



The Methodist Messenger

FEBRUARY 2017

Whiteville United Methodist Church

Sunday School - 9:00 a.m.

Sunday Worship Service - 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday Communion Service - 6:30 p.m.



Last month Circles of Abundant Grace were formed in each district across the North Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church. Each pastor, accompanied by a church member, was encouraged to sign up for a circle and participate in its conversation. The topic of each 90-minute conversation was human sexuality, The United Methodist Church, and its recently formed Commission on a Way Forward. The Circles of Abundant Grace are a reminder that our church now has teaching on human sexuality. Below is one pastor's attempt to offer that teaching. (PTS)

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH'S TEACHING ON HUMAN SEXUALITY

The working pastor's duty is to propose, to the congregation, the Church's teaching (or doctrine). Not impose. But propose. As persuasively as possible.

It is the responsibility of each member and friend of the local church to receive the teaching, consider the teaching, accept or reject the teaching, and live accordingly. If there is rejection of what the larger Church teaches, the congregation's members and friends, while striving to be open, should enter into good-faith, deeper exploration of the Church's teaching.

Teaching is one way we United Methodists are the Church. We assume the Church, with 2,000 years of time-tested experience, has something to teach us.

Currently, The United Methodist Church is in conflict over matters related to human sexuality. Therefore, in the few paragraphs below, I would like to propose, in brief, the Church's teaching on human sexuality for your consideration.

THE CHURCH'S TEACHING

The United Methodist Church's Book of Discipline contains the Church's doctrine (or teaching). Regarding human sexuality, the Church teaches, in part: "Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are affirmed [by the Church] only with [within would seem to be the more appropriate preposition] the covenant of monogamous, heterosexual marriage." (Paragraph 161F on Human Sexuality, The Social Principles, The Book of Discipline [2012 and 2016])

This is The United Methodist Church's standing teaching on human sexuality, in the briefest possible form. There are more extensive, detailed statements -- and series of statements -- on this subject in the Discipline. But the above quotation forms the basis for the larger teaching of the Church on this matter.

This teaching comes from General Conference, which assembles every four years to establish The United Methodist Church's doctrine and discipline, with the help of the Holy Spirit, that are consistent with the witness of Scripture and Tradition. With this brief teaching on human sexuality, The United Methodist Church stands with the witness of historic Christianity -- through the ages and around the world. (Yes, there are exceptions. A few denominations in the United States have recently revised their traditional teaching on human sexuality; all of them, it is worth noting, are dividing and imploding.)

So, The United Methodist Church -- along with the larger Church -- teaches that sexual relations are reserved for marriage and only for marriage. All other sexual activity is outside the boundary of what God intends and wills.

Where does the Church get that idea? After all, today it seems, well, a bit out-of-step.

THE BIBLE'S FOUNDATION

Here is the most simple and direct way to respond. In frank conversation with some Pharisees about divorce, Jesus speaks clearly about marriage: "But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." (Mark 10:6-9, NRSV, here and below)

Here Jesus declares very clearly the context for sexual relations: marriage. In marriage, through marital relations, the two become one. Two people become one. The marital act is not a mere physical or biological act. It is a union -- a union -- of two people. The union of two bodies indicates a union of their souls as well. This union is so powerful that it can produce a child (or children), which the two-who-are-one can then welcome, protect, and raise.

To make His statement on marriage, Jesus draws from "from the beginning of creation." (Mark 10:6) That is, Jesus quotes from Genesis twice. The first time: "[M]ale and female he created them." (1:27c) And the second: "Therefore a man

leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh." (2:24) Here Jesus reaches back to His Father's creation of humanity as male and female, and to what the Father intends for humanity. Even at the creation, this plan for marriage -- for the husband and wife becoming one flesh -- exists.

Later in the New Testament era, in his Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul also discerns the marital union of husband and wife, and he relates it to the union of Christ and His Church. Paul writes: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church." (5:31-32) So, the truth of marriage and sexuality established at creation -- which is first revealed in Genesis, then quoted by Jesus, and again set forth by St. Paul -- appears across the entire Bible, the most detailed Story of the World, as we often call it. This is a powerful, life-transforming truth. This Biblical witness on human sexuality grounds the teaching found in The Book of Discipline.

MANY WAYS TO WANDER, ONE TOWARD RIGHTEOUSNESS

The Church does not look down on, or condemn, those who depart from its teaching on human sexuality. Rather, the Church occasionally proposes her teaching so that people are given the opportunity to repent, to receive forgiveness, and to begin to live transformed lives of true freedom, with Christ and for Christ.

Most of the conflict in The United Methodist Church today focuses on homosexuality. That seems odd. Homosexual activity is indeed one way to wander from the Church's way. However the vast majority of sexual sins have to do with heterosexuality. Lust. Pre-marital sex. Extra-marital affairs. Drug and alcohol abuse that leads to sexual promiscuity. Pornography. Digital exhaustion that results in vulnerability. Married men who refuse to leave their families of origin. Married women who refuse to create a home. Married men and women who put their jobs above the ones to whom they are married. All of these behaviors miss the mark. They are sins -- for which Christ died and was raised, for which there is forgiveness, and from which there is deliverance and new life.

The Church's teaching on human sexuality does not just bless whatever people are going to do anyway. That is the easy way. Rather, the Church, following the Word of God, presents the difficult way, the narrow way. As one who has veered and now veers from this path, who has been forgiven and is being forgiven, this pastor acknowledges the difficulty and narrowness of this way. But this path is the best way, the true way. True love and life, and true freedom and flourishing, are found by striving on this way.

In Christ,
Pastor Paul

2017 CAROLYN T. HIGH
PREACHING MISSION
Whiteville United Methodist Church
Whiteville, NC

Rev. Robert J. Bauman
Edenton Street United Methodist Church, Raleigh
Preacher

FEBRUARY 26/SUNDAY
10:00 a.m. Morning Service of Worship
and
7:00 p.m. Evening Service of Worship

FEBRUARY 27/MONDAY
7:00 p.m. Evening Service of Worship

Each Service of Worship will include very special music.

Rev. Robert J. Bauman is the preacher for the 2017 Carolyn T. High Preaching Mission.

Rev. Bauman has served as:

- *the Associate Pastor of Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church in Wilmington (1987);
- *the Associate Pastor of Swansboro United Methodist Church in Swansboro (1992);
- *the Pastor of Sunset Park United Methodist Church in Wilmington (1994);
- *the Pastor of Grace United Methodist Church in Wilmington (1998);
- *the Senior Pastor of Wrightsville United Methodist Church in Wrightsville (2007);
- *the District Superintendent of the Harbor District (2015); and
- *the Senior Pastor of Edenton Street United Methodist Church in Raleigh (2016).

Invite family members and friends to attend.

UNITED METHODIST MEN

Our WUMM meeting for February is scheduled for Thursday, February 2nd, at 6:30 p.m. at Joe's Barbecue. Please join us for good fellowship and food as we finalize the details of our annual Valentine's Dinner to be held this year on Tuesday, February 14th, at 6:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Please see any of the men in our group, or Kathy in the Church Office, for purchasing your tickets (\$12 each) while they are still available. We're looking forward to seeing everyone at our February meeting and also at our Valentine's Day Dinner.

– In Christ, Brad Crowell

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Worship service attendance averaged 86 in 2016, 7 less than the prior year. Attendance in January, March, and April declined sharply compared to 2015. Other than that, monthly attendance was only slightly less than 2015.

We met our 2016 budget. Offerings were \$319,022 compared to a budget of \$319,303. Expenditures were \$290,684. Thanks to your leadership, all work areas accomplished their goals within budget.

The year-end building fund balance was \$24,920. The Earl and Mildred Robbins estate includes an annual gift to the building fund. We received the first gift of approximately \$1,720 in November.

The year-end general fund balance is \$121,695 including restricted funds of \$71,270. Our available general fund balance is \$50,425. Deducting reserves of \$25,000 leaves an excess balance of \$25,425. Our policy of transferring the first \$15,000 of excess funds to the long term building and maintenance reserve leaves a balance of \$10,425. The finance committee requests direction for the use of these excess funds. – Tom Leggett, Finance Chair

UNITED METHODIST YOUTH

We will once again be collecting money during Sunday School and the Worship Service on February 5, 2017, for the Souper Bowl of Caring. Please prayerfully consider making a donation that will be used in the community. The next weekend is our ski trip to the mountains of North Carolina. Also be in prayer for safe travel and guidance for the leaders and youth for a safe adventure. We would like to remind church members that we are planning another yard sale and hope you can contribute donations (anything except clothes and shoes). Thanks again for all your support of the youth ministry at our church and continued prayers.

– Heather LaMora

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

United Methodist Women have attended the district officers training session and are ready to support the purpose of United Methodist Women locally, nationally and internationally.

Our next local meeting will be February 6 at 6:30 in the Church Parlor. Pat Ray, with assistance from several community personnel, will lead a program on “Mission Opportunities in Maternal Health.” Please remember that this meeting is for all women who want to gain new knowledge and, especially, to assist our local community as well as beyond. Pat Ray has the devotion, and JoAnne Biser and Pat Ray are hostesses.

For the second Sunday in March, we are planning a special UMW Sunday with a guest speaker. Please make plans not only to attend, but become involved. – Dixie Batten

SUNSHINE CIRCLE

The Sunshine Circle will meet on Monday, February 20, at 11:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Carolyn Hankins will give the devotion and also be the hostess. Florence Marlowe will have the program. All women are invited to

join us. Please bring your lunch; a beverage and dessert will be provided.

REACHING OUT

Reaching Out will meet Tuesday, February 28, at 6 o'clock at Dale's Seafood in Whiteville. Reaching Out consist of widowers and widows who meet for an evening of food, fellowship, and learning more about our community. Our guest speaker will be Fuller Royal, who the group always enjoys very much. If you are a widower or widow, please consider joining this group for the evening. – Dixie Batten

NURTURE COMMITTEE

According to Webster, the definition of nurture is “to supply with nourishment, to further the development of...”

As the new chair of the Nurture Committee, I wanted to understand the scope of the committee's responsibilities. Nurturing is more than giving food and nourishment to the body. It can apply to the spirit as well. While we plan many meals throughout the year, our committee oversees the children and youth ministries, Sunday School and Bible studies. Food for the spirit!

This month we will be planning and finalizing the Wednesday Lenten lunches for the 6 weeks between Ash Wednesday and Easter.

I know I have a hard act to follow after Sue Wells, but I will try to continue her loving leadership.

– Debbie Conway, Nurture Committee Chair

FROM UNCEASING THINKING TO UNCEASING PRAYER

Our minds are always active. We analyze, reflect, daydream or dream. There is not a minute during the day or night when we are not thinking. You might say our thinking is “unceasing.” Sometimes we wish that we could stop thinking for a while; that would save us from many worries, guilt feelings, and fears. Our ability to think is our greatest gift, but it is also the source of our greatest pain. Do we have to become victims of our unceasing thoughts? No, we can convert our unceasing thinking into unceasing prayer by making our interior monologue into a continuing dialogue with our God, who is the source of all love.

Let's break out of our isolation and realize that Someone who dwells in the center of our beings wants to listen with love to all that occupies and preoccupies our minds.

– From Bread for the Journey by Henri Nouwen
(submitted by Darryl & Wanda Diefes)

PARISH NURSE NOTES

The next American Red Cross Blood Drive will be on Tuesday, April 18, from 2:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in the WUMC Fellowship Hall. – Pat Ray, Parish Nurse

*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made,
Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.*

– Psalm 139:14, NRSV



Whiteville United
Methodist Church
902 Pinckney Street
Whiteville, NC 28472

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Mission Statement of Whiteville United Methodist Church

As people of the body of Christ, we will gather for and be strengthened by Word and Sacraments, participate in loving fellowship, grow in discipleship, and serve our community and the world in Christ's name.

The Whiteville United Methodist Church Service of Worship is broadcast on WTXY 1540 AM from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. on Sundays. Also it is available online at www.wtxy1540.com: **click on "Church Services" in the upper heading, and then click on "Click to Listen Live" next to "United Methodist Church of Whiteville"** at 10:00 a.m. to hear the complete audio of the service.

Mrs. Kathy Graham, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Layton Dowless, Custodian

Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday

9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

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Rev. Paul T. Stallworth, Pastor