanks. To glorify God is to sing God's praises in public and thereby increases His reputation of goodness among all others.

### **Your Faith Has Saved You**

This story ends with a declaration about the grateful man's faith. We note that all 10 lepers are healed as they recognize the power of Jesus. But only this one grateful leper is said to have faith. He has the faith in Jesus that Luke wants all of us to have. His thanksgiving expresses his faith in God.

So what does that mean for us? Luke wants us to follow the grateful leper's example as we express our own faith through thanksgiving. Doing that demonstrates that we recognize our dependence on God for all good things. And by thanking God we give voice to our profound trust in the goodness of God.

As the story concludes, Jesus makes it clear that this man's faith has "saved him." His acknowledgement of dependence on God brings wholeness and healing that far surpasses any physical malady.

### **Summary**

Not long ago, I ran across a statement that truly made me think. The author is unknown.

"The greatest blessing lacking in life is the willingness to see our blessings."

Now, that may have been true of nine of these lepers, but it wasn't true of the one grateful leper. You see, he recognized his blessing and the Source of his blessing. Therefore, he becomes our example of how we are to respond to God's goodness – both in gratitude and worship.

### **Action Plan:**

1. Ask class members to share gratitude for blessings, including healing they have received.
2. How is the Samaritan a good role model for us?
3. Discuss the relationship you see in this story between gratitude and faith.

*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](#).*

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## **Humble Faith**

**Spring Quarter: The Gift of Faith**

**Unit 3: The Fullness of Faith**

**Sunday school lesson for the week of May 15, 2016**

**By Dr. Hal Brady**

**Lesson Scripture: Luke 18-9-14**

She exclaimed rather excitedly, “God hears and answers every prayer. He gives a yes, a no, or a maybe.”

But according to our scripture lesson, there is a time when God turns a deaf ear. There are some prayers that God will neither hear nor respond to.

In his familiar parable of “the Pharisee and the Tax Collector,” Jesus calls attention to a specific time when God turns a deaf ear. It is in this story that Jesus points out the absolute necessity of “the quality of humility” as the prelude to prayer. Jesus’ purpose here is to alarm and guide “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt” (Luke 18:9).

The parable before us identifies two characteristics of the intended audience. Initially, there are those who think they are right with God through their own efforts. There are religious people who live moral lives and take God’s commandments seriously. By every indication they are what good people should be.

But sadly, their attitude condemns them! They believe that these things give them the status of being right with God. Consequently, they think they deserve to be those who God favors and those who are in a right relationship with God.

Charles Spurgeon, that eminent preacher of another generation, once said that he thought a certain man in his congregation the holiest man he had ever known – till the man told him so himself!

Notice here and this is very important! Jesus does not characterize all his audience this way, only some. Much like the modern-day church, it includes only some.

The second characteristic of this intended audience is that they tend to look down on others who are perceived to be not as good as they are. If we believe we made ourselves righteous, we become judgmental about those who are not as faithful or religious as we are. So this parable confronts both attitudes.

Now, we are told that two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. At first glance, both men seem to have much in common. Both of them went to worship. That’s good. Both

prayed, and that's good. But it is at this point that their similarity ended. Their prayers were so vastly, vastly different.

### **The Pharisee**

When God turns a deaf ear – we begin with the Pharisee. Said Jesus, “The Pharisee stood and prayed about himself...” (Luke 18:11 CEB). Officially, the prayer was a thanksgiving to God but in reality, it was an essay on self-righteousness. This Pharisee was not really grateful to God, but he was very, very pleased with himself.

Listen to his testimony. I'm quoting from Eugene Peterson's translation, “The Message.” This proud Pharisee “prayed” this prayer: “Oh, God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, crooks, adulterers, or heaven forbid, like this tax man. I fast twice a week and tithe on all my income” (Luke 18:11, 12).

In reality, with his strong moral life, fasting, and tithing, this Pharisee is not all bad. As a matter of fact, his personal, social and religious behavior are all exemplary.

The problem with the Pharisee is that he has a self-congratulatory attitude about these things. He believes that his performance of these things gives him something to boast about to God. It never crosses his mind that he is able to live in this way because God has enabled him to do so. He seems to think that he deserves to have God listen to him and accept him. His life has been good enough that he thinks he has little need for God's grace.

It is at this point that we in the church have to be on our guard. That attitude of the Pharisee is dangerously contagious.

Many of us grew up in religious families and have usually maintained our association with the church. Since we haven't committed a crime, tried to live decently, and been involved with charity work or giving, we tend to think of ourselves as good people. And when we see ourselves that way, we often see little need to come to God and ask for forgiveness. Basically, we are good people so any fault or mistake on our part should be easily overlooked.

To point out how far we have gone with this attitude, many churches today seldom have a confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness in their worship services. Others have difficulty thinking about the death of Jesus as something that deals with sin. Somebody to intervene and die for our sins is just not the way good people think. For these folks, to acknowledge dependence is to demonstrate weakness. Thus, we hate to admit that we need help – or that we do not deserve to have God be in a relationship with us. Now, of course, we don't brag about these things, but they do point out that the attitude of this Pharisee is alive and well among us.

No wonder God turns a deaf ear to this Pharisee's prayer. Added to these other things, he compares himself with the tax collector. Do we see it? He compares himself to the wrong standard. Jesus told us that we have only one standard to compare ourselves. Jesus said, “Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is

perfect” (Matthew 5:48). This means that we should love as graciously and tolerantly as God. God is our standard and our only standard. This is another lesson this Pharisee had somehow missed.

Before moving on, note further that his prayer never got out of that room. It stayed right there with him in the temple. You see, it really wasn't a prayer. It was pride! We only grow fully by God's grace, and no other way.

### **The Tax Collector**

For a little while, let's look at the prayer God did hear – the tax collector's prayer. Jesus said, “I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other...” (Luke 18:14).

“But the tax collector standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13). That's the picture Jesus painted of the tax collector.

Almost needless to say, this tax collector's prayer is very different. There is no question of merit in his case. He's a sinner, and he knows it. He has glimpsed his own sinfulness against the burning holiness of God, and all he can say is, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

So this tax collector sees himself as a sinner, and he's right. He is a sinner. Tax collectors were notorious for collecting the required taxes and then stealing more for themselves. They were permitted by Rome to keep anything they could squeeze out of people. Thus, tax collectors were considered traitors by their fellow Jews. They demonstrated just how low people could go to make a profit.

Now, in commending this tax collector, Jesus is not putting his approval on the man's life style. Far from it! But Jesus is putting his approval on the basis of true prayer, humility – this man's need of God.

For even though he is a sinner, this tax collector knows the proper attitude to have before God. He knows that he does not deserve God's grace and love. His life has simply been a demonstration of his unworthiness. But his posture tells a different story. His posture is an indication of his humility, his recognition of his dependence on God for forgiveness and acceptance. His prayer is that God will have mercy on him.

### **Justified**

Jesus states in verse 14 that this tax collector is justified. It is the people who recognize their dependences on God and confess their sins who are justified.

According to scholars, the term “justified” is used often in the New Testament as the word that means “salvation.” It is a term often found in legal settings for being found not guilty, but its nuance in the first century was somewhat different from what that means today. Scholars inform us that the not guilty verdict then signaled that the parties were now to resume the relationship that had been interrupted by the offense. Consequently, in the New Testament it means that the offense that separates a person and God has been wiped out and that God and the sinner are again in right relationship.

The point Jesus makes is that the person who recognizes his/her dependence on God and confesses his/her sin is the one who receives not only forgiveness but also a renewed relationship with God.

### **Final Judgment**

Jesus concludes by saying, "...for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 18:14)

The truth is, in this world, the haughty seem to get their way while the humble are often trampled. In the light of this proverb, what is the explanation? The explanation is that Jesus is not referring to this world, but to our standing at the final judgment, or should I say, our kneeling at the final judgment.

In his warning, Jesus is saying that those who are humble before God, those who recognize their need for and dependence upon God's grace will be received by God in the end. They are the ones God will lift up. And those who think they deserve a place in God's presence will be unpleasantly surprised when God evaluates their lives. Their pride will have resulted in disaster for them.

For sure, we are all sinners and have gone our own way. Thus, at the final judgment, as in life now, we will all depend on God for mercy and grace through Jesus Christ. Simply stated, there is never and will be then no room for self-righteousness in any of us. As Jesus put it, "All who humble themselves will be exalted." (Luke 18:14)

### **Lessons from the Tax Collector**

First, recognize the distance! We must be aware that there is a great distance between us and God. "God," the tax collector prayed, "Be merciful to me a sinner!"

Are we aware that there is a great separation between us and God because of our sins? Duh.

Second, change your attitude! The Pharisee's attitude comes through loud and clear. "Thank God," he says, "I am not a sinner like everybody else" (18:11). We will never close the distance with that attitude.

The writer of First John says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Third, remember God is approachable!

In John 6:37, Jesus states, "He/she who comes to me I will not cast out." Grace is available to all. God is approachable. We confess our sin, receive Jesus into our hearts and the distance is closed.

A tax collector "justified?" Pronounced right by God? Forgiven? He was a traitor to his country. He was apostate to his church, his friends, his self-respect. A tax collector "justified?" Yes! It is the emphatic words of Jesus Himself. Not that his lifestyle is commended but that he needs God. He has humility and God hears his prayer. And it will be no less true for us.

### **Action Plan:**

1. How would you characterize the people for whom Jesus told this parable?
2. What attitude characterizes those who are put right with God?
3. Why was the Pharisee's prayer not heard?

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## **Events in the South Georgia Conference – 5/2/2016 edition**

### **Magnolia Manor Sunday – May 8**

Magnolia Manor is a ministry of The United Methodist Church and serves older adults of all faiths throughout South Georgia. On this Special Sunday, South Georgia United Methodists are asked to take up a special offering to support this vital ministry. To learn more about Magnolia Manor visit [www.magnoliamanor.com](http://www.magnoliamanor.com).

### **General Conference – May 10-20**

The 2016 General Conference will be held May 10-20, 2016, in Portland, Oregon. For more information, visit [www.umc.org/gc2016](http://www.umc.org/gc2016).

### **Local Pastors' Licensing School – May 20-29**

The 2016 session of the Local Pastors' Licensing School will be held May 20-29 on the Campus of Emory University. Local Pastors' Licensing School is a "crash course" in being a pastor for those who want to be available for appointment to a church or charge as a licensed local pastor. Those who are licensed for pastoral ministry make a commitment to continue their education beyond Licensing School either through the 20 classes of the Basic Course of Study or through a Masters of Divinity degree from a United Methodist approved seminary. For more information, visit [www.sgaumc.org/localpastorslicensingchool](http://www.sgaumc.org/localpastorslicensingchool).

### **Peace with Justice Sunday – May 22**

Peace with Justice Sunday enables The United Methodist Church to have a voice in advocating for peace and justice through a broad spectrum of global programs. [Click here for resources to help promote this special Sunday.](#)

### **Albany First UMC Celebrates 175 Years: "Celebrate" Service with Rev. Mike McAfee - May 22**

This year marks the 175th year of Albany First United Methodist Church in downtown Albany. To commemorate the anniversary, the church has planned four Unified Services, featuring guest speakers and followed by a covered dish meal. The first service on March 6 focused on "Remembering" the history of the church with Dr. Don Kea. Each of the remaining three Unified Services has a unique theme. The services start at 10:30 a.m. in the church's sanctuary. May 22: "Celebrate" with Rev. Mike McAfee (including a Hosanna Choir reunion for former members with Danny Key), Aug. 14: "Engage"

with Rev. Cindy Autry, and Dec. 4: “Anticipate” with Dr. John Horton. Contact Beth O'Brien for more information at [bethrobrien@gmail.com](mailto:bethrobrien@gmail.com). 307 Flint Ave., Albany, Ga.

**New Start for Moving Pastors Meeting – May 25**

The New Start for Moving Pastors meeting will be Wednesday, May 25 from 10:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall at Riverside UMC (735 Pierce Ave., Macon, Ga. 31204). Lunch will be provided. If you are a pastor moving this year, please let your district office know if you will be able to attend.

**2016 Annual Conference Session – June 8-11**

The 2016 Annual Conference Session is set for June 8-11 in Tifton, Ga. Visit [www.sgaumc.org/annualconference](http://www.sgaumc.org/annualconference) for details.

**South Georgia Annual Conference Retiree Luncheon – June 9**

Retired clergy of the South Georgia Annual Conference are invited to a Retiree Luncheon during the 2016 Annual Conference session in Tifton. The luncheon is sponsored by Young Harris College and the South Georgia Eagles. It will begin at noon on Thursday, June 9 and will be held in the University of Georgia Tifton Campus Conference Center’s Banquet Room D. Cathy Cox, President of Young Harris College, will be the guest speaker, and retiring clergy at 2016 session will be recognized. The menu will consist of: smothered chicken, twice-baked potatoes, squash casserole, steamed broccoli, rolls, drinks (sweet and unsweet tea, water and coffee), and dessert (peach cobbler OR chocolate layer cake). Register by sending a check, payable to “South Georgia Eagles,” for \$15, to Rev. Grover Bell, 333 E 53<sup>rd</sup> Street, Savannah, GA 31405, by May 26.

**Wesley Glen Day – June 19**

Every local church in South Georgia is encouraged to receive a special offering to support the ministry of Wesley Glen. To learn more about Wesley Glen and its great ministry, visit [www.wesleyglenministries.com](http://www.wesleyglenministries.com).

**Join in the WONDER this summer at the 2016 Camp Connect Summer Camps!** Camp Connect Summer Camps run weekly June 13 through July 22 for middle school and elementary school students. Elementary Camps are intended for rising fourth through sixth graders while Mid High Camps are intended for rising sixth- through ninth-grade students. All camps are filled with a week’s worth of fun activities and opportunities to grow closer to Christ through daily worship, Bible study, and fellowship. Campers will enjoy the beach, pool, art, games, boat rides, marsh hikes, hilarious morning shows and evenings of worship. All camps are held at Epworth By The Sea on St. Simons Island. Visit [www.sgaumc.org/campconnect](http://www.sgaumc.org/campconnect) for camp dates, registration, and more information.

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**Christ UMC makes prayer beads for General Conference**

Christ United Methodist Church in Warner Robins was asked to make prayer beads for the 2016 General Conference session, which will be held May 10 through May 20 in Portland, Ore. Members of the

congregation made more than 60 strands of beads that will be given to the General Conference delegates.

“This is an incredible opportunity to share this new (ancient) prayer tool on a large scale and in a way that, hopefully, invites them to experience God’s presence in new ways,” said Elisa Reece Director of Christian Education and Children Ministries at Christ UMC.

One of the ways the church worked on spiritual formation was through a focus on prayer. That focus led them to a small group study called “A Bead and a Prayer” by Kristen E. Vincent. A study on Protestant prayer beads introduced as a tool to assist in prayer, the class soon realized that their lives are busy and somewhat noisy. The prayer beads helped them to focus, concentrate, and meditate on God’s Word in a deeper way.

“Christ UMC’s mission is to grow ALL in knowing, loving, and serving Jesus Christ,” Reece said. “This was a beautiful experience that will be a constant remembrance of connecting with God during our daily lives.”

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### **Wesleyan College announces availability of full-tuition scholarship**

Wesleyan College is pleased to announce the availability of a full tuition scholarship for the 2016-2017 academic year.

The Mary Knox McNeill Scholarship is one of Wesleyan College’s most prestigious scholarship programs provided annually to first-year applicants for admission who demonstrate outstanding academic achievement along with a commitment to faith and community service. This scholarship is in memory of Mary Knox McNeill who served her church and community with a strong faith and commitment to others. Mary lived her life with a joyful enthusiasm dedicated to her family, friends and her faith. She continues to inspire us to live by her example of dedication, enthusiasm and devotion which will continue through this scholarship and the young United Methodist women who receive it.

For more information about the scholarship and the eligibility requirements, please contact Danielle Lodge, Executive Director of Undergraduate Enrollment, at [dlodge@wesleyancollege.edu](mailto:dlodge@wesleyancollege.edu) or (478) 757-5161.

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## **Scripture Readings – May 2**

### **May 8**

#### ***Ascension Sunday / Seventh Sunday of Easter***

##### *Ascension Sunday*

Acts 1:1-11

Psalm 47 (UMH 781)

Ephesians 1:15-23

Luke 24:44-53

##### *Seventh Sunday of Easter*

Acts 16:16-34

Psalm 97 (UMH 816)

Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21

John 17:20-26

### **May 15**

#### ***Day of Pentecost***

Acts 2:1-21

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b (UMH 826)

Romans 8:14-17

John 14:8-17 (25-27)

### **May 22**

#### ***Trinity Sunday / First Sunday after Pentecost***

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31

Psalm 8 (UMH 743)

Romans 5:1-5

John 16:12-15