



**Cedar Grove UMC**

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## **The Beacon April 2016**



### **Office Hours**

Monday	10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Tuesday	10:00 am to 4:00 pm
Wednesday	10:00 am to 4:00 pm

### *From the Pastor's Desk . . .*

#### BEING THE CHURCH

I want to thank everyone who worked hard and helped us to have a great Holy Week. Our numbers were up at every worship service (thank you Carla Hultberg, Debbie Huffman, Bill Kline, Mike Haas, and the Praise Team/Sound Room staff!) and the Easter Event on Saturday was a great time of fun and fellowship (Thank you Mitzi Roby and all of your workers!). As we contemplated the cross and celebrated the resurrection of Jesus we were lifting up in prayer members of our church who had surgery, injuries, and other problems even amidst the joy of Easter. The week started with our Palm/Passion Sunday service and then the homeless trip (Thank you Pam Morton and your helpers!) reminding us that as a church we love God and our neighbors. We can do great things in many different directions worshipping God, helping the homeless, praying for the sick, and going about serving God in many ways that is what it means to be the church.

Part of being the church is struggling with moral issues. Inside this newsletter you will see a long article on an issue that The United Methodist Church is considering changing its position on. It is important as United Methodists that we are informed on what the Bible says about this issue. The article in this newsletter will point you to important passages on this issue and to a book you can read that represents both sides of the issue.

We will also soon see the renovation of the parsonage into a storage facility begin. I want to thank the Trustees for how well they have handled the flooding of the parsonage and the process that has led to what we are doing about it. This is also a part of being the church--constantly keeping up and improving our physical plant for ministry.

I will soon be having a new member's class after worship. If you are interested in joining the church please let me know and come to this meeting after worship, in the parlor on April 17<sup>th</sup>. Having new people join and be a part of our church is part of being the church.

Finally, church council meetings, committee meetings, and other administrative work is part of being the church. It is not always exciting or fun to go to these meetings but they are vital to the life of this church. I am thankful to all the people who count the money, keep accurate records, set policies, and come up with new programs and events that help us to be a better church. Everyone who contributes in any way to our work together here helps us to be the church! Thank you to all!

Your fellow servant of Jesus Christ,

*Glen*



## **CHURCH NEWS**

**New Members Class after worship in the parlor on April 17<sup>th</sup>.** If you are interested in joining the church the pastor will be holding a new member's class on April 17<sup>th</sup> in the parlor following the worship service.

**Wednesday Night Dinners** – We have sufficient dinners on hand, thanks to Peggy and Dick, to continue their supply of twice a month dinners through May 2016. Now we need your help if our church wishes to continue the Wednesday night dinner event. We need individuals or groups of church people to accept the responsibility of providing the Wednesday dinner. If you or your group is willing to do this, either once a month or more than that, please contact the office or Bill Kline so that a schedule can be made for the dinners to continue. We normally provide dinner for about 50 people and the menu is at the discretion of the provider. Time is growing short for someone to step forward and see that this ministry continues. If we are to continue to have the dinners resume in the Fall, we need someone or group of people to step forward to cover the fourth and fifth Wednesdays (when there is a fifth Wednesday). If someone does not come forward by **May 1 we will not have the dinners in the Fall.**

**Scripture readers on Sunday mornings!** It has been great having some different voices read the Scripture on Sunday mornings. We would love to have even more voices. If you are interested, there is a sign-up sheet in the narthex and if you do sign up we will send you the reading electronically or inform you over the phone as to what the reading is. If you find the reading to be too difficult (length or hard to pronounce names) you can always let Pastor Glen know you have changed your mind. So please sign-up.

**Order of worship** – Some small changes might be coming to our order of worship so pay attention! The two changes that are being considered are both geared to making the opening part of the service before the Call to Worship shorter and to go more smoothly.

We continue to have our **Wednesday dinners** at 6pm and we would love to have more people come out to them. Invite your neighbors! Following the dinner we have Kids group, youth group, and women's Bible study at 7pm.

**Please be praying for our General Conference in May and our Annual Conference in June** – Each year our annual conference meets to decide things about how we will function as The Baltimore Washington Annual Conference. Also, this May, the general conference representing all of United Methodism around the world will be meeting which it does every four years to decide as a denomination where we stand, how we will function, and what we believe. Please pray that God guides these conferences to make right and good policy for the church.

The **Tuesday Morning Bible Study at 10am** continues to meet and we are studying 1 John. All are welcome.

**Confirmation Ministry Project.** Garrett Foster collected for the homeless: 6 pairs of shoes, 31 jeans, 2 packs of underwear, 12 T-shirts, 6 sweaters, 10 jog/sweats, 30 shirts, 4 coats/jackets, 4 shorts, and 1 backpack. This was a wonderfully successful project and we are still opening bags of items. Thanks to everyone that donated!

**Family Movie Night.** Friday, April 8th at 7pm in the Fellowship Hall. We will be showing *The Peanuts Movie*. All ages are welcome! Our snack bar will be open, selling items such as: pizza, popcorn, candy & soda. Everything is \$1.00 or less. Our theme this month is "Movie in the Park" so we will turn our Fellowship Hall into a park. Please bring blankets to sit on and even pillows if you want to be super comfy. If you wear crazy socks you will get free popcorn!

**Vacation Bible School** will be Monday, June 20, 2016 through Thursday, June 23, 2016. We will "travel" to **Ancient Egypt** this year! Get the answers to questions such as What was it like to live in Bible times? How did they make Mummies? What happened to Joseph (the guy with the colorful coat)? Explore Pharaoh's Palace. For additional information or to register, contact the Church office at 410.867.7417 or by email at [office@cgumc.org](mailto:office@cgumc.org). There are also registration forms and flyers on the table in the narthex of the Church. Spread the word!

**Our monthly Church Workday is Saturday, April 30<sup>th</sup> from 9am-12pm.** It's Spring Spruce Up Time and we need as many helping hands as possible! Many areas of the church (inside and out) need work so please come help, even if you can't stay for the whole time.

Also, to update everyone, the contractor should begin work soon on converting **the parsonage** into a storage facility. If you have any questions about work day or Trustee projects, please contact Paul Seen (Trustee Chairperson), Pastor Glen, or another member of the Trustees.

Two missions that we support are having fundraising events this month:

The **South County Faith Network** will have a **Spaghetti Supper** on Sunday, April 17, at 3:30pm-7:30pm at Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic Church, Owensville Rd., West River, MD. The price is Adults \$12/\$10 in advance. Children (4-12) \$5. For tickets call 410.206.1762.

The **AA County Good News Jail & Prison Ministry** will have their **Annual Banquet** on Saturday, April 22, at 6:30pm at the Chesapeake Christian Fellowship Family Life Center, 377 Central Ave., Davidsonville, MD. **RSVP before April 8** to [brit.fletcher@goodnewsjail.org](mailto:brit.fletcher@goodnewsjail.org) - 410.222.4937 or [chase.wood@goodnewsjail.org](mailto:chase.wood@goodnewsjail.org) - 410.222.4549.

Also wanted to mention that **Southern High School** is having a **Color Run** on April 23 to benefit SHS Sports Boosters & SHS Athletics. Check-in is at 10:30 am at the front of the high school, 4400 Solomon's Island Rd., Harwood, MD. 11:30 am horn start. All Ages Event. \$25.00 Race Registration, \$15 T-Shirt. Come out and join our SHS community for a 3 mile run/walk around campus! At different spots on the course you will be doused in color and a grand finale color party waits all participants at the finish line! So register today. You can also register to be a sponsor at <https://sites.google.com/site/bulldogcolorfunrun/home>.



## **MISSIONS CORNER**

(The Mission we are highlighting this month is the **Homeless Ministry**)

While reading my Guideposts Daily Devotional one day I read the story below and it left me touched beyond belief, so much so that I wanted to share it with you. I thought it was very appropriate even though we do not give out money to our Brothers & Sisters on the streets. The message still applies. The Brothers & Sisters we see are always appreciative of what we do for them. I'm sure that more than once I have seen God's love filling in someone's eyes. If we only make a difference to one person it was worth it.

### **The following is Brock Kidd's article:**

"I was walking to my car when I saw a man coming toward me. Oh no, not again, I thought. It was obvious that he was homeless, hadn't had a bath in a while, and didn't plan to buy food with whatever money he might ask of me.

A day earlier, I'd had a similar encounter as I walked down this same street with a friend. "These guys spend all their time begging," he had said. "I don't support that sort of behavior. If you give him money, he'll just get drunk."

Now this man was approaching me. "Do you have any money to spare, sir? I'm awfully hungry. I stopped dead-still. A story my dad had shared with me played across my mind. It was by a nineteenth-century theologian who told of his childhood.

When walking with his father, they came upon a blind man begging for money. His father pressed a bill into his son's hand and told him to put it in the man's cup. He did as he was told and returned to his father. "You didn't tip your hat to the man," the father said. The son answered, "But, Dad, he's blind." To which his father replied, "Yes, but what if he's faking?" "This, Brock, is a story of grace," my dad said.

I smiled at the man who stood before me. I slipped some money into his hand. "God bless you," he said. I'm sure I saw God's love filling his eyes, and that set me to wondering about grace. Was it mine to give – or his?"

Makes you think, doesn't it. I want to THANK each and every one of you for your generosity this past year. It has been my pleasure to be a part of a Church that answers the call when asked for help. You did this tremendously and I appreciate your support for the Homeless Ministry. If it were not for all you do (helping fix meals, donating clothing & money, and your prayers) this program would not survive.

May God continue to bless this mission; and, may God bless you.

To God be the Glory!

*Pam Morton*

1 Corinthians 16:24 – My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen



## **BOOK CORNER and BIBLE STUDY**



As most of you know, The United Methodist Church is again considering changing the position it has held on homosexual sex. Currently we consider homosexual sex contrary to Christian practice (a roundabout way of saying it is sinful) and we reject the idea that within the practice of the church that homosexuals can be married in the eyes of God. (Obviously, this has no impact on whether or not a State recognizes same sex marriage as that is a legal, secular matter, not a spiritual or religious issue.)

Both at the Annual Conference level and more importantly at the General Conference level (the only body in The United Methodist Church that sets what we believe and don't believe) legislation and actions are being considered to push the pro-homosexual practice agenda. All of us need to be knowledgeable about what the Bible teaches about homosexual sex and marriage in general to make a Christian and biblical decision about these issues. So in conjunction with our church council, I want to briefly introduce a book for you to read and lay out Bible passages about homosexual sex and marriage.

But before I go any further, I want to address what this debate is not about for me. It is not about whether homosexuals can go to heaven. All of us are sinners, it doesn't matter what kind of sin struggle we have, if we believe in Jesus Christ and repent of our sins we will be forgiven. This debate is not about whether or not homosexuals are people of sacred worth, good people, who do good things, who can be good neighbors and friends and family members, and contribute to the church and our society. Of course they can, like all people they bear the image of God like everyone. This is not about singling out one sin for particular condemnation. All sins deserve condemnation as a perversion of what God wants us to do and say.

The issue is, just like for other sins such as telling a lie, taking the Lord's name in vain, whether or not we help the poor, adultery, and so on, is it a sin or not and we have to decide what is the right thing to do and what is the wrong thing not to do. And ultimately what's at stake is whether or not the Bible is what it claims to be, a book to guide our lives, to tell us what are good deeds and what are sinful deeds and what happens when we declare sin "good". Thankfully there are not groups (well not yet!) who are advocating for adultery to not be a sin or taking the Lord's name in vain not to be a sin, and so on. We must address this issue because many are making the case that what has throughout the history of Christianity been seen as a sin, is now not a sin.

Before we look at the issue of homosexual sex and marriage directly, let us first look at what the Bible says about how it (the Bible) should be read and whether or not it should be authoritative for Christians. READ: Matthew 15:17-20 & 18:15-17, Psalm 1, Malachi 2:17, Isaiah 5:20, Psalm 119, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:20-21.

I want to recommend a book titled, Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views by Dan O. Via and Robert A. J. Gagnon (Fortress Press 2003 117 pages) which has two authors on either side of this issue argue their best case for why either homosexual sex is fine with God or not. I also want you to read the following passages of the Bible which directly address the issue of homosexual sex and the issue of marriage. READ Genesis 2:18-25, Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:22 & 20:13, Matthew 5:27-28, Romans 1:18-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Timothy 1:8-10, and Jude 7.

Whether you read the book mentioned above or not, please pay attention to what the Bible says about homosexual sex and marriage. By the way, I could have given you many, many more Bible passages about marriage and in every case the Bible always, without fail describes marriage as between a man and a woman. Even those on the pro-homosexual sex side will admit that at least on the surface the Bible is not friendly to homosexual sex.

So how do these Christians make the case that the Bible does not prohibit homosexual sex, consider it a sin, and that marriage is only between a man and a woman? Again, I encourage you to read the book, but in case you don't let me summarize the pro-homosexual sex argument. *First*, when the Bible was written they had no idea that homosexuality might be genetic and natural and thus had they known that the Bible wouldn't have said what it said. (Some will take Galatians 3:28 and want to add neither homosexual nor heterosexual to the list in this verse.) *Second*, we fail to read these seemingly 'anti-homosexual sex' in the proper context. For example, the Sodom and Gomorrah story is about rape, not homosexual sex and the passage in Romans is about homosexual sex attached to idol worship and thus what it condemns is not homosexual sex but rather having such sex in worship of idols, and finally we need to read all of these passages about homosexual sex in the context of God's call to love your neighbor and help people find fulfillment in their lives and thus since consensual homosexual sex harms no one, how can we deny someone sexual fulfillment in their lives? *Third*, some point to the relationship between David and Jonathon (1 Samuel 18:1-4 & 19:1) and suggest that they had a homosexual relationship. *Fourth*, much of what I read from the pro-homosexual sex side simply says some combination of there are passages we don't need to obey, they are out-dated, and/or they point to other difficult texts in the Bible and say we ignore those verses so why can't we ignore these passages about homosexual sex.

What is the anti-homosexual practice position? Well, I hardly think it needs defending if one reads what the Bible plainly says and what the church has always taught about marriage and homosexual sex. I do want to briefly address the arguments about deciding what is right and wrong based on whether it feels good, doesn't hurt anyone, and times have changed. All three of these arguments are not only ridiculous but dangerous. *First*, "something feeling good" has never been a standard for determining right and wrong. Many sinful activities feel good! *Second*, the "it doesn't hurt anyone" argument fails for me because a sin doesn't have to hurt someone for it to be a sin. When someone takes the Lord's name in vain and no one is around to hear it doesn't hurt anyone right? Well, only if it is not a sin, for if it is a sin it damages us spiritually and it hurts God! *Third*, yes "times change" but to say that is a reason to walk away from what the Bible says is dangerous. Let's say our culture moves to a nearly universal attitude that we shouldn't help the poor. Does that mean we as Christians should stop helping the poor?

Let me close this lengthy article by making one last point. Christians should be loving and kind to all people. We should proclaim God's truth to all people without exception. We should love our neighbor as we love our self. No exceptions! But we are not free to change God's Word because it makes certain people uncomfortable for what it says about what they like to do. Obeying parts of the Bible are difficult. I have never found it easy to love my enemy. It is not always enjoyable to forgive people who do horrible things to you. Doing the right thing is not always fun and easy. There may be those in our church who will not agree with what I believe the Bible says on this issue and will as they have in my previous churches try to have me silenced, removed, and failing that leave our church. But like Peter and John, when I am told to be quiet I respond that I will not stop speaking about what God has shown me and taught me. Finally, as Malachi puts it so well, I will not weary God by calling sin, good!

(I want to recommend one other book that goes into great detail regarding what the Bible says about homosexual practice – it is 520 pages long—and that book is by one of the two authors from the other book I recommended Robert A. J. Gagnon [The Bible and Homosexual Practice.](#))

*Pastor Glen Arnold*