



Cedar Grove UMC

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REACHING OUT, GROWING CLOSE, CHANGING LIVES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

From the Pastor's Desk . . .

The Beacon November 2018



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

CHURCH CONFERENCE, STEWARDSHIP, NEW MEMBERS, THANKSGIVING 2018

Thanks to everyone who attended our Church Conference. I hope we will seriously, prayerfully consider Pastor Macaulay of Franklin UMC's invitation for us to do something with their church in 2019. November is always a full month as we begin with All Saints Sunday and remember those who have gone before us here at Cedar Grove UMC and end it with Thanksgiving; and, in the middle of the month I will be preaching one Sunday on stewardship. Remember that stewardship is not just about your financial giving, it is also about giving your time, talent, and prayers to the church as well. Cedar Grove UMC needs more people doing things such as helping with the nursery, running the sound room, and many other things that help us be the church God wants us to be. I hope that you will spend time in prayer and ask God to lead you to the place at our church where you can make a difference. Finally, we will be receiving new members into our church sometime this Fall/Winter. I hope you all will make our new members welcome and include them in the fellowship of our church.

Next I want to share with you my pastor's report that I prepared for our Church Conference, but before I do so I want all of you to know how thankful I am for all the work you all do in all sorts of ways to help us be the church we are today. I am always thankful for this but even more so when Thanksgiving Day comes. So please read the following report, it's slightly altered from what I submitted, but please know that it comes from my heart:

While the question I am to answer here is about what I do to provide leadership and support to the laity of my church I will begin by thanking them for their leadership, hard work, contributions, and support they give the church and me. Yes I do my part, but I never forget that they lead and support as well and for that I am very thankful. To everyone who has helped us this year at Cedar Grove UMC, THANK YOU!!!!

As the pastor I am very busy doing all the work, administrative, worship leading, Bible teaching, preaching, pastoral care and counseling, visitation, conference work, etc., that a UMC pastor is supposed to be doing. Consistent with other churches I have served, I have a robust preaching and Bible teaching ministry here and as compared to my other appointments am doing a much greater amount of pastoral counseling. I am particularly satisfied to report that my Bible study on Revelation is being attended by more than 35 people.

Cedar Grove UMC has enjoyed a period of stability during my six years here and I think the congregation has benefited from it. I think we are more united, work better together, and for the most part are happy with our church. But we are not growing. Some ministries are struggling to continue or have disappeared. While we continue to do many things well, such as adult Bible study, excellently led worship, great woman's group and Bible study, our homeless ministry and support of other ministries of which I want to highlight the work done by Chaplain Woods at the county jail, and I could go on but I won't for all the good we do does not change the fact that we need to improve in other areas. As always this is not a task just for the pastor, or the pastor and a few leaders, but for every person in our church, to face together. I want to express particular thanks to our Board of Trustees who do a great job in caring for our property and safety, to our financial leadership and to all who give for the financial health of our church, and to our praise team that makes our worship so vibrant and meaningful.

Cedar Grove UMC hears God's call and we continue to faithfully try and offer Christ to our most long time member and to someone who has yet to know Jesus as Lord and Savior. This year we saw a young man who has been deeply helped, changed, and loved by this church go off to college. Those who were here on his last Sunday before moving away to college know how moved Jacob was and how proud we were of not just how we have helped him but how he has, by the Grace of God become not just a mature young man, not just a good, committed Christian, but a servant in the Kingdom of God. Cedar Grove UMC was the place and the people he needed for this to happen. Whatever else we can say about our church, Jacob is a sign that we don't just call ourselves the people of God; we are as our mission statement proclaims; the people of God reaching out, growing close, and changing lives through Jesus Christ! And remember we can only do this great work because God has called us, empowered us, led us and blessed us. AMEN

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

Glen



ADVENT BOOK

To Live Again: An Advent Journey using the Christmas classic, 'It's a Wonderful Life', by Sheila Jacobs

We are again hoping to use a book for Advent and this one is based on the classic Christmas movie, "It's a Wonderful Life." We will be trying to get a number of copies of To Live Again by Sheila Jacobs (currently both Amazon and Cokesbury have it listed as out of stock) for you to have one to read and we will again be asking for a donation if you can afford it to cover the cost of the book (\$6.99 on Cokesbury). We are exploring including a clip(s) of the movie during the sermon. The book is divided into four chapters, one for each Sunday of Advent, and we will begin on the first Sunday of Advent, December 2 at which we will look at the first chapter. We will let the congregation know if we are able to get copies of the book in time. (I might use the movie regardless!)



CHURCH NEWS

Tuesday Bible Study will be starting Genesis in November. If you have wanted to come to the study and were waiting for us to start a new book or have an interest in Genesis please join us in the Fellowship Hall at 10:00 am on Tuesday.

Wednesday Night Dinners Are Back! Join us for delicious food and Christian fellowship. Things continue to go well in terms of attendance but we need the numbers to stay where they are for this event to continue. Invite your neighbors, the food is delicious!

The Women's Bible Study meets on Wednesday evenings at 6:45-8:00 pm in the Parlor. We are currently doing a series on the Ten Women of the Bible. On Nov. 28 we begin our Advent series studying "The Redemption of Scrooge," by Matt Rawle. This Advent series invites us to enter into the pathos of Charles Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* to discover anew the healing power of God's grace. Even the most selfish, sinful person is not beyond the reach of God's love in Jesus Christ. As we spiritually consider our past, present, and future, may we, like Scrooge, recommit ourselves to kindness, living with a generous spirit in today's world of haves and have-nots. If you have any questions, please contact Diana Seen at dianaseen4@comcast.net.

New Bible Study! Join us on Wednesday nights following the community dinner for a new bible study for Adult Teens through Thirties. We're offering a time of fellowship and fun studies of the Bible. Any questions about the study can be directed to Kevin Roby at kmcl.robby@comcast.net, or Mitzi Roby at mitzidawn@verizon.net.

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.

Children's Sunday School is every Sunday during worship service after the children's message. Our lessons sometimes involve food, so please be sure to let Cindy Rothhaas know if your child has any allergies or dietary restrictions. We can always use middle/high school helpers. Please let Cindy know if you are able to be a helper or if you have any questions at 410-867-2973 or at rrothhaas@comcast.net.

Decorating the Church for Christmas. Everyone is invited to the church on Wednesday November 28th to decorate the church in preparation for celebrating Jesus's birth on Christmas. Please come and enjoy the community dinner at 6:00-6:30 pm before decorating the church. This will be a time of celebration and joy with other church members. We need decorators with all skill levels so please come out to help. We also need help after church services on the Sunday before (Nov 25th) to bring in and stage the boxes of decorations. There is a volunteer sign up sheet in the Narthex. Please let me know if you have any questions at sandraburns87@gmail.com or at 410-867-7897 or see me before or after church.

Sanctuary/Sunday Committee Update—Sandy Burns. Again I would like to thank all of the volunteers that have helped with greeting, nursery and ushers. We had a great response to volunteers to greet on Sunday mornings. Did you enjoy greeting church members? Please sign up again to volunteer for another Sunday. We really need more volunteers to work in the nursery. Are you reluctant to volunteer because you don't think that you have enough knowledge of the bible or scriptures? It is nice to have the knowledge but is not mandatory for this support. We should have two volunteers each Sunday however due to the low response we have not always been able to do that. Please volunteer so that we can rotate the Sundays so that there is no need to miss Church services every week. Please talk to Courtney Roby or Debbie Huffman if you have any questions. We can also use more volunteers for ushers on Sundays. Please talk to Randy Smith or Spike Deale if you have any questions about being an usher. Again thank you for the support each Sunday. Please contact Sandy Burns at 410-867-7898 if you have any questions or want to provide suggestions on how we can better support Cedar Grove UMC. God bless everyone.

Family Movie Night is Friday, November 9 at 7:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall. We will be showing "Ant Man and The Wasp." Movie night is FREE and all ages are welcome! As always, our snack bar will be open selling pizza, popcorn, candy, and sodas. Everything is \$1.00 or less. Hope you can join us for a fun evening! Movie night is held on the 2nd Friday of every month. **On movie night in November and December we will be collecting blankets for the homeless.** New or used blankets are welcome. The homeless usually ask for larger, heavier blankets because they work better at keeping them warm on those cold winter nights. If you are donating a used blanket we ask that you please make sure it's washed and ready for giving. If you have any questions about movie night or this year's blanket drive, please contact Stacy Crine at sweetbooboo16@aol.com. *Thank you for your kindness and generosity!*

The Martha Lydia Circle Soup, Bake, Crafters, and Vendors Sale is Saturday, November 17 at 9:00 am-1:00 pm. Tables are available to rent for \$15 each. Contact Mabel-410-867-2978 or Evelyn-410-867-2818. Baked goods and other food will be for sale. Soup preordering is available. Look for an order form in the Sunday bulletin or contact the office at 410.867.7417.

Our **Annual Thanksgiving Eve Dinner is Wednesday, November 21 at 5:00-7:00 pm** in the Fellowship Hall. The dinner is open to everyone, so invite your friends and neighbors! Volunteers are needed to set up, serve, and cleanup. If you can help, a signup sheet is in the Narthex or contact Bill Kline. Also, if you know of someone who is shut in that we can deliver a meal to that night, please contact the office.

Operation Christmas Child (OCC). We are winding down this year's OCC Mission. This week the age group focus is 5-9 and next week is 10-14. However, donations for any age will gladly be accepted. You can take shoe boxes home with you if you have friends or relatives interested in packing a shoebox. Don't forget that the packing party will be next Sunday (Nov 11th) after church in the Fellowship Hall. Everyone is invited even if you didn't donate or if you packed your own shoebox. We are in need of additional money for shipment fees. It costs \$9.00 per box for Samaritan Purse to ship the boxes to the the children. I hope to have at least 40 shoe boxes packed which would require \$360. We have only collected \$36 so far. If you unable to shop for gifts you can donate money and I will shop for items needed to fill shoeboxes. Please put your donations in an envelope marked for OCC with a note indicating how you want your donation spent. Please make checks out to Cedar Grove UMC. All shoeboxes packages need to be returned in November 11th. Please contact me if you have any questions or suggestion. Sandraburns87@gmail.com or 410-867-7897.

The Homeless Ministry is in need of heavy blankets or comforters to give out on the monthly trips to help the homeless. All your donations are very much appreciated by both this Ministry and especially the Homeless.

The Deale Elks have experienced some damage to their building and they need help funding the repairs. For those of you who do not remember, a few years ago they selected us to receive funding in support of a number of our outreach ministries. Our Church Council has decided that in appreciation for their support of us in the past our church will make a donation to them and we will publicize their need. Donations can be sent to: Deale Elks Lodge at 6022 Drumpoint Road, Deale, MD 20751. A copy of their letter is posted on the bulletin board in the hallway outside of the sanctuary. Christmas Decoration of the Church.



MISSIONS CORNER

The Mission we are highlighting this month is **The South County Faith Network**.

The South County Faith Network, Inc (SCFN) was founded in 2005 by several local churches. The group has grown to 13 churches, including Cedar Grove UMC. We support SCFN with donations, fundraising, and volunteerism. SCFN is an interdenominational, not-for-profit, improving the quality of life for seniors and disabled adults in southern Anne Arundel County. The organization uses local volunteers to provide informal, home-based care and services that enable at-risk individuals to remain in their homes and enjoy a higher quality of life than they might otherwise experience.

Per SCFN's website, the senior population of South County is growing faster than any other area of Anne Arundel County. Demographic information suggests that 7%--or roughly 30,000--of the 500,000 local population is senior citizens. Of that group approximately 300 are believed to be the senior client base for this program. A survey of local churches found that the majority of the seniors in South County were women between the ages of 65-85 living alone in their homes. The greatest needs of the seniors are light house cleaning, grocery shopping, yard work, minor home repairs, maintenance and friendly visits. SCFN takes care of these needs in hopes of improving the quality of life of these individuals.



On behalf of the School Counseling Office at Southern Middle and most importantly the students who will benefit from the school materials that you donated, we appreciate and thank you for your generosity and continued partnership. ☺

—Oct. 16, 2018 letter to Cedar Grove UMC from SMS Counseling Office.

[Cedar Grove donated school supply items collected during our Vacation Bible School this summer as the children's mission campaign.]



BOOK CORNER

The Uncontrolling Love of God: An Open and Relational Account of Providence

Thomas Jay Oord, IVP Academic 2015 228pgs

I am sure you will struggle to understand what I am writing in this brief review; for short of writing 10 or so pages on it, it is almost impossible to clearly and completely present the argument of this book. You have to read the book to accomplish that, so my goal in this review is to hopefully give you enough to realize what this book is about, why it is an important topic, and that you would benefit from reading it.

As you read this review, you might wonder if everything I have to say about it is on this book because at times I felt as if this was a great book and at times I felt as if it was a terrible book. Yet, in the end I decided that this book is overall very much worth the aggravation it sometimes caused me because it addresses a very important issue about the power of God and the reality of evil. Perhaps the best way I can describe the theme of this book is that it tries to address the age old comment, if there is a God and He is all powerful how can he allow such terrible events to happen and that we also still retain our freedom as humans. For you see if God stopped every one of us from doing bad, sinful, horrible things and only allowed us to do what is good and right we would not be able to demonstrate our love for God and thus not return God's love for us.

Since most believers in God have some concept of God being powerful, believe that we have freedom and thus can love God as He loves us for love cannot be forced, and that God wants what is best for us, they struggle to understand why things in this world are far from the best. They ask how can God allow horrible things like 9/11, hurricanes, the Holocaust, and so on to happen. Don't we believe that if we have the power to stop someone from doing what is evil that we have a moral obligation to do so? Is this not the point of Cain's question to God, 'Am I my brother's keeper?' and we know the Bible answers Cain with a yes. So how can an all powerful God, who can stop all sin and evil, not do it and still be good?

From the very start, the book--by telling a few classic stories from real life of communal, national, natural, and individual horrors--looks at the basic ways people try to address the tension between a good and powerful God and horrible things happening. Oord then proceeds to look at all the classical answers of theology and philosophy for this issue and even includes the sciences and social sciences and what they can add to understanding God, humans, morality, evil, and how they interrelate. He even provides a typology of the different views on page 83, and from one end to the other these views of providence are:

- A. God is the omnicause (God causes everything to happen, good and bad);
- B. God empowers and overpowers (God causes some things, gives humans real freedom, allows all things to happen, and occasionally thwarts things from happening);
- C. God is voluntarily self-limited (God can have complete control but restrains Himself so that humans can be free, love, and do evil);
- D. God is essentially Kenotic (this is Oord's view and essentially it means that God is not all powerful, cannot do everything, respects our freedom and tries to influence us but never forces us);

- E. God sustains as an impersonal force (in other words God is not a person, but rather a force in the world, yes it sounds like the Star Wars movies);
- F. God is the initial creator and current observer (God does not intervene in the world, God created it, this is known as the Deist position); and,
- G. God's ways are not our ways (this position is simply saying it is a mystery, we can't know, etc.).

I will admit to you that I am a combination of Views B, C, and G. The crucial key for me is that God desires us to love Him which means we must be free and thus bad things can happen. (And Oord's view thinks love is important as well.) Yes, God does at times intervene and rescue but not always. When we struggle to understand--while I don't think we should begin with G, 'God only knows'--at some point we do have to accept our limited perspective and to remember that we are not God. I think View A fails because it makes God the author of all of our sins and we have no freedom. Views E and F fail because they reduce God to an impersonal force and do not align with the many stories in the Bible where God is depicted as intervening; the person of Jesus Christ comes to mind. View D which is Oord's view has some merit, but for me it does not match the God of the Bible and God not being all powerful and only cooperating with us is problematic. But Oord's view has given me some things to think about. The book up to this point is excellent and I agree with almost everything Oord puts forth.

However, I didn't like when Oord puts forward his solution in detail to the dilemma of an all powerful God, the existence of evil and tragedy, human freedom and how to make sense of it. Essentially Oord decides that he cannot believe in a God who is all powerful and doesn't stop all the really terrible acts of evil (what he means by this in my opinion is not completely clear, but I think he would say gossip is okay if God is all powerful He can be God and not stop that sin, but if God is all powerful and He allows someone to be raped, that cannot be a good God or a God he can accept). Oord believes that this cannot be a God who can be considered good and he concludes that God is not all powerful, never forces anything or anyone to do something (without their cooperation) and so what Oord thinks he gains is you cannot blame God when bad things happen. Thus, we have a good but limited God.

My problem with this is threefold. First, God is who God is and acts as God does. How can we say what/who God is if He exists apart from us and we only know Him from the Scriptures and in our lives? God does not wait to fulfill our definition of who and what God is, before being God. God acts, speaks, etc. and from that we know who God is. Oord suggests that God is not good if he doesn't stop all evil if He is able too. God has clearly allowed evil to happen so Oord concludes that God is either not good or not all powerful. What I think Oord is refusing to see is that we have not just the values of power and good, but also allowing human freedom so that we are able to love God. While it is true that God calls us to intervene if we can to stop evil, but when we do so that in no way eliminates our freedom or the freedom of the person doing the bad thing. For God to step in at every point when evil is about to happen and stop it, humans would not be free, we would not be able to obey God's greatest commandment to love Him for love must be voluntary. Additionally, who are we to judge God? How can the created tell the creator what He is all about? It is the other way around, the Creator tells the created who He is and who we are and what is right and wrong.

Second, this view of God does not agree with the God of the Bible. Now we can go down the road of editing out of the Bible the stuff we do not like that is revealed about God and His will for us, but where will that end? Are we not then telling God you will operate according to our will, rather than us think and live according to His will?

Third, we make a mistake when we think that our morality that God has given us in the Bible, such as the commandments, Christ's example, etc. means that God, in God's acting must be identical to us, for our morality to be good. What do I mean? We are told not to judge others, not meaning you can't tell someone they did something wrong we are called upon to do that, but rather to tell someone they are evil to the core beyond the redemptive love of God and destined for Hell. We can't do that, it is wrong, evil, and bad for us to do this because we are fallible (not to mention sinners ourselves), can't see into another person's heart, and do not fully comprehend what God can do in even the worst of sinners. But God can judge, because He is not fallible. He can see into our hearts, and to put it bluntly, He knows what He is doing! So taking a standard for humans, Oord's favorite example that if we have the power to help someone and don't that is wrong (Oord is correct), evidently does not apply to God, because God is God. While we might not be able to see how God makes it all right and sees that justice is done, that is more our problem based on our limited human view rather than an inadequacy in God or as Oord would have you believe is not either good or all powerful. And must I mention that Our Father in heaven stood by as His only Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus, died though He was not guilty of anything? I believe that while our rules, right/wrong, and morality might not be the same for God because He is God, when we cry out to Him when evil is done, wrong is done, tragedy occurs, God has experienced it Himself, close to His heart, and He hears us and will see to it that in the end all will be made right. Every injustice reversed, every broken heart mended, etc. Finally, the evil of the world, our not living in paradise, is the fault of humans, not God.

If you are still reading this book review, please e-mail me and tell me you actually got this far! (I mean it.) I loved reading this book. I really liked parts of it and really disagreed with other parts of it, but through it all it made me see this issue in a new light, from different perspectives, and to understand the issue more fully. I particularly enjoyed his interaction with other disciplines such as the sciences in talking about this issue. The book was published by IVP Academic so it is written with an academic audience in mind. Further, if you are not familiar at all with this issue and some basic understanding of the sciences you will at times struggle to follow Oord's argument. But overall the book is not too difficult to read and benefit from. If you have ever wondered why God didn't stop that terrible thing from happening, this is a book for you. You might not agree with Oord's answer but you will certainly have a deeper understanding of the issue and various strengths and weaknesses of the various answers one can give to the tension between an all powerful God, the reality of evil, and the human capacities of freedom and love. Finally, if you are confused by my review rest assured that if you read the book you will not find it to be a fairly easy book to read and understand either. Hence, the difficulty of just reviewing it in a few paragraphs!

If you decide to read this book I would enjoy talking with you about it if you have questions or thoughts about what Oord presents.

Pastor Glen Arnold