

Familiar face to serve as new pastor of First UMC

June 25, 2011



By GWEN SISSON

sdnlife@bellsouth.net

Dr. William Giles Lindley will share his first sermon as the new pastor of Starkville First United Methodist Church on June 26, but this will not be his first time to serve in the Golden Triangle area.

In 2010, Lindley served as the Superintendent of the Starkville District for the United Methodist Church, in conjunction with his five-year term serving as Superintendent of the East Jackson District.

“Being a District Superintendent is an interesting and important job, but it is not as much fun as being the pastor of a local church,” Lindley said. “I was honored that the Bishop asked me to be a DS and enjoyed most of the job, even during the year that I was covering two districts and had to deal with 200 churches. But I have missed being a pastor and preacher. I don’t think I’ll have much trouble switching gears.”

The staff at First United Methodist Church of Starkville are excited about working with Lindley and increasing opportunities for ministry.

“Giles is a very good communicator with skills in administration as well as preaching and he really cares about people,” said Bob Whiteside of First UMC Starkville.

“We have a very positive attitude about what Giles has to offer our church,” said Starkville First UMC members, Tom and Francis Woodard.

Lindley said he expects First United Methodist Church of Starkville to be the church God needs in this community.

“Starkville First is a great church with a tremendous heritage in ministry,” Lindley said. “I attended Starkville First every Sunday when I was in Starkville as a student. It was my church away from home. I want to make sure that we claim that important place in the life of this generation of students.”

Lindley said if we seek to follow Jesus Christ, God will show us daily what needs to be done in Mississippi and in the

Starkville/ Golden Triangle area and how we can help.

“One challenge for all of us in the church is to take eternal truths and to translate them into the language, music, and media of a new generation.” Lindley said. “Being in a college town, we have a special responsibility in that area.”

Lindley said he enjoys every day in ministry.

“I am really proud of the young people who have grown up in my churches and who have gone on to do significant things for their churches and community,” Lindley said. “Some of them have become pastors. Some of them have become transformational leaders in helping their hometowns move beyond the past with genuine reconciliation and hope for the future. Some of them have just become really interesting people. I am proud of them and proud to have been a part of their lives.”

He said he has been part of many good things — growing churches, building and paying for buildings, getting churches more involved in missions — but all of those things were accomplished with the help of God and a lot of people.

“That doesn’t take away from my role and responsibility as a leader, but I am constantly reminded that I do nothing on my own,” Lindley said. “Whether in career or life, I think my biggest accomplishment is that I come to this point so excited about what God calling us to do in Starkville. I am proud of many things I have done, but I always look to the future and still expect that the best is yet to come.”

Lindley was called to preach in high school, and promises to share that story from the pulpit in a week or so. He has been an ordained United Methodist minister since 1981, serving Philadelphia First, Laurel Kingston, Biloxi Heritage, Ellisville First, and New Albany First United Methodist Churches.

“I grew up singing ‘Jesus Loves Me,’” Lindley said. “I can’t ever remember not knowing Jesus. But I did have a series of events in my mid-teens where I came to accept and understand the gospel of Christ in deeper and deeper ways. And, in good Methodist tradition, I continue to discover new things and grow in faith day by day.”

Lindley grew up in Jackson, but his grandparents lived on Greensboro Street in Starkville. He was active in the youth group of Christ United Methodist Church in Jackson and is a graduate of Callaway High School. He is a 1970 graduate of Mississippi State University, a 1982 master of divinity graduate of Duke University and a 1993, and 2003 graduate of the doctoral program at the University of Southern Mississippi.

He is married to the former Lisa Mitchell of Brandon, and last month the couple celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary.

Lisa attended Mississippi State and has degrees from the University of Southern Mississippi and William Carey University. She is a Special Education teacher, most recently teaching autistic children in the Madison County Schools.

Their daughters, Charla Howard and Chelsea Ragland, are fourth generation MSU graduates. Both girls graduated in biological engineering and both are in the Bagley College of Engineering Hall of Fame. Both girls also worked as volunteers with the Starkville FUMC youth program while at MSU.

Charla lives in Jackson and is married to Joel Howard. Charla did graduate work at Arizona State University and is currently a research engineer in prosthetics at Methodist Rehabilitation Center. Joel is a medical student at University Medical Center.

While at MSU, Charla organized the first Mississippi State Wesley Foundation Mission Trip to Ghana in 2008. Lindley said one of the neat things about the trip is that students from the MSU Wesley have gone back to Ghana every year since and have maintained relationships with the Rafiki Orphanage and other ministries that were part of that first trip. “It is exciting to see one person’s idea grow into something more,” Lindley said.

Chelsea lives in Greensboro, N. C. and is married to Chandler Ragland. Chelsea is finishing her first year of medical school at Wake Forest University. Chandler is a candidate for ministry and a student at Duke Divinity School.

One of the fun things about moving to Starkville, will be enjoying MSU football and basketball in their new hometown.

The Lindley's are huge fans.

And in his spare time, Lindley enjoys reading about Methodist history and listening to old time radio shows.