From your District Superintendent . . .

When I was a young boy, long car trips with my family would inevitably lead to that famous question asked by kids everywhere: “Are we there yet??” The companion question that always followed the obvious “no” answer was, “How much longer??” And the answer to that question, given with great resolve by dear old Dad, was, “It’s another long way!”

After almost four months of social distancing and “sheltering in place,” this is the part of our journey when we may feel like asking, “Are we THERE YET??” But due to the recent rise in Covid19 cases, it looks like we are in it for another long way. I want to commend the churches and pastors of the Northwest District for your faith, your patience, your flexibility and your resilience during these challenging times. I thank you for your willingness to learn and grow, to try new things and to be adaptive. You have truly shown your love for Jesus Christ and your love for one another!

Jeremiah 29:11 is one of the familiar and oft-quoted verses of the Old Testament: For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Quoted in isolation, the vital context is often lost. Jeremiah was writing to the Jews who were exiles in Babylon. They had been taken from their homes, their land and their families. They felt cut off and isolated, and they wanted to know how long this would last. One would-be prophet had announced that all the Jews would return to Jerusalem within two years. But God’s prophet Jeremiah said, “No, not two years . . . but seventy years.” Two years sounds a lot better than seventy. Seventy is definitely another long way! But precisely at the point where discouragement could come creeping in, Jeremiah issues a wonderful promise, saying that these plans are plans for good, not evil, to give the people a future and a hope.

Many of our health officials have been saying all along that this pandemic was going to be more of a marathon than a sprint. And if that is the case, what will we do? Based on the promises of God’s word, we will do what we have been doing: we will continue to be the church, we will continue to abide in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit and we will stay engaged with one another and our neighbors. We don’t have to be anxious or afraid, for the Lord has promised to be with us. And we can be confident that His plans are truly good, and designed to give us a future and a hope. And central to that plan is for us to be His witnesses; to shine His light in the darkness, to tell the good news and to show His love. And our world needs that truth, that light, and that love like never before.

Steve
South Georgia Annual Conference to Meet Virtually in August

6/30/2020
Bishop Lawson Bryan, in collaboration with the officers of the Annual Conference and the Cabinet, has announced that the 2020 South Georgia Annual Conference session will be held virtually.

The clergy session is set for Sunday, August 2, 2020, from 3:00 pm - 5:00 pm, and the one-day annual conference session is set for Saturday, August 15, 2020, from 8:30 am - 4:00 pm.

In addition to the business sessions, two special online services are being planned. A Retiree Recognition Service will be held Tuesday, August 11 at 7:00 pm to honor and recognize retiring clergy. A Memorial Service to remember clergy and clergy spouses who have passed away this past year is set for August 13 at 7:00 pm.

Those approved for provisional membership or full connection at the clergy session will be commissioned or ordained in a local church setting. Plans will be announced for these services.

The move to a virtual session was informed by a strong response to a survey sent out in May as well as a paper ballot vote in June to amend the Conference’s standing rules to provide for a virtual conference session under certain conditions, which was approved 650 to 43.

“The overwhelming response to the survey and the ballot confirmed our need to plan a virtual session of Annual Conference rather than risking the uncertainties involved in an in-person gathering of hundreds of people,” Bishop Bryan said. “A lot of thought and care is going into what a virtual Annual Conference looks like.”

Bishop Bryan has been in communication with conference leadership as well as various stakeholders - those being commissioned and ordained, retirees, Board of Ministry, Board of Laity, and Memoirs Committee - to make sure all are being heard and cared for.

We are making every effort to continue and strengthen our shared ministry while protecting the health and well-being of all based on information that is rapidly changing,” he said.

The August 2 clergy session and the August 15 business session will utilize an online meeting and voting platform that will allow members to securely participate using an internet-connected device. Several training dates have been set prior to the sessions for individuals to practice voting and become comfortable with the technology (see FAQs below for dates). A non-voting live stream option will be available on the conference website for any guests who wish to view the sessions. The Retiree Recognition and Memorial Services will also be streamed on the conference website.

A condensed agenda is being developed and will be published in July, along with the Book of Recommendations and Reports. The agenda will include only items that are essential at this time so that the session can be conducted in one day.

Instructions for members, details of the session, an outline of the credentialing and voting process, and more information will be forthcoming in the weeks ahead. Find updates as they are available at www.sgaumc.org/annualconference.

“Thank you for your support and flexibility as we navigate planning for the 2020 Annual Conference session,” Bishop Bryan said. “Although this year’s session will be different than any we’ve ever experienced, I look forward to being Alive Together with each of you in new and exciting ways.”

The 2020 South Georgia Annual Conference was originally scheduled for June and postponed until August 14-15, before the decision to hold a virtual gathering.
Linda Laye Welcomed Into UMC As a Deaconess  6/14/2020

Micah 6:8 resonates deeply with Linda Laye.

“Do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

It’s a fitting verse for Laye, who was welcomed as a deaconess into The United Methodist Church in a virtual ceremony Monday, May 11.

“When you are consecrated as a deaconess you commit to a lifetime of service,” said Laye, who serves as chaplain of the Fellowship at Rose Hill in Columbus.

Laye was to have been consecrated as a deaconess during the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis, Minn., but the ceremony was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic. On May 11 Laye and 31 other deaconesses and home missioners were welcomed into the order during a virtual service of dedication. The Fellowship at Rose Hill is an extension ministry of the Northwest District and Laye coordinates the weekly meals and programming in partnership with several local United Methodist churches, said Rev. Steve Patton, superintendent of the Northwest District.

“Linda leads a committed and enthusiastic team of volunteers who provide love and support for the Bibb City and midtown Columbus community,” he said. “We are blessed to have Linda in the Northwest District and we celebrate her consecration as a deaconess!” Laye is grateful to have the opportunity to live out her calling to serve. “I’m very grateful to the United Methodist Women, to my mother who was very supportive, and to the leaders at Pierce Chapel. My Pierce Chapel family has been so supportive,” she said. “I’m grateful to the UMW globally that have funded this and that make this program available to people like me who want a connection, that feel this calling.

“All are called; few answer. I was lucky enough to get placed where I can serve.”

Sexual Ethics Workshop

Due to the suspension of in-person gatherings due to COVID-19, the Sexual Ethics Workshop scheduled for April 21 was not held. To accommodate this change, Bishop Lawson and the cabinet, in consultation with our Conference Pastor Counselor, have extend the deadline by one year for all clergy mandated to attend future workshops. If you were due for a workshop during 2020-21 conference year and did not attend the workshop last September, you will now have an additional year to complete this requirement. The next Sexual Ethics Workshop is scheduled for Thursday, September 17, 2020, Pittman Park.

Those needing to take the workshop before the 2021 Annual Conference are: Jeremy Alexander, Gayle Alston, John Beck, R.T. Beverly, Patricia Burns, Stephanie Caldwell, Earnestine Campbell, Allen Carmichael, Paul Coats, Sandra Conley, Kurt Dukes, Kim Evans, Andrew Ginn, J Grantham, Shane Green, John Homer, ShaNee' Jeffers, Mark Kinsevick, Dennis Lanning, Brian Litch, Thomas Mason, Jr., Doug Mays, Jimmy McIlrath, Rick Mitchell, Jr., Jason Owens, Gary Page, Noel Pérez, Micheal Powell, Ivelisse Quinones, Mark Sasser, Betty Lee Scott, Dennis Stalvey, Johnny Updike, Steve Vinson, Stephen Waite, Reginald Williams, and Joy Wilson.
Early Response Team (ERT) Training

Early Response Team (ERT) Training: Equips individuals and teams to respond in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. The cost for the training is $25 per participant. At the training, participants will receive an ERT Training Manual and upon completing the course will receive an UMCOR ID Badge and a conference ERT T-shirt, and lunch is included. You must be 18 years or older to get the UMCOR badge. An UMCOR background check is required before receiving badges—participants must register at www.tinyurl.com/umcorvv at no cost to participants. Contact your Lead Instructor if you need the Verified Volunteer Good Deed Code.

There must be at least ten (10) participants to schedule an ERT class. Participants can come from other churches within the community/district/conference. The Conference will help promote online and publish a Registration Page. Host church must provide a classroom-style venue, access to projector and screen (instructor will bring own laptop or thumb drive), and two rectangular table for demonstration purposes. Host church will provide simple working lunch (sandwiches, pizza, tea, lemonade—reimbursable at $7.00/person). Pre-registration is required.

Chainsaw Operator Safety Training: Training requirements; participants must complete and pass ERT training offered or hold a current ERT badge. Cost for chainsaw training only is $12; if taken following an ERT class is $6. The cost includes a separate textbook and Chainsaw ID badge. This chainsaw training includes lectures and hands-on demonstrations. There must be a minimum of six (6) participants for a chainsaw course. Host church must facilitate 1-2 trees (within reasonable distance form training venue) to be fell during hands-on training portion. Bring your own chainsaw and personal protective equipment.

Conference T-Shirts: Additional Conference ERT T-shirts: $15 To schedule and host an ERT training/chainsaw training, please contact: Luis Morales at:

**ERT Basic Certification & Chainsaw Training, Fitzgerald**

Friday, July 17, 2020 to Saturday, July 18, 2020
July 17-18 at Central UMC in Fitzgerald
Register now
The ERT Basic Certification course is Friday, July 17 (6 pm - 9 pm) - Saturday, July 18 (8 am - 11:30 am) with the Chainsaw training beginning immediately following from 12:00 noon - 5:00 pm.
Location:
Central United Methodist Church
201 W. Central Ave | Fitzgerald, GA 31750
For questions, contact Kelly Crane, Coastal District Disaster Response Coordinator, at kelcrane@gmail.com or 731-499-0491.

**ERT Basic Certification & Chainsaw Training, Cairo**

Saturday, July 25, 2020
July 25 at Cairo First UMC
The ERT Basic Certification course is Saturday, July 25 beginning at 8:00 am with the Chainsaw training beginning immediately following from 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm.
Cost: $25 for ERT class, badge, registration, t-shirt and lunch. Chainsaw training is an additional $6.00 (must be an ERT badge holder).
Location: Cairo First United Methodist Church - 318 S. Broad St., Cairo, GA
For questions or to register, call Susan Hughes at 229-423-9381 or 229-425-3068.

Dooly Camp Meeting
September 20 - 23, 2020

Certified Lay Ministry Training

The Certified Lay Minister program us designed to offer a good foundation to anyone who wants to be a stronger leader in their church. The cost for the class is $300 per person, which includes lunch, snacks, and curriculum materials for the entire course. Registration: [www.saumc.org/certifiedminiatrytraining](http://www.saumc.org/certifiedminiatrytraining)

*Fall 2020: 6 Courses Sessions*
_The Pointe, Leesburg - Registration upcoming_
_July 18, August 4, August 15, August 29, September 12, and September 26_
Camp Connect update: no camps this summer.

Last week, Suzanne Akins, Camp Connect director, announced that all 2020 Camp Connect summer camps have been canceled. Camp Connect is the camping ministry of the South Georgia Annual Conference. “With heavy hearts, we have made the decision to not have camps this summer,” Akins said. “Through consultation and collaboration with conference leadership, Bishop Bryan, camp industry experts, and health officials, we are confident that closing camps for the 2020 summer is the wisest decision for us.

“The safety and well-being of your children and our staff have and always will be our main priority,” she said. A full refund will be given to all who have already registered. Each registered family will be contacted within the next couple of weeks.

In a video, Akins shares future plans: “We know that we will be back together again in 2021, and it’s going to be better than we can ever imagine.”

For more information and to watch a video from the camp director, visit www.campconnectumc.org/covid-19-update.

Dooly Kid Camp update: no camp this summer.

Student Loan Payment Suspensions Available

A three-month suspension of student loan payments is being offered by the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry in response to the economic impact of the coronavirus. The pandemic may cause financial hardship for many paying off student loans. Read more

New Wesleyan Partnership Offers College Credit to Pastors in Training

A new partnership between Wesleyan College in Macon and the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) will offer college credit for women who are enrolled in GBHEM’s pastoral training program, the Course of Study. The Course of Study is designed for those who wish to serve as local pastors in The United Methodist Church and possibly pursue ordination as elders without taking the traditional seminary route.

Women who are enrolled in one of Wesleyan College’s online degree programs (Business Administration, Accounting, or Applied Psychology) and who are enrolled in the Course of Study program may earn 36 credits toward their Wesleyan degree (120 credits total) upon successful completion of the entire Course of Study. All Wesleyan College courses required for graduation will be taught in an online format.

“To be able to get a college degree online through Wesleyan College and get 36 hours credit toward that degree from the Course of Study is a good deal for licensed clergywomen in our conference,” said Dr. Jay Harris, Assistant to the Bishop for Ministerial Services for the South Georgia Conference. Read more

Georgia United Methodist Foundation Newsletter

sign-up www.gumf.org/stay-connected For more information: GUMF
770-449-6726
877-220-5663
info@gumf.org
South Georgia Conference Offices have Moved
The Episcopal, Administrative Services, Ministerial Services and OCM offices have moved. This will enable them to work more closely together. E-mails and telephones remain the same.
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