

New Season for Wesley United Methodist Church at Frederica

SAINT SIMONS ISLAND, GEORGIA, UNITED STATES, May 30, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Wesley United Methodist Church at Frederica was founded in 1987 in fulfillment of St. Simons United Methodist Church's vision to expand outreach on St. Simon's Island. Surrounded by canopies of massive oaks at the north end of the Island, and next to the Wesley Memorial Garden (a 2 acre plot tended by the Methodist and Episcopal churches), Wesley was built near the entrance to Fort Frederica following the donation of land by the Jones Family and Sea Island Company. As its membership steadily grew, the church eventually built a stunning and soaring sanctuary, a worshipful piece of architecture that opened in 2005.

Now, nearly forty years since its inception, Wesley Church at Frederica has entered a new season - one full of hope and promise as it puts down new roots as an independent church under new leadership.

In response to over six months of church wide education, dialogue, meetings and prayer, the members of Wesley voted to discontinue their affiliation with the United Methodist Church at large and become an independent church body. This new season for Wesley was birthed out of a careful and extensive examination of the future state of the UMC denomination.

During Wesley's review and consideration of the UMC, pastors representing all viewpoints were invited to speak at a series of church wide meetings. "We set ground rules for these meetings on how our congregation would engage in this conversation, and we discouraged folks from labeling other church members and their viewpoints," offered Rev. Dr. Jerry Roe, Jr., the current Wesley UMC lead pastor. We grounded ourselves in Matthew 7:12 Roe said: "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this sums up the law and the prophets."

The dialogue process proved fruitful and reminded the congregation of the legacy they hope to continue. "We saw an opportunity within the broader conversation to reaffirm that our values have not changed since our founding. We are the same Bible believing church that accepts all people, encouraging one another to allow Jesus to transform us from the inside out. We stand on the Word of God as an anchor in the midst of ever-changing cultural norms and we believe that all people can come to know and experience the completion and fulfillment that can only be experienced through Jesus Christ," stated Wayne Johnson, head of Wesley's Church Council.

On May 21, 2023, the South Georgia Annual Conference met to vote on the disaffiliation of

nearly 200 churches at a special called Annual Conference. The vote was approved and Wesley is among the group of disaffiliating congregations. Wesley will now become an independent church with a new pastor to begin in July 2023.

Since the current senior pastor announced his retirement, Wesley's leadership has worked diligently to find the right person to pastor in the new season ahead. Wayne Johnson has announced that the Staff Parish, Church Council and Transition Team committees have unanimously called Lucas Ramirez as their new lead pastor. Ramirez will start in the new role beginning July 30th 2023.

Lucas Ramirez is uniquely gifted to lead Wesley in this new season. Having been Wesley's Youth Pastor from 2005-2010, Ramirez will leave his current position as President/CEO of The Gathering Place in Brunswick, Georgia, where he has a strong legacy of leadership since 2010. His book *Designed for More* (Hachette 2018), captures the heart of Jesus' prayer for unity in John 17. Holding a B.A. from Eastern University in Philadelphia and a Master's from St. Andrews University, Scotland, Lucas is frequently invited across the US as a conference speaker, preacher and panelist. He and wife, Thea, were married at Wesley in 2006 and are blessed with three children: Luci, Max and Teddy. The family resides in, and steadily works to restore, their historic home in Old Town Brunswick, GA.

Lucas Ramirez has a vision to help Wesley Church replant itself as an independent body of firmly rooted believers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ as found in God's Word. "My prayer for Wesley is for it to be the place where grace and truth can exist together. We'll be a faith community where people can discover and deepen their relationships with Christ. I know this is possible because grace and truth co-exist perfectly in the nature and person of Jesus Christ," Lucas shared.

It is a new season for Wesley, but its purpose and mission remains constant. That mission is perhaps best depicted in Wesley's enduring logo ... a mighty live oak tree, helping people to flourish like the tree that is described in Psalm 1:

"Blessed is the one...whose delight is in the law of the LORD, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers."

Worship services every Sunday:

8:15am | 9:00am | 10:45am

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