

A Message from Buddy Cooper

I will be retiring at the close of the 2019 Annual Conference in Columbus, Georgia.

I have shared with Bishop Bryan and with Gail that this is my final run toward annual Conference. I have sent my letter in to Jay Harris to request my final change of status with the South Georgia Annual Conference: Retired Elder

I am especially thankful that God sent Sheila Davis to be my helpmate. Sheila has walked besides me in every stage of my ministry. We were married in 1975, while I was serving the Crawford County Circuit. Even before our marriage she was my pianist. In East Macon Eddie joined us and in Albany Charlotte was added to us. The four of us served Warner Robins, Waycross, Fitzgerald, and Columbus. My ability was enhanced by Sheila's dedication to our family. She made sure the children knew their father. Too many nights she would keep them up to see me when I got home.

Today, as I write this letter to you, Sheila and Ellison are walking Abbey, Eddie is resting from a morning of being the best uncle any children could have, Emma is getting some special time with Jason and Charlotte while Ellison is with us, and I am in my study reflecting upon the blessings my family is in my life and thanking God for each kindness shown to us through the years by friends and loved ones across South Georgia.

Reflecting back over the forty-five years under appointment I am amazed at the providence of God. Looking back, I do not see examples of great execution. Rather, I see time and time again the ability of our Lord Jesus to take what we offer and use it to accomplish in unbelievable ways His eternal Will in our lives. Truly, being still and knowing has been more important in my life than all my planning and machinations that contain more of the dust of dailyness than the freshness of His Spirit.

When I arrived at the District Office, I found my Guiding Star, Mrs. Gail Grantham. Gail was hired by Dr. Alvis Waite and has worked and prayed, side by side, through over forty years with the Superintendents. Her faithful attention to the details of the District work freed me and those before me to be among our people and ministers. I could not have had a more supportive and faithful assistant in this ministry. Gail will remain and help train, I believe, her Eighth superintendent! She or he will find what all in our generation have found: A fountain of wisdom and knowledge about this Columbus/Northwest District and its ministers and people. Thank you, Gail, you have made the journey a joy. The best way to travel anywhere is still the same: in good company. Mrs. Gail Grantham is good company for the journey of superintending.

The team of lay leaders in the Northwest District will be blessed by this change of leadership. I know I have not met as often as I would have liked with you, but your faithfulness has helped keep the course and continue our great ministries in our District. To Mr. Chris Tyra, my chairperson for our Trustees, I am grateful for your counsel and prayers through the years. To Mr. Robert Anderson, our District Lay Leader, who faithfully attended every Cluster Conference he could during my tenure. Thank you, Robert, for your guidance and prayers. I look forward to seeing each of you at our District Conference in April. To the ministers I have served with in the Great Northwest, thank you! The miles and days covered serving you were part of my joy in seeing you grow in grace and effectiveness.

March 6, 2019, the cabinet will meet in Tifton to begin prayerfully putting together the South Georgia Conference's ministerial service for 2019-2020. I know you are praying for us, but I want you to know this. We have never made a minister's or a church's appointment with anything that looks like anger, casualness, impatience, or without sincere godly prayer for all concerned. I have been appointed every year by our Bishop and Cabinet, as have each of you, and I have been in the Cabinet and will soon be outside of the Cabinet again. Everyone of you is loved and cared for by all of us. I have through the years heard the "war stories" and "wild tales", but I know they are mostly lies and enriched hero stories. Why would you consider yourself, called and appointed, to be less than anyone? These stories have ways of cutting our souls and setting us up to receive our appointments as either a blessing or a cursing by some group of humanity. The truth is we serve at God's pleasure and no one should ever be allowed to so harm our soul by making us hate them. The Lord Jesus who called us to this life of service will never allow anyone to diminish our life or call by causing His Will to not be done in every life He calls. Continue going with God.

I have rambled, hoping to get out my deepest feelings of love for you and the privilege of Leading is some small way in the journey that is your continuing ministry until we are all gathered into our Father's House.

"Let me at 'em!" has given way over time to "Protect 'em from my zeal." No one is right all the time, but God alone. But when one is right, then having done all to stand, stand in the power of His Holy Spirit, proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ. General Conference 2019 is one of the truth-telling times that will require humility to keep us from arrogantly saying it was our idea. The crisis we are facing is because several sides cannot agree on what the truth is. Fear not! God will reveal in His time His Truth and His Will for us all. To pray for His will to be done is not an attempt to persuade Him to act. It is a prayer that seeks to prepare us for His will being finally done in our lives. "Even so, Lord Jesus, Come."

I have loved you as an elder brother and will not let you go without my blessing and continuing prayers for you and your loved ones. I know my family is also held in your heart by His love.

Forever blessed together whether in His Service or finally in His House.

Your brother,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Buddy", written in a cursive style.

Buddy Cooper