



Cedar Grove UMC

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From the Pastor's Desk . . .

Happy Anniversary and On To Year Two!

The Beacon July 2014



Office Hours

Monday	10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Tuesday	10:00 am to 5:00 pm
Wednesday	10:00 am to 5:00 pm

It has been one year since I was appointed as the pastor of Cedar Grove UMC. A number of days during June, I would think back to what I was feeling a year ago -- moving into my own home for the first time, wondering what it would be like at Cedar Grove UMC, and dealing with my feelings of going to what I hope and plan to be my last appointment. One year later I am no longer wondering what it is like to be at Cedar Grove UMC; I am still moving into my new home, and while this will be my last pastorate, the ministry is still the same as it was at my first church and all the ones after it.

While we need to continue to be a better church, overall I think we have had a good first year together. Just this past month we had the joy of taking in three new members to our church and a very successful VBS, and we surrounded many of our church families going through health issues with the prayers, love, and support they need. We as a church do this by the grace and power of God. I hope you will make our new members feel welcomed, will thank our VBS staff for doing a great job, and continue to support those in our church who are facing health issues. Also, don't forget to pray for the youth and adults who will be going on the SPY Mission in July.

We have been given an early charge conference date (September 28), and we will need to get to work on this earlier than last year. One of those things is filling committee chairs and members. We still do not have a Church Council Chair and a Missions Chair. All four of our committees, Missions, Lay Leadership, SPRC, and Trustees will need three new people each. If you are willing to serve, please let me know. Our church cannot function without every member doing their part! Please prayerfully consider stepping forward and serving on one of our committees or in a position of leadership.

Finally, within this newsletter you will find information about this year's Annual Conference session, which for me was the second worst Annual Conference I have attended. (How about that as a preview!)

I want to express my heartfelt thanks to every member and friend of Cedar Grove UMC for all that you have done to help us be the church we were this past year.

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

Glen

Welcome to our **new members** Boyd and Kathy Monday and Virginia Windsor.
If you are interested in joining our church, please contact the office and/or the pastor.

Acolyte Program - Given the difficulty we are having in getting kids/youth to be acolytes, the acolyte program will be coming to an end unless someone wants to take charge of it.



Book Corner

Twenty Five Milk Runs

Richard Johnson Trafford Press 2004 281pgs



While this is not a religious book, the type I usually review in this newsletter, it is a book written by a member of our church and does have one whole chapter on a former pastor of this church, Rev. Harold May. But the reason why I want to give a review of this book is that it gives you a very clear and entertaining look into what it meant to grow up in pre-World War 2 America, to serve in the military, and to live in Deale, Maryland.

The centerpiece of the book is Richard's service in the Army Air Force. A 'milk run' was what bomber crews in the European theater called what was thought to be a fairly safe mission. You will learn in this book that there were no 'safe' missions and that the line between life and death could be determined by the smallest of things. On either side of this centerpiece of the book are his stories about growing up and his life after the war. As someone who loves to read about military history, I would have enjoyed this book simply for its well told stories of being in combat but I must say that I also really enjoyed the other stories. Bill Kline's comments on the back of the book about how this book should be required reading for all of today's teenagers is well put, though I think anyone who grew up in post-WW 2 America would also benefit from reading this book about how Richard (or Dick as many of you call him) and his generation were willing to serve our country and defeat fascism and later on communism.

Now, reader beware, there is some 'salty' language in the book and some adult themes in the book, but Dick is to be applauded for telling the story the way it happened, even some of the uncomfortable parts! As he puts it at the start of the book, 'But this is the way it happened'.

I would recommend this book for anyone who wants to know more about what it meant to be a bomber during World War 2, what it was like to grow up in pre-WW2 America, and again as Bill Kline comments on the back of the book, 'It shows how a person can overcome the toughest obstacles in childhood and still achieve life's goals.' Finally, I must say that the book is well written, easy to read, and that Richard is a very good story teller.

CHURCH NEWS

VBS – We had a great VBS this year with about 50 kids at each session. I want to thank the following people who made this year's VBS such a success: Sharon Staley (leader of our VBS), Pam Foster (Tribe leader coordinator and lots of other stuff), Diana Seen (Market Place), the Youth Group, Greg Witte (pictures), Chuck Case (a great Moses!), Heather Parks (opening and closing), Paul Seen and Kevin Roby and helpers (assembling and un-assembling the market place), Mike Haas (sound room), David Rose and Casey Manifold (games), Stacey Witte and Cassie Keenan (nursery), Peggy L'Hommedieu (sign-in), Carla Hultberg (registration), Barbara Sturgell and Karen Sturgell (meals for volunteers), Bill Kline (drinks) and I constantly saw Betsy Weinkam, Janna Manifold and Maren Sheidy doing things though I don't know what their official titles were or even if they had them. We had many adults helping in the marketplace, the opening, as tribe leaders, and in too many places to mention them all by name. Also, a big thank you to our youth who not only help us have VBS, but make it a lot better for everyone. Of course, the biggest thanks goes to the kids and their parents who brought them for without them VBS would not be worth the effort! We collected \$745 for the mission project of bringing clean water to children in India!

Movie Night collected cereal for the Breakfast Club. Praise God and thank you movie nighters!

The Breakfast Club would appreciate any financial donations and if you would like to help in some other way contact Ingrid Quimby-High.

The **second refinished bench** has returned and looks great! Thanks Doug!

PASTOR'S REPORT ON ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2014

As I mentioned in my 'From the Pastor's Desk' article in this newsletter, I am going to report on what for me was the second worst Annual Conference that I have ever been too. That is saying a lot because I dislike going to Annual Conference every year and for one of them to really stick out for me as particularly bad is significant. I want to thank my Dad for taking me to conference and really, really thank Mike and Jeanne Haas for taking me home after conference! I also want to thank Mike and Jeanne Haas for going to Annual Conference this year.

For those of you who do not know what Annual Conference is all you need to know is that every church in our conference (all of Maryland except for Garrett County, Cecil County, and the Eastern Shore, plus the District of Columbia, and a small northeastern portion of West Virginia) sends its clergy and a number of lay people based on the size of the church to vote on matters of policy for our conference and to interact with the General Church. Most of the three days of the conference, we simply have worship, ordain clergy, remember those who have died, honor our retirees, and listen to reports. We then vote on various matters presented by conference boards and agencies and resolutions from the membership. Most of the voting, outside of approving the conference budget have very little or no impact on anything as often they are simply statements in favor or opposed to something.

There were some high points for me at this conference, our bishop gave a good message at the opening worship service, we heard some great singing and music from the Africa University group, and while it wasn't what I consider a Bible study, the Bible study leader told some inspirational stories about what God is doing in Africa and how we as a conference have helped make it happen through our support of Africa University, our mission trips, and help in the battle against malaria. On the down side sometimes the volume of the music was too loud for me and gave me a headache; but, that happens at almost every Annual Conference.

There was one issue, of which there were four resolutions on, and while they are not binding on anyone, they reflect the divisions and I would say the dysfunctional nature of our denomination. That issue is whether or not The United Methodist Church should affirm homosexual practice and same sex unions as compatible with Christian teaching and the Bible. The fact that we are debating this is amazing and depressing. I will offer the challenge that I have offered to every person, find me a passage in the Bible that affirms homosexual practice? Trust me you won't, because it doesn't exist. While Jesus never said anything about two men getting married or two women getting married to each other, when He did talk about marriage it was always between a man and a woman. The Bible seems clear on the fact that homosexual sex is a sin, and it is not a matter of interpretation, it is right out there in plain words. Look at the following verses: Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:27, and 1 Corinthians 6:9. How can we as a denomination be having a discussion about whether or not the Bible condemns homosexual practice? What we are really discussing is will the Bible play a role in our churches any longer, and as you read on you find that for the majority of our clergy and lay members to annual conference the answer is it will not.

What was even worse was the unfair way the four resolutions were processed through the conference. The conference leadership decided to 'suspend the rules' and have a different way of addressing these resolutions. In regular order the resolutions are presented and then people, up to three on each side are allowed to debate the resolution before the whole conference, make amendments, ask questions of clarification, and then we vote. After succeeding in getting the rules suspended they put forth the following process, the Bishop would speak for about 10 minutes on the pro-gay side, the makers of the pro-gay motions got to speak to the whole conference on the pro-gay

side, and then we broke up into groups of ten to have dialogue, not debate! At no time was anyone allowed to speak on the other side to the whole conference. Then we voted. The four resolutions passed on about a 5-3 ratio. In the days following this, the bishop and the conference newspaper hailed this as such a great process. Of course they feel this way because they are on the pro-gay side and won the votes and made sure that no other voices could be heard. Does that sound like a fair process? (This process was challenged and a decision from the judicial council on the validity of this process was asked for and we will get the answer in the months to come.)

I personally could care less about the sexual preference of any person. Further, if the Bible didn't say what it does about homosexual practice, I wouldn't care what the church decided. But the Bible does speak on this issue and it speaks clearly! The group of 10 that I was in at Annual Conference was all pro-gay except me. I heard a constant refrain that the Bible says we are to accept people, love people; we are all sinners, and so on. Yes, the Bible says that! But it also says that homosexual sex is a sin. We are to accept all who come to Jesus, we are all sinners, and then we are supposed to by studying the Word of God try and stop sinning and live the way God wants us too. Who decides what is a sin? Of course God does and He has primarily done this through the Word of God, the Bible. Let us move away from the gay issue, is adultery a sin? Is bearing false witness a sin? Is taking the Lord's name in vain a sin? Is murder a sin? I believe it is not up to me or a vote at Annual Conference to determine whether or not any of these things are sins, but rather we must go to the Bible and let God tell us. If we go the direction many want us to do, will every preacher have to end every sermon with "and that is what God in the Bible says and we all need to do it, well, until we decide we are not"?

The other aspect of this debate that makes me so angry and depressed is that somehow the ordained clergy who promised when they were ordained to uphold the rules of our denomination are now saying let me not do that and continue as an ordained minister. My brothers and sisters how can we continue as a church when we have clergy who will not keep the promises they made to God and our denomination? You have probably read in the Washington Post articles about a United Methodist Minister from Pennsylvania who violated the rules of our church, broke his promise to God and the church, and yet he says he did nothing wrong. It is a sad day for the church. He can say he disagrees with the rules of our church. Okay, then either change them (we have voted on this every conference since 1972) or leave if you don't like them. Finally, you can break the rules, but then if you are person of integrity, you will accept the punishment for breaking these rules which is surrendering your credentials as a pastor because you have demonstrated by what you have done that you do not want to be a United Methodist pastor.

Let me make one thing clear, even though these resolutions about changing our rules, not bringing charges against people who have promised to uphold our rules and then break them, to agree to disagree (This lame brained resolution basically says until we change our rules on homosexuality those who don't like the rule can do whatever they want. I wonder if we could do that on our apportionment payments to the conference? You know if you don't want to pay them you don't have to pay them!), and another odd resolution saying we oppose the rules we agreed to follow when we were ordained, **these resolutions change nothing because only the General Conference can change these rules. Our denomination is still in agreement with the Bible on this matter.**

I hope that you will pray for our denomination as it continues to struggle with this issue. The United Methodist Church is growing in Africa and in the Southeastern United States, gaining a foothold in Russia, and declining in the rest of the United States. There will be tough decisions and tough times ahead for this great denomination, and we need to do our part right here at Cedar Grove UMC. If you have any questions about this year's Annual Conference please let me know or talk to Mike and Jeanne Haas.

Pastor Glen Arnold