

Faith & Money

EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO CHANGE LIVES!

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Future Pastor Will Use Life's Challenges to Share God's Love

Met Theneshia Bowen! She is a second-year, second-career student pursuing a Master of Divinity degree and ordination in The United Methodist Church. This self-proclaimed overachiever is a proud mother of four, newly published children's book author, and student pastor at Hampton UMC. Bowen holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology from the Stony Brook State University of New York and a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education from Georgia State University.

Thanks to the generosity of individual donors, she received two separate scholarships from the Georgia United Methodist Foundation. Bowen also received matching support from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The North Georgia Conference, Candler School of Theology, McKendree UMC, and the United Methodist Higher Education Foundation.

Born and raised in Jamaica, Bowen immigrated to the United States when she was 13 years old. During her lifetime, she has struggled with racism, health challenges, and divorce.

McKendree UMC in Lawrenceville played a pivotal role in helping her develop a personal relationship with God. "My kids loved McKendree and would beg me to go back. Once they had my kids, they had my heart," Bowen said. "After I started Disciple I class, I realized I had been ignoring God's call to ministry for years. McKendree shifted my view on Christians and Christianity."

Bowen left a career she loved as an educator of autistic children to attend Candler. The journey from educator to pastor has not been an easy one.

"I consider myself a quadruple minority. I am an immigrant, black, a woman, and mother of young children," Bowen stated. "When I come home from Candler, I



Theneshia Bowen is grateful for all of the scholarships she has received, which support her call to ministry.

need to put dinner on the table and help with homework. Although I struggle with balancing being a mom and not feeling guilty, I want to remind other moms that if God calls you to a purpose, He will always support you. The only way for me to be happy and fulfilled is to listen to what God tells me to do.

I would not be in seminary without these scholarships, which cover fees, books, transportation, food, and everything else needed to survive! Even during this pandemic, these scholarships have given me peace of mind. It's very reassuring and humbling to know that there are others out there—people I don't even know—who are supporting my call to ministry. Although life has not been easy, the challenges I have faced have made me stronger. I am hoping these experiences will help me relate to more people and show them God's love. I have so many dreams for ministry! I am praying God will guide my steps to the places where I can be of most service."

Need Help Leaving a Legacy?



**By Rev. Keith E. Lawder,
GUMF President/CEO**

Are you thinking about leaving a legacy gift to your church or a favorite ministry? The Georgia United Methodist Foundation wants to help you find ways to accomplish your legacy giving and estate planning goals. Everyone's financial situation is a bit different. At GUMF, we are happy to discuss your plans and make suggestions on how you might make a gift. Sometimes you know exactly what you want to do. But sometimes, your situation might require advice from a legal or financial professional. Part of our mission is to promote generous giving from United Methodists.

Bill Vogel and Tracy Crump, GUMF trustees, have begun to put together a list of experienced attorneys and financial advisors familiar with generous giving to churches and ministries. When your wishes involve more complex financial or tax issues and estate plans, we would be happy to share with you contact information from someone on our list.

Please contact Dr. Rick Lanford, Regional Vice President (South Georgia), at 478-256-7130 or rlanford@gumf.org, or Nancy Young, Vice President of Development (North Georgia), at 678-708-6601 or nyoung@gumf.org, so we can help you with your legacy giving plans.

GUMF Solutions for Churches and Agencies

Investments

We help churches and agencies manage and grow invested funds through socially responsible and sustainable investing.

Investment Funds	Quarter	1 Year	3-Year Average	5-Year Average
U.S. Equity Fund*	19.65%	27.16%	16.09%	15.91%
International Equity Fund*	19.08%	21.17%	9.57%	12.73%
Multiple Asset Fund	13.58%	19.43%	10.83%	11.73%
Fixed Income Fund**	2.88%	8.25%	5.72%	5.89%

Returns as of 12/31/20 net of fund fees. Past performance is not an indication of future results.

*On 10/10/17, GUMF's Equity Fund was split into the U.S. Equity Fund and the International Equity Fund.

**On 11/1/17, GUMF's Fixed Income Fund Manager changed from Merrill Lynch/BlackRock to Wespath.

Certificate Program

We offer 4-, 3-, 2- and 1-year fixed-rate certificate investments, which in turn provide funds for loans to churches and agencies.

Certificate Terms and Rates: 4-Year: 1.20% 3-Year: 1.10% 2-Year: 1.00% 1-Year: 0.90%

Rates as of February 2021. Rates are subject to change without notice. For current rates, contact GUMF.

Loans

We offer loans to churches and agencies wishing to refinance debt, build, expand, or renovate facilities to sustain ministry.

Construction Loan Terms and Rates Less Than 1 Year: 4.90% Fixed
Permanent Loan Terms and Rates Up to 20 Years: 4.25%*

*Fixed rate for five years. Interest rate is adjusted at the end of each fifth year of the permanent loan. Rates as of February 2021. Rates are subject to change without notice. For current rates, contact GUMF.

Endowments and Legacy Ministry Training

We teach church leaders how to establish and cultivate permanent sources of income to support and sustain church ministry programs.

Wills Clinics

We help churches by assisting their members by sharing information on critical documents such as wills, health care, and estate planning.

GUMF Solutions for Individuals

Planned Giving Strategies

We offer free individual and group meetings for churches and members to discuss effective strategies for creating a legacy for ministry that also may benefit your family.

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Scholarships

We partner with donors and the UMHEF to offer scholarships to Georgia United Methodist students who attend Methodist colleges, universities, and seminaries.

Clergy Financial Literacy Academy

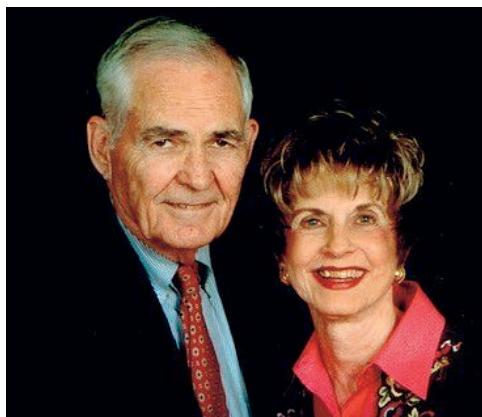
We provide pastors training for both personal and church financial literacy.

Family Scholarship Helps Students in Need

When Kyle S. “Stanley” Drake Jr. was searching for a meaningful way to give back, his cousin, Morris Henderson, told him about the scholarship endowment he had established with the Georgia United Methodist Foundation. In 2019, he followed suit and established The Stanley and Mary Ann Drake Scholarship Endowment.

Drake’s parents grew up in the years preceding the Great Depression. His father’s formal education ended in the eighth grade, and his mother graduated from high school. They were self-taught and together became successful in a business enterprise.

Drake’s late wife of 62 years, Mary Ann, helped put him through college and supported him during a Tour of Duty in the U.S. Army. He later



The faith that Kyle S. “Stanley” Drake Jr. and his late wife, Mary Ann, shared impacted his decision to establish a scholarship endowment with GUMF.

became the recipient of his parents’ shared success and could not help but appreciate the value of a formal education they were unable to enjoy.

“As a consequence of Mary Ann’s mothering skills, we were able to raise three sons and make a college education available for each of them.

When I see children who have been denied the opportunity of formal education through no fault of their own, it moves me to seek some way to be of assistance to them because I know, for a certainty, that is what Mary Ann would want me to do,” Drake said. “She had an overwhelming desire to help other people and responded to that desire whenever she recognized there was a need for assistance.”

Future United Methodist pastor Theneshia Bowen (see cover story) is the first scholarship recipient of this named endowment, which will generate a \$1,000 scholarship each year in perpetuity.

“I have no doubt that Mary Ann would be thrilled to know that our financial resources are contributing to the education and assistance of a qualified scholarship recipient,” Drake said. “I am very pleased and blessed to become affiliated with a Christian organization like GUMF.”

Wills Clinic Helps Liberty UMC Members With Their Estate Plan



The Georgia United Methodist Foundation offers Wills Clinics to help get your estate plan in order. In this Q&A, Macon-based Liberty UMC Senior Pastor Rev. Tony G. Crosby (pictured above) shares how this free educational program was a real benefit to Liberty UMC and its members.

Why did Liberty UMC host a Wills Clinic? Dr. Rick Lanford (GUMF Regional Vice President) invited us to host this event with one of our members, James Russell Lipford Jr., a CPA. (See tax tips column on page 4). Our goals were to provide an opportunity for people to learn about estate planning so that their wishes are honored and to present the workshop in-person and online through Zoom to maximize participation.

What challenges do people face when it comes to estate planning? The key challenges are procrastination and facing the idea of our mortality. In our young adulthood, we tend to believe we will live forever. As we age, we resist acknowledging that one day we will no longer be here and that we will need to make directives that our family can follow when we are gone.

With the pandemic, why is it more important now than ever to have an estate plan? God never promises us tomorrow. We all know someone who has died of the coronavirus, and we can only hope they had their affairs in order. We should try to do the same.

What were your key takeaways? I didn’t realize how intentional the planning needs to be to circumvent the variety of family circumstances that can create obstacles to having your wishes carried out. I also learned that the Church needs to be more intentional about teaching these things—even beyond this workshop—that we should know about it when people plan to give to the Church in their will.

What feedback did you receive?

Everyone enjoyed the class, and I believe people will be taking action due to their attendance. I know I will. Member Charles Cheek shared, “For many years, I have needed to update my will and create a living will and power of attorney. Several life changes and COVID made this more urgent, but I never put estate planning on my to-do list. This seminar produced action items for me, which resulted in my meeting with an estate planning attorney. The forms provided helped me to organize the needed information. Soon I will have completed this critical life administration task.”

Why should members consider leaving a legacy gift to the Church? I hope members will consider the Church that they loved and gave to in their lifetime as a worthy recipient of the treasures they leave behind when they leave this world. Just as their witness of faithful living can leave a legacy to follow, a legacy gift can provide the resources to equip those who come behind them.

RESET YOUR Financial Aptitude and Attitude With the Clergy Financial Literacy Academy



We are calling all pastors! Is your financial aptitude all you want it to be? Being a pastor today requires both attitude and aptitude. It is a tough calling. The financial skills needed to thrive in this environment are more challenging than ever. But don't get discouraged. Quality help is available from the Georgia United Methodist Foundation!

The winter cohort of the Clergy Financial Literacy Academy has begun. Over 20 pastors are engaged in a convenient, practical study of both personal and church finance. They are learning how to evaluate and restructure their personal finances to align with biblical principles. They are developing their personal financial plan. Students then move on to learn how to read and use their church financial statements. And they are learning a new tool to help evaluate church projects and strategies.

The program consists of online tutorials, electronic workbooks, and Zoom discussion sessions followed by exercises to demonstrate how to use what they have

learned. Upon successful completion of the \$50 course, students receive 2.5 CEUs. Several pastors who completed the program in the fall reported that it was the most helpful course they have taken since seminary. GUMF is in discussions with both The North and South Georgia Conferences about the possibility of including this course in the training programs for pastors preparing for ministry.

Program leaders include Author, retired AT&T Executive, and Consultant Charles Buffington Jr., and Rev. Keith Lawder, pastor, a retired banker, and President of GUMF.

Are you ready to invest time and effort into resetting your financial attitude and aptitude? We are here to help! To learn more, please visit www.gumf.org/training/clergy-financial-literacy-academy-training or contact Dr. Rick Lanford, GUMF Regional Vice President (South Georgia), at 478-256-7130 or rlanford@gumf.org, or Nancy Young, GUMF Vice President of Development (North Georgia), at 678-708-6601 or nyoung@gumf.org.

2021 Retirement Tax Planning Tips

James Russell Lipford Jr., a special contributor, and partner of CLH CPAs, LLC, a certified public accountancy firm in Warner Robins, wants to help you get your new year off to a great start with the following tax retirement tips.



How much longer will we benefit from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017? Now that Joe Biden is the 46th president of the United States, many Americans wonder if he will fulfill his campaign promise of increased taxes.

Regardless of the outcome, economists and financial professionals agree that our current tax structure cannot sustain current spending levels. The U.S. budget deficit for the fiscal year 2020 was \$3.1 trillion. The National Debt was \$26.9 trillion as of September 30, 2020. Are retirement accounts and retirement deductions an easy target for Congress, which has the power to tax and spend? The window for optimal tax planning with retirement accounts may be closing. I want to offer a few points to ponder.

Could 2021 be a good year to convert a traditional IRA to a ROTH? If asset values are depressed or your 2021 taxable income can be lowered or will be lower, you may want to entertain a conversion. I have noticed in the current tax environment that many clients have not enjoyed a reduced tax rate in retirement, and the Biden tax plan promises further tax increases. Conversion today could lock in today's lower tax rates, allow the account to grow income tax-free, and avoid oft hated taxable Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) during your and your spouse's lifetimes.

Taxable RMDs can be especially painful due to increased taxes on widows or widowers whose filing status changes from married filing joint to single. In contrast, their taxable income remains substantially the same. Taxable RMDs can also be painful to non-spousal beneficiaries of inherited traditional IRAs who can no longer benefit from the "stretch IRA" rules after your death but must now withdraw the assets over a shorter period of 10 years. The SECURE Act eliminated the "stretch IRA."

Many taxpayers no longer benefit from charitable contributions as an itemized deduction due to the higher standard deduction. If you are charitably minded, I suggest using your traditional IRA to fund highly tax-efficient philanthropic gifts like a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD), which are available for IRA owners over 70 ½. Some taxpayers may even be able to make a deductible traditional IRA contribution for 2020 by April 15, 2021, and then use the funds to accomplish a 2021 QCD.

Please include your CPA and financial advisor in any decisions regarding ROTH conversions, QCDs, and other planning techniques because of the various factors and complex tax rules involved. They have the experience and tools to help you make the best decisions.

Loans Empower New Covenant UMC and Elizabeth Lee UMC to Change Lives

Jim Pope, Director of Lending, and Lori Tucker, Loan Administrator, find their work very rewarding at the Georgia United Methodist Foundation. They help pastors, board chairs, and financial committee leaders at churches and agencies achieve their property and facility financing goals. Read on to discover how the money these two churches have saved impacts their congregations and the communities they serve.

New Covenant UMC in Douglasville Refinances Loan - By Rev. Tim Constien, Senior Pastor



At New Covenant UMC, we consider each other family, and the overall emphasis is to love one another. NCUMC is a very giving church, willing to help

those in need when they can.

Our ramp ministry helps those with a disabling condition who need help getting into and out of their house. The ramps are provided without cost to the homeowners and give them the freedom to experience life. We work with the homeless. We support Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, and Boy Scouts. And during October, our pumpkin patch, done in cooperation with the local schools, provides funds for Thanksgiving meals to help families in need.

Years ago, the Church took out a loan with a bank, which had a balloon maturity. Higher interest rates and the costs of refinancing every five years delayed the Church's ability to get the loan paid off.

I had experience working with the Foundation from my previous church. Since they are part of



Karen Shepard-Hamilton spent two nights in her carport after breaking her leg. Mike Eastman and the New Covenant UMC team stepped up and built their 95th ramp.

the Methodist connection, they understood what we wanted to do and supported that initiative. The refinancing was a wise use of the resources God has given us. The Church received a lower interest rate and monthly payment, enabling us to have additional funds to go towards the principal and ministries. It also eliminated the \$1,000 refinance fee every five years.



Elizabeth Lee UMC in Chickamauga Purchases Property - By Rev. Zach Fitzpatrick, Senior Pastor

Elizabeth Lee UMC is a growing church that is known for serving its community. Over the last few years, the Church has started a modern worship service (The Well), opened a food pantry, and started elementary and middle school mentoring programs, to name a few. These initiatives have positively impacted the Church and the community's spiritual health.

Elizabeth Lee UMC had outgrown its existing facilities. We had planned to renovate our education building.

Once COVID-19 hit, we realized the necessity of having additional space and chose to acquire the adjacent property, which had a building, with a loan from GUMF.

The Church at which I previously served, Lawrenceville First UMC, refinanced their loan at GUMF and had a wonderful experience. We chose to work with GUMF for three reasons: First, we believe in their mission of empowering people and churches to change lives. Second, their customer service is excellent. Finally, their loan rates and terms are very competitive. Not only were we able to partner with a ministry whose mission matched ours, but it also made financial sense.



Elizabeth Lee UMC purchased a new parcel of land and building to allow for future growth.

The new property is a three-fold blessing. First, we use outdoor space for worship services, church gatherings, and more. Secondly, the home on the property allows us to expand Sunday school and youth ministries into the future. We are already dreaming about how God might be asking us to use the indoor and outdoor space to expand and start new ministries and missions that serve the community. Finally, the property will give us the needed space to one day expand our fellowship hall.

We are pleased with GUMF and appreciate all you do to serve churches like ELUMC!

Donor-Advised Fund Allows the Martins to be More Generous, Systematic, and Intentional in Their Giving



Rev. Tommy and Flo Martin believe it is better to give than to receive.

Even in retirement, Rev. Tommy and Flo Martin of Macon are still dedicating their lives to helping others. Rev. Martin's pastoral ministry with The South Georgia Conference began in 1980. Now a retired elder, he currently serves Sunshine UMC in Round Oak and Haddock UMC in Haddock.

Mrs. Martin served as a Christian educational consultant for Cokesbury and the United Methodist Publishing House for 33 years before retiring in 2018. She currently serves as the director of education and children's ministries at Centenary UMC.

The Martins hold the two primary laws of Jesus close to their hearts: Love God and love others. "For us, those exemplify the call and full context of Scripture," Rev. Martin said.

It comes as no surprise that their two sons also chose professions that serve others. Their oldest, Rev. Dr. Thomas Martin, is senior pastor at Fayetteville First UMC. He and his wife, Leslie Neal, are the proud parents of three children. Their youngest son, Matt, and his wife, Courtney, are both teachers who foster children through HOPE Foster Care, a ministry of The Methodist Home for Children & Youth in Macon.

The Martins were blessed to have parents who modeled a life of generosity. They have continued that tradition with their children and grandchildren. One of their favorite Bible passages on giving comes from Galatians 5:22-23: By contrast, the Fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things.

In 2020, the Martins established a donor-advised fund (DAF) with the Georgia United Methodist Foundation. The Martins' financial advisors worked closely with GUMF while initiating the stock transfers to fund the DAF. All the Martins had to do was complete a single form.

A DAF is an irrevocable gift of at least \$10,000 in either



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cash or appreciated securities administered by a charitable sponsor. GUMF manages and invests the funds for tax-free growth over time. By front-loading several years of donations into a single tax year, donors may realize the tax benefits from itemized deductions while maintaining the freedom to make charitable gifts over time. Account advisors can then recommend grants from these funds to a church, faith-based ministry, and other qualified charitable organizations.

"The donor-advised fund allows us to be more generous, systematic, and intentional in our giving," Rev. Martin said. "We are stewards of what God has given us. The deepest values by which people live, at their best, should be directed toward the betterment of others and the common good. It is better to give than to receive.

"For the transformation of the world" is our Methodist calling. In Luke 4:16-19, Jesus began His ministry, claiming a particular kind of transformation—to reach out to the lost, the marginalized, the poor, the "least of these." Jesus pointed to issues of peace, justice, and inclusion throughout His ministry. We are to be instruments in the unfolding work of God's Kingdom here on earth."

When asked about the legacy, they hope to leave behind, the Martins shared this quote from Kalu Ndukwe Kalu, a political scientist, "The things you do for yourself are gone when you are gone, but the things you do for others remain as your legacy."

Rev. Martin adds, "For us, it's like planting seeds of which you will not see the fruit. We hope that even in our imperfections, others will learn good lessons from the lives we have lived."