



The Lighthouse

August 2021

Rev. Lachlan C. Vass II **Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Biloxi from 1942-1947**

Rev. Vass served First Presbyterian during the war years and has an interesting life story. He was born in 1872 in New Bern, North Carolina where his father was serving as pastor of the New Bern Presbyterian Church. His father had taken the call after serving as a chaplain in Stonewall Jackson's brigade during the Civil War.

Mr. Vass was educated at Davidson College and it was there that he committed his life to Christ for full time service. In 1894, he entered Colombia Presbyterian Theological Seminary to prepare for the ministry and possible missionary service. While a student at the seminary he was also enrolled in courses at the University of South Carolina to qualify as a member of the USC football team. Extremely athletic, the 125-pound, 5-foot 2-inch athlete who had played football in college, became one of the first "ringers" for the South Carolina varsity.

Following his graduation from seminary in 1897, he held pastorates in Spartanburg, South Carolina and Matthews, North Carolina, where he was when he received his summons from the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions to serve in the Congo Free State in sub-Saharan Africa with the American Presbyterian Congo Mission. This mission had been founded in 1892 by two American pastors, Rev. Samuel N. Lapsley from Alabama and Rev. William Henry Sheppard from Virginia. Notable is the fact that the mission board sent them to work together as equals - Lapsley, a white man and Sheppard an African American. That continued to be the practice as more ministers and missionaries came to work at the mission. Rev. Lapsley died of fever there shortly after the mission was established in 1892. Rev. Sheppard continued the work with the help of others who came along from America.

The mission was located in Luebo at the confluence of the Lulua and Luebo Rivers which were tributaries of the great Zaire River System. The land was undeveloped and travel was difficult. A railroad was slow in being built, so the only way to travel was by the rivers or on foot. Steamers worked the treacherous river system, but they were mostly limited to the organizations that owned them.

As the mission grew and with it the need for more supplies, the need for a steamboat became increasingly apparent. In 1893, the Presbyterian Church announced a church-wide project for children to raise \$10,000 for the construction of a steamboat for the mission. They raised that money in one year, but realized that it would cost twice that amount. It wasn't until June of 1900 that the new steamboat was finished and dedicated in Virginia. They named it the Samuel N. Lapsley. In August the steamboat was disassembled and shipped to Africa.

Rev. Vass had arrived at the Congo mission in March of 1899. The natives called him “Malu Malu” which means “one who stays busy with many responsibilities.” His energy and decidedly mechanical turn got him chosen to undertake the reconstruction of the Lapsley because they could not afford a professional engineering company to do the work. He oversaw the unloading by hand of five railroad cars full of steamboat pieces and parts, some weighing as much as 4.5 tons. After four months of work, the steamer was reassembled and ready for work. Rev. Vass, with no knowledge of shipbuilding, was able to figure it out and get it together; and then learn how to navigate the treacherous river system in a boat that they soon learned was not suitable for the difficulties of navigating such a river system. Two and a half years later, the steamboat capsized. Rev. Vass was spared, but 24 others drowned.

After this tragedy, Rev. Vass was tasked with overseeing the building of a new steamer that would be suitable for the river system. With a dogged determination, and often facing criticism, he was able to do so and once again captain the new Samuel N. Lapsley which was completed in 1905. That boat, built to the specifications of Rev. Vass, served the American Presbyterian Congo Mission for 27 years until it was sold to a commercial company in 1932. Rev. Vass retired from the Congo mission in 1909 because frequent bouts of malaria had taken its toll on his health.

Shortly after Rev. Vass returned to the United States, he married and served churches in Germantown, Tennessee; Cartersville and Dalton, Georgia; and Chattanooga, Tennessee before serving us here in Biloxi. Upon leaving Biloxi he retired to Decatur, Georgia where he died in 1962.

His son, Lachlan Vass III also became a missionary in the Belgian Congo for 30 years and our church continued to support him after the war. Lach III and his wife wrote a book about his father's experiences entitled, [The Lapsley Saga](#). A copy has been donated to our church library by Lach III's daughter who is a long-time friend of my wife Sarah's family. I have read a portion of it and it is a very engaging story. I encourage everyone to read it.

Happy 130th Birthday, FPC Biloxi!

Tim

Prayer and Praise

Jody Collinge

July 24, 2021



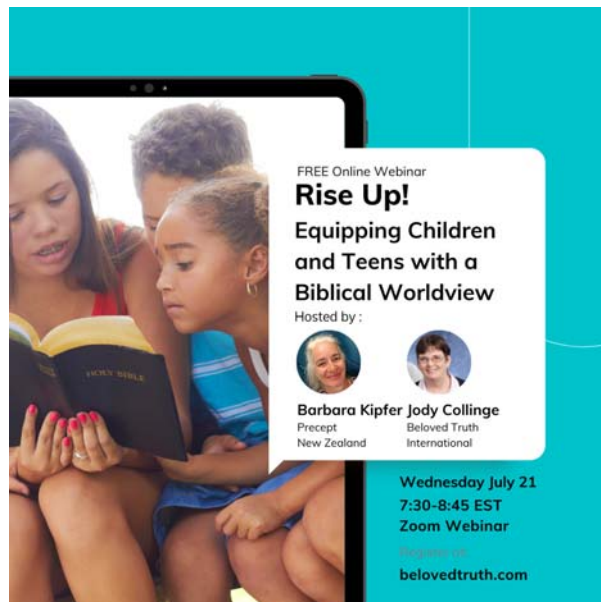
Travels: (Dios mediante--Lord willing)

- July 29 to August 18--To Rochester and Syracuse, NY
- August 7--Mary Ellen Collinge's memorial service
- August 18 to September 2--To Texas
- September 2-11 To Hawaii for a CHE Training of Trainers seminar
- September 11-22 To Arizona
- September 23--Return to Zihuatanejo

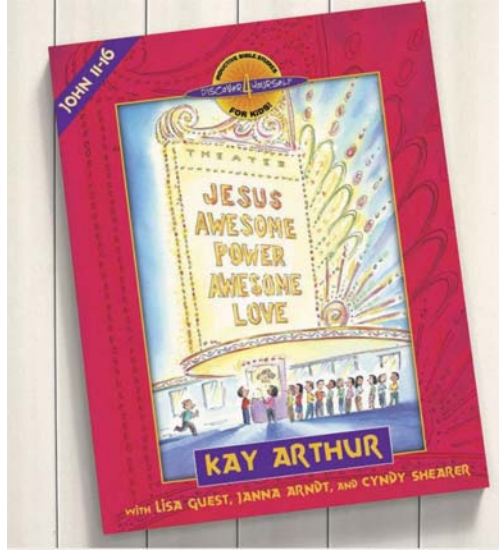
Prayer and Praise

- The memorial service for my mother, Mary Ellen Collinge, will be at 11 am on August 7th at Webster Presbyterian Church. Pray that we may be able to share many wonderful memories of Mom and also bring honor to God. Pray also for good times of sharing with our family and friends.
- I begin a long series of travels next week. Thanks for your prayers for my travels.
- I hope to also visit friends in Rochester and Syracuse and will be speaking at a few churches.

- From Syracuse, I will head to Texas to spend time with Candi and Greg Seager and CHSC friends.
- Next stop: Hilo, Hawaii, where we will be giving CHE Training of Trainers seminars. Please pray as we are trying to update and improve the materials for the trainings. We will also have a brief CHE Service Team retreat.
- Finally, on to Payson and Phoenix, Arizona, with Terry and Jeannie Dalrymple for the International Wholistic Missions Conference.
- I hope to return to Zihuatanejo on September 23rd.
- All of this is Dios mediante or Lord willing. Pray for the Lord to oversee all of my travel plans. As you know, there are more complications this year.



- Our Rise Up! Webinar went well, though we had some technical difficulties sending out the links. Thanks to all who came! Let me know if you are interested in future Webinars.
- We have started the children's ministries again in Zihuatanejo. Pray for more children to come and also that we can reach out to the parents and families.
- In September, we also will begin online Bible studies for children using the Discover 4 Yourselfs books on John and Jonah. Let me know if your children would like to take part in this. Or check the classes out at <https://belovedtruth.com/beloved-truth-classes/>.



Thanks for your prayers! How can I be praying for you?

Dios les bendiga. May the Lord keep on blessing you.

Jody

Send donations to:

Global CHE Network, 4702 East Monte Way, Phoenix, AZ 85044.

Please designate that they are for my support. Thanks!



Dates to Remember for August

August 1 Communion

August 14 Special Concert at 5:00 p.m.

Join us for a special concert Sat., Aug. 14th at 5:00 p. m. Duo Mirić are twin sisters Darka Kooienga (née Mirić) and Tanja Mirić. They have been playing together for over two decades. Each holds D.M.A. from the University of Minnesota, an M.M. from Southern Methodist University and B.M. from Mississippi College. Notable concert appearances include the St. Louis Classical Guitar Great Artist Series, the Schubert Cub Courtroom Concert Series, the Fort Worth Guild, and the Ensemble Show case at the Guitar Foundation of America Convention.