



Cedar Grove UMC

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REACHING OUT, GROWING CLOSE, CHANGING LIVES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

From the Pastor's Desk . . .

LENT 2020

Believe it or not on February 26th Lent will start with our Ash Wednesday service at 7 pm. (No dinner that night but on Shrove Tuesday the day before we will have our Pancake Supper.) On Ash Wednesday we begin the season of Lent, the forty days (not counting Sundays) prior to Easter.

While Lent is the creation of the church, it is based on the 40 days Jesus was tempted in the desert and it has traditionally been used as a time to prepare people to join the church, for Christians to examine their lives, repent of their sins, to re-dedicate themselves to the holy life, and as a time to fast, meaning giving up something to honor God, to mark yourself as a believer, and through the act of fasting open your mind, heart, soul, and life to the leading of God. It is my prayer for all of you that you will take advantage of this season of Lent to grow in your faith, your service, and your love of God through whatever spiritual discipline or practice you choose.

As your pastor, I am asking everyone to pray each day during Lent for our denomination as we consider splitting as a denomination. Ask God to guide those who will be making these decisions so that God's will is done.

I was hoping to find a book for us to read and for me use in my preaching on the topic of Discipleship during Lent but I am not finding anything that I think would be good for this purpose. So at this point, I am thinking about simply preaching a sermon series on this topic using various texts.

Finally, I have written the first of two articles on the issue of what the Bible says about Homosexual sex at the request of our church. In this article I give you all the key Scriptures to look at in terms of the Authority of the Bible, marriage, and what types of sexual activity are approved by the Bible. Next month I will try to explain how both the pro-homosexual sex side and the homosexual sex is sin side interprets these passages.

Your fellow servant of our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ,

Glen

Office Hours

Monday	9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Tuesday	9:00 am to 3:00 pm
Wednesday	9:00 am to 3:00 pm



CHURCH NEWS

Adult Sunday School – Due to lack of people (we had three people move away and several members of the praise team are practicing and no longer attending the classes which makes up the bulk of the decline) the two classes we used to offer has been reduced to one class. We would like to see more people at the Adult Sunday School class which meets at 9am and ends around 9:45am on Sunday morning. So we are hoping to attract some new people by studying the book, Grace in a Tree Stump: Old Testament Stories of God's Love - J. Ellsworth Kalas and we will begin this study on March 1. If you are interested please let either Bill Kline or Pastor Glen know and you will need to procure a copy of the book. We will study chapter 1 on March 1. (Each chapter of the book is 6-8 pages long and the book is 18 chapters long.) Until then we will be studying the Gospel of Mark and you are welcome to come to that ongoing study as well. If you have any questions contact Bill Kline or Pastor Glen.

New Members: If you are interested in joining the church, please contact Pastor Glen.

Tuesday Bible Study is now in the wilderness chapters of Exodus, please join us in the Fellowship Hall at 10 am on Tuesday and even though we have a good crowd of about 15 people each week, there is always room for more. Questions? Contact Pastor Glen.

Scripture Readers on Sunday mornings! 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.

Wednesday Night Dinners are doing well with an average of 30-35 people coming out. But we need some more people to sign up to cook; so please see the sign-up sheet in the narthex to volunteer. If you have any questions don't hesitate to ask.

The Martha Lydia Circle Soup & Bake Sale is Saturday, March 21 at 9:00 am-1:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Featuring hearty MLC homemade soups for sale at \$8.00/qt: Vegetable Beef and Ham & Bean. They will also have tasty bake sale items. Soup pre-ordering is available.

Family Movie Night is Friday, February 14, 2020 at 7:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. Movie night is FREE and all ages are welcome! As always, our movie night snack bar will be open selling pizza, popcorn, candy, and sodas. Everything is \$1.00 or less. If you have any questions, please contact Stacy Crine at sweetbooboo16@aol.com. Hope to see you all there!

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper is on Tuesday, February 25. Please join us and bring your friends for some homemade pancakes, French toast, scrambled eggs, and sausage. Dinner will be served from 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm. If you are interested in helping with the dinner, please contact Mitzi Roby at 410-474-4696.

Vacation Bible School! It's that time of year again, where we start planning for VBS. The dates for VBS are June 29, 2020 - July 2, 2020 from 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm.

The **Church Office** is open Monday-Wednesday from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. **If you need assistance when the office is closed**, please contact Pastor Glen at pastor@cgumc.org or by cell at 443-699-3645. The office emails will not be read until the office administrator is back in the office. So if you have an immediate need, please reach out to the Pastor.



MISSIONS CORNER

As we usher in a new decade, I'm thankful for the support of our church congregation and the tireless help of all who volunteer!

We have much to celebrate, including the addition in 2019 of a new mission to support in Redeeming Hope focused on church planting in Tennessee. The generous support of the congregation each and every time a request for help is placed, is something we truly appreciate and celebrate.

In 2020, we will continue to share opportunities for outreach and invite all members of our congregation to get involved in the sharing of God's love and message of salvation through missions work.

We want to encourage all of you to bring any ideas for new missions to our committee and would only ask that you also be prepared to lead that effort.

I would like to personally thank our Missions committee members from 2019 - Pam Morton, Mary Day, Julie MacNamee and Marjorie Johnson and Pastor Glen for their time, dedication and support. A special thanks to Sandy Burns who has completed her term on the committee. With Sandy's departure, we do have a vacancy and would invite anyone who is interested in serving to reach out.

Finally, I would like to thank all of you - our amazing church family who ALWAYS comes through in a time of need - thank you for your generosity, your prayers and your support. Please continue to pray for our Missions committee as we seek to do God's work and make disciples for Christ.

Ingrid Quimby-High
Missions Committee Chairperson



BOOK CORNER



Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church
edited by Preston Sprinkle Zondervan Press 2016 237pgs.

We recently had a meeting after worship led by Greg Witte discussing what appears to be the almost certain split of The United Methodist Church over the issue of what the Bible teaches about LGBTQIA+ issues over the next year or so. At that meeting I was asked to write an article in the newsletter about homosexual sex and what the Bible says about it. You will find that article elsewhere in this newsletter but I thought I would briefly review a book on this issue where both sides are represented. In preparing to do this, I found that I have already reviewed such a book in this newsletter back in April of 2016 where I did a combined Book Review/Bible Study article on this issue. In that newsletter I recommended a shorter book Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views than the book I am going to recommend in this article Two Views on Homosexuality, the Bible, and the Church edited by Preston Sprinkle Zondervan Press 2016 237pgs. The titles look similar but there are three key differences between them other than length. First, four people present articles in this book as opposed to only two in the other book that I reviewed with two writing on each side. Second, partially because of length the second is more detailed. Finally, this book also has an introduction and conclusion written by a fifth person. This book is a part of the 'counterpoints' series of which many volumes have been published on many different issues. (I own many of them.)

The format of the book is that each author presents their position and the other authors write responses. One of the unique aspects of this book is that one of the supporters of the traditional view that homosexual sex is a sin is himself a homosexual. The book is detailed and gives you biblical texts to look at and while it reads easily it is somewhat in an academic style. I would recommend this book and the other mentioned above (which is half as long) if someone wants to look at this issue from both sides.

I must admit this book did not add to my understanding of what the Bible says on this issue but that is only because this is not the second book I have read on this issue, more like the seventh. But for someone new to the issue or who wants the perspective of a gay person who supports what I believe the Bible says about Homosexual sex you will find this book to be very informative and interesting.

Pastor Glen Arnold

THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

In looking back at the article I wrote about this in the April 2016 issue of our newsletter, which I think speaks clearly and consistently with what I still believe I want to make sure that each of you reads the Scripture for yourselves before I give my interpretations of these texts. So in this issue I will give you the texts to read, some hints about interpreting, and next month give my interpretation of these texts and analyze the way the pro-homosexual position interprets these texts that are obviously either pro-heterosexual marriage and/or anti-homosexual sex.

Before I do even that I will invite you over the next month to make me aware of any passages in the Bible that address the issue of homosexual sex in a positive way. I have been making this invitation for over 30 years and guess how many pro-homosexual sex verses have been brought to my attention? That is right, none. Now just because there are no pro-homosexual verses in the Bible that does not mean the Bible condemns homosexual sex as sin. The Bible says nothing positive about flying in airplanes but that doesn't mean it is a sin to do so.

But before we even get to texts on marriage and sexual sins, we need to address the place of the Bible in the life of the believer and the church. Obviously people disagree on its place but I want us to look at what the Bible says about itself. It seems to me that if we are to address the place of the Bible or the Canon of Scripture which is another way to define the Bible or Written Word of God or the Scriptures, we need to hear what it says about itself and look over the history of Christianity and see why this book or should I say books (Bible means, books) came to be seen as the authoritative texts of the church and the Christian Faith.

As Christians we begin with Jesus who recognized the Old Testament. He would have simply called it the Scriptures, the law, or 'what was written'.

READ MATTHEW 5:17-20

So for me that takes care of the Old Testament but what about the New Testament. It was all written after Jesus. Did what He said in Matthew 5:17-20 apply to the New Testament? The best way to answer that question is to look at what Jesus said to the Apostles about the Holy Spirit.

READ JOHN 16:5-15

Since the New Testament refers to itself as 'inspired'

READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:14-17 & 2 PETER 1:20-21

So Jesus, in advance supports the New Testament as Scripture. Also, consider

READ PSALM 1 and PSALM 119

and the place they give Scripture/Word/Law/Commands etc...have to say about how vital the Bible is to living the holy life.

Finally, consider that in two places we are warned, see again Matthew 5:17-20 of tinkering with the Bible and....

READ REVELATION 22:18-19

The early church decided as they looked at the many documents that were being claimed to be Scripture (New Testament part) and decided we needed a Canon of Scripture. Canon means essentially measuring rod, meaning a Christian needs to measure himself or herself with what the Bible says. In other words you live your life according to the Bible then you measure up as a Christian. There is a point of logic to be made. If there is not a definition, rules, stories of limited number that define something, then something cannot be defined. How long is a foot? If it is determined by what anyone might think, then a foot could be any length. But we have a measuring stick called a ruler and something can be determined to be a foot long or not. The Bible is that 'measuring stick' for a Christian to use to determine who Jesus is, right and wrong, good deed or sin, and many other things. Without the Bible someone could claim anything and everything or nothing is Christian and without a standard, a measure, a canon, a Bible we would not be able to define it.

The Bible is concerned about many things but one of the most important is to define what is approved by God and what is sinful.

READ MATTHEW 5:19, MALACHI 2:17, ISAIAH 5:20 (Note how contradicting the Bible is a serious offence.)

Finally, Jesus made clear that we have a responsibility to confront sin in others.

READ MATTHEW 18:15-17

Yes, we cannot judge people, but we have a responsibility to confront sin. As I conclude this long introduction to the role of Scripture and should we use it to declare what is right and wrong, consider the Great Commission.

READ MATTHEW 28:16-20

At this point if one is not convinced of the credentials of the Scripture and their importance than why even care what the Bible says on any issue? And for me that is the point, why have a Bible if our goal is try and ignore what it says? So if we accept that the Bible is to be authoritative for Christians and as I have argued it should and must as a Canon is needed to rule what is and is not true for Christians let us move to the texts on marriage and sex in the Bible. I am going to list the key and main passages to be considered but I will not list every mention of sex and marriage in the Bible as there are so many. But know this; the Bible only speaks positively about sex in two ways. One it is between a male and female and it is reserved for marriage that for Christians by the end of the New Testament is between one husband and one wife.

(NOTE: The translation you use might differ, so one translation might say fornication and another homosexual sex and another perversion another sodomy when I address the interpretation of these verses and words I will try to address this, but the basic point is in the Bible if it is addresses sex that is not between a husband (male) and wife (woman) any of these words would/could address homosexual sex as it is can never be the approved sexual act reserved for a man and woman.)

READ GENESIS 1:27-28 (What is the purpose of sex? Answer: Make babies. What are the implications of that for thinking about the purpose of sex? This might seem an obvious point but people miss it and we must agree that physical activity between two men and/or two women will not result in pregnancy.)

READ GENESIS 2:18-25 (Note: Man and Woman were made for each other.),

READ GENESIS 19, LEVITICUS 18 (Note verse 22 and note that homosexual sex is not the only type of sex condemned in this passage.), LEVITICUS 20:13 (Remember the penalty of death would only apply for the nation of Israel as these laws were not just religious at that time, but also civil.)

READ MARK 10:6-9, ROMANS 1:18-32, 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9-11,

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 7 (Note in this teaching on marriage that celibacy in singleness is seen not as pitiful state but an honored state.)

READ 1 TIMOTHY 1:8-10, 1 TIMOTHY 3:2 (Note with this verse a Christian, male leader is to have but one wife!)

READ JUDE 7 & GALATIANS 3:28 (This verse is included because people argue that the pair of words 'gay and straight' are implied or could be added),

READ 1 SAMUEL 18:1-4 & 1 SAMUEL 19:1 (These last two passages from Samuel are included due to the argument that perhaps David and Jonathon were gay lovers and nowhere in the Bible is their love for each other condemned. Feel free to read all of 1 Samuel 18 and 19 to get the full story. Of course I must point out that a man can love a man and it has nothing to do with sex.)

Read these texts, ponder their meaning, and consider what God is trying to tell us. Next month I will try and explain how each side interprets these passages.

Pastor Glen Arnold