



“A House Divided:” The United Methodist Church

As you may know, for decades our denomination has been debating the most godly way our UMC should relate to self-avowed practicing homosexual persons, particularly in regards to ordination and same-sex marriage ceremonies (both of which are currently forbidden in our Discipline). Faithful people who read the Holy Scriptures have come to differing (but legitimate and defensible) interpretations of the will of God in regards to homosexuality, and how the church should approach this impasse.

In an attempt to find “A Way Forward,” the denomination held a specially-called General Conference earlier in 2019. At that session, a number of possible “ways forward” on this issue were presented for consideration. Among those proposals were several options, ranging from full-inclusion of LGBTQ people in the life and leadership of the church – to leaving the decision about how congregations relate to LGBTQ person up to individual congregations or clergy – to doubling-down on the restrictions on LGBTQ inclusion (reinforcing the total ban on same-sex marriage and homosexual ordination, with punitive enforcement mechanisms for the disciplining of congregations and clergy that seek to welcome all people, i.e. extending the rites of the church to all, regardless of their sexual orientation). The result of that General Conference was to adopt the “Traditional Plan” – the most restrictive and conservative option. The Plan goes/went into effect on January 1, 2020.

As you can imagine, the more progressive and centrist segments of our UMC (a huge proportion of UMs in the United States) are unhappy with the General Conference’s decision (a position that won with only the slightest majority – with nearly all of the African delegates who comprised 40+ percent of the delegates, voting in favor of that plan). When the decision was made at the 2019 General Conference, not surprisingly,

a great deal of tension was created, since people on all sides hold very strong feelings on this matter. While many in the UMC worldwide celebrated this outcome as a faithful interpretation of a few verses in the Bible, large segments of the UMC (primarily in the USA and Europe) who feel full-inclusion is a matter of justice and the ever-expanding grace of God extended to all people, are grieving the outcome and wondering if there is room for them anymore in the UMC. As we move forward as a denomination, we need to relate to one another with grace and love, especially with our LGBTQ sisters and brothers, and all those who have experienced this decision is hurtful.

Since the called-2019 General Conference, major segments of the UMC in the US have organized and are presenting other options for our denomination to consider at our regularly-scheduled 2020 General Conference this spring. Basically, the proposals fall into two camps: 1) Ways to restructure our denomination so that there is more autonomy for various regions of the UMC that then would be free to adopt differing stances on this issue; or 2) Plans for allowing for a split in our UMC so that one or more new denominations are formed, reflecting various approaches. We have no way of knowing what will come from the 2020 General Conference, but it seems likely that there will be a decision that will bring significant change.

As you may have experienced yourself, there is a great deal of anxiety about the future course of our UMC, and what impact it might have on local churches. My view and recommendation is to NOT stress about it (since we don’t have any real control over the outcome), but to wait and see what the General Conference decides, and what option there may be, or decisions which we may be asked to make. We can trust in the faithfulness of God, that there will be a future for our congregation – a future that God wants to bless – no matter what!

(continued next page)

"A House Divided:" The United Methodist Church (continued)

My Position

I confess that these past couple of years have been stressful for me personally. I am a "centrist" in the church, one who longs for both faithfulness to God's Word, while at the same time, extending love and grace to those with whom I may not fully agree. I have many clergy and lay friends on "both sides" of this issue, and understand the motivations of their hearts for the positions they hold. I am as torn by this issue as is our beloved denomination. I grieve for the brokenness of our UMC fellowship. In light of what has been decided by the 2019 General Conference, I think it is appropriate that I, as your pastor, share with you how I view this issue:

I do not believe that homosexuality is God's intention for creation. We are created male and female for each other – biologically by design. However, I also recognize that we live in a world where God's intention has been corrupted, so that much of our experienced reality is not in accord with God's design (creation is broken). That means that for some people, same sex attraction may be their reality (and not their "fault"). In all of life in this "fallen" creation, we have to deal with life as it is, not as we may wish it to be. For that reason, I recognize LGBTQ person's need for relationship and fulfillment in this broken world in which we live. They, no less than we who are heterosexuals, should relate to those they love with faithfulness and commitment. However, the institution of "marriage" is to be reserved for the joining of husbands and wives, as Jesus makes clear (Mat. 19:5).

I affirm LGBTQ persons as people of sacred worth who

are loved passionately by God, as are we all. I value the gifts they bring to the church. I strive to minister to them as their pastor just as I minister to others. In the congregation, they should be welcomed and loved, not judged or condemned.

That is the least we can do as people of grace. John Wesley, our founder, established "Three Simple Rules" for the people called Methodist: 1) Do no harm; 2) Do good; 3) Stay in love with God. May we practice those rules in this and every situation we face.

I hope that our congregation will continue to love and welcome ALL people so that they might encounter the love of God for themselves, and commit their lives to Him. I also hope for our congregation, that even though we have members and friends on all sides of this issue (and other issues), we may seek to love one another and treat one another with respect, recalling the wise words of our founder, John Wesley, when he said: *"Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller differences."* ("The Catholic Spirit")

And, may we never forget Christ's word to you and me: *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* (John 13:35)

I love being your pastor!
Pastor John Gil

New Pastor's Bible Study – "The Book of Acts"



Beginning Tuesday, January 7 (10 a.m.), Pastor John will begin leading a study of the Book of Acts, the story of how the Holy Spirit birthed the Church. Bring your Bible and a friend! (We will meet in the Large Classroom on the north side of the Education Building.)

Non- Communion Sundays

Every non-"Communion Sunday," communion will be offered for all those wishing to receive. Elements for Holy Communion will be on the altar, and the pastor will include a prayer of consecration as a part of the prayer time near the end of the service. Then, immediately following the conclusion of the service, you may move forward to the altar, and the liturgist or a Lay Servant will be happy to serve you communion. (Gluten free bread)



*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking of sleeping, thy presence my light.*

"Be Thou My Vision" is a text loved by many. The text has had a long and interesting journey to become the hymn we know today. The original text can be found in two manuscripts dating from the eighth century. They can be found in the Royal Irish Academy Library and one is a clear copy of the other. Mary Bryne translated the manuscripts into sixteen literal couplets that were then published in the *Journal of the School of Irish Learning* in 1905. Following this in 1912, Eleanor H. Hull arranged the text into twelve metric couplets and published them in her *Poem-Book of the Gael*. A comparison of the two texts is very interesting. In 1919 Hull's text was first adapted into a hymn and paired with the tune SLANE for the Irish *Church Hymnal*. After this, the text's history was sealed. It appeared in many British hymnals and was brought to the United States after World War II. "Be Thou My Vision" appeared in United Methodist hymnals in 1957. Most hymnal editors continue to work off of Hull's text, pairing it down to four stanzas. The tune SLANE is a traditional Irish melody that is found in Patrick Weston Joyce's unpublished work *Old Irish Folk Music and Songs: A Collection of 842 Irish Airs and Songs* which was completed in 1909.

Carlton Young writes that "Be Thou My Vision" is "a prayer for the vision of God to be sustained throughout one's life." The text begins by asking God to be our vision. What can be overlooked is the second half of the first line which says "O Lord of my heart." We are asking God to be our vision because of the relationship we already have with God. God is the ruler of our lives and has a plan for us. Because of this we are seeking to know and understand this plan so we can be obedient. God's plan for our life is better than our own. "Thou my best thought, by day or by night, waking or sleeping, thy presence my light." Throughout each day God is shining light to guide our path. All we have to do is search for this light to guide us. No matter what we are doing God is with us. The second stanza in our hymnal discusses God being our

wisdom. This helps us focus on God's word as a guide for both our inner thoughts and lives as well as our vision and actions. Through reading Scripture, God will teach us how to live and help us discern our path. One stanza found in other hymnals starts out saying "Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight." God is our source of strength to get through the trials of life. Sometimes we face situations that may seem impossible to get through or triumph over. When we rely on God for strength God will lead us through our trials. It still may not be simple but it will be easier with God by our side. Another stanza not found in our hymnal starts out saying "Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise." This reminds us of Jesus saying "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will also be" (Matthew 6:19-21). Everything on Earth will pass away and sometimes we will not be given the praise we deserve by people around us. However if these are the things we are searching for to fulfill our lives, we are looking in the wrong places. God's treasures are greater than any treasures we can gain on Earth. "Great God of heaven, my victory won/may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!" Through Jesus our salvation has been won, a place in heaven has been prepared for us. As we begin a new calendar year, my prayer is that we will all seek God's vision for the life of this congregation and for our personal lives and that we will be more intentional about seeking after the ways God is calling us to grow and change. Asking for our vision to be God's vision is not always easy but will in the end be the more rewarding.

Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me.

What did we do in 2019 as a church for our brothers and sisters in Christ? Actually, we did quite a bit, in so many ways, through our various Mission Groups, such as:

Aphasia Group – We hold weekly gatherings to help those who struggle with speech problems as a result of having had a stroke

Christmas for Kids – Through monetary donation from our generous congregation we were able to bring Christmas to 22 local children. Seven people from our congregation volunteered to shop and the Monday morning Small Group along with an extra helper or two, wrapped all the gifts that were delivered by men from our congregation. What a great team effort.

Cookies for Cops – Two months of the year we make cookies for our local police force

Ecumenical Council – Helps to feed about 1200 families monthly, plus additionally distributing 100 boxes of food for both Thanksgiving & Christmas

Florida UM Children's Home – We made an annual commitment to donate \$12.00 per member for a total of \$1740.00 to help the UM Children's home. We actually collected from all of you a total of \$5582.31. Our total donations greatly exceeded our commitment!

LOL Youth Mission Activities – On their Mission Trip they worked at a food bank & served food to homeless folks. All year long they package pills for a clinic in Haiti and monthly make sandwiches for local people who are homeless. They painted the office of the Big Brothers/Big Sisters in Vero Beach. As one can tell, our youth are learning to be the hands & feet of Jesus in our world!

Light Up Night – By participating in this community activity we served about 250 people pulled pork sliders & Christmas cookies. Visiting children had an opportunity to make Christmas crafts.

McCurley Mission in Japan – Our congregation made a commitment to donate \$2500.00 in support of this mission. We have fallen short of our commitment as our congregation has only donated \$1050.00 this year.

Again if you feel the call to help sponsor this mission you still have time before year end. Jonathan is the Ministries Coordinator at the Asian Rural Institute, training rural leaders predominately from Asia, Africa & the Pacific area. These leaders are trained in sustainable agriculture and sound ecological practices as well as leadership training to enable them to teach others in their home locations

Salvation Army Bell Ringers – This was our 1st try at Bell Ringer to help & support the Salvation Army in their efforts to help those in need. They do incredible work &

help many. We joined with RUMC and took one day at Walmart manning the two doors. Together we collected \$655.58 in that one day. The door that Roseland UMC had higher traffic area because it is the door leading into the grocery area. Regardless it was a great take for one day. The SUMC door brought in \$203.34

Sandwiches for Homeless - 2 Sundays every month we make sandwiches that are distributed to people living in the woods in town.

Stamp Out Hunger – Our volunteers, using our truck picked up donated food & delivered it to the Ecumenical Council.

SUMC Discretionary Fund – Provides assistance to those in various types of need this year our congregation contributed \$1450.00, however \$2373 was distributed to folks in need. So we have a shortfall there. If you feel called to help in this area you still have time before year end.

Summer Music Camp – 3 weeks of camp for local children, bringing them stories of the Bible & teaching them to sing and perform in front of an audience.

Thrift Shop's outreach to persons in need – provide furnishings & household items to families in need

Trunk or Treat – Fun and games along with a safe environment for trick or treating, rain or shine

Welcome Table – Because of the generosity of our congregation donating both money & food we are able to provide a monthly dinner, restaurant style, at 2 low income senior residences in town. Additionally our Choir takes home-baked Christmas cookies to both locations and sings Christmas Carols in December.

WOW!!! It is awesome to see how much and in how many different ways we are reaching beyond our doors to bring the love of Christ to others.

I have come to know and become friends with many good, kind, loving & caring people here at SUMC. My life & faith have been forever changed (for the better). You all have my gratitude and love. I understand the needs are many and not one of us can do it all, but together with Jesus as our guide, we are unstoppable!

I wish for you all the Hope, Love, Joy & Peace of the season, that you may carry it with you every day of the year.

Donna Osborne,
Mission Chair

Lois Planeta Small Group (closed session) January 6 & 20, 9 a.m. in the large classroom

Barb Farrington Bible Study 10 am "Bad Girls of the Bible" will meet every Monday in the small group room.

Snow Birds Small Group Tuesday January 14 & 28 in the Small Group Room at 7:00 p.m.

Note: this Snow Bird Small Group is full but Barb Farrington will start another if needed. See Barb Farrington or call the church office

Pastor's Bible Study Tuesday, 10:00 a.m. in the large class room

Ben Ashton Adult Bible Study Wednesday 10:00 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall

Mary Lou Rothfuss Small Group (closed session) January 9 & 23 9:30 a.m. in the small group room

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Weekly Opportunities

Computer Circle 1:00 p.m. Tuesday in the church office (conference room)

Informal instruction on computers and smart phones, all welcome.

Men's "Out to Lunch Bunch" Tuesdays at noon. Meet at Roadside Café in Sebastian, all welcome.

Happy January Birthday

Pat Mays	January 1
Suzann Moritz	January 7
Jackie Gowin	January 10
Robbie Messersmith	January 12
Irene Strever	January 12
Bill Messersmith	January 15
Terri Gill	January 16
William DeJonge	January 17
Jeannette Schumacher	January 19
Doris McNutt	January 25
Theresa Kraft	January 26



Confirmation Class starts January 5

Please pray for our youth

Confirmation in The United Methodist Church is a time of intentional preparation, it gives teens and tweens the opportunity to reflect on the most basic tenants of our faith and gives them a safe environment to ask questions and grapple with the divine truths and mysteries proclaimed by the church of Jesus Christ. Confirmation helps youth to investigate the depths of the faith and helps them begin to understand what it means to become a fully-devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

ATTENTION UNITED METHODIST LADIES!!



A new year is starting and each of you have an opportunity to make a difference in your community, church and personal life. What do you have to do? Give up one morning a month. Our United Methodist Women meet the third Friday of the month in the Fellowship Hall. Currently we bring a bag lunch while coffee, tea and refreshments are provided.

What do we do? First of all honor our God. We want to walk in his shoes and help those that are in need. Alone it is more difficult to make a big difference; but together with God we can do great things.

Each month we meet at 10 a.m. at the Fellowship Hall, the third Friday. We have a schedule of items to bring for the food pantry. January will be pasta and sauce.

Since we are starting a new year, come prepared to suggest projects and ministries that are near and dear to your heart.

Come for approximately 2 hours of creative, supportive and worshipful fellowship with your sisters in Christ.

All Ladies Welcome


When: January 17th, 2020

Where: Fellowship Hall

Food Pantry Item: pasta/sauce

Brown Bag Lunch

January 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<div>Men’s Out to Lunch Bunch 12:pm Tuesdays at the Roadside Restaurant Computer Circle Tuesdays 1 pm CO</div>			1 <i>Happy New Year Church Office Closed</i>	2 <i>3 pm Joyful ringers 7pm Handbells</i>	3	4
5 <i>10 am Worship 11 am Fellowship Hour FH 11:30 am U of L LCR & CCR 3 pm LOL at par- sonage</i>	6 <i>Lois P Small Group 9 am LCR closed group Barb F Bible study 10 am SGR 4 pm Ecumenical Council LCR 7 pm SPR—CO</i>	7 <i>10 am Aphasia FH 10 am Pastor Bible Study LCR 12 pm Rug Hookers FH</i>	8 <i>10 am Bible Study FH 2 pm Stewardship Committee CO with Gary Spen- ser</i>	9 <i>9:30 am ML Small Group (closed) SGR 7</i>	10	11
12 <i>10 am Worship 11 am Fellowship Hour FH 11:30 am U of L LCR & CCR 3 pm LOL YR</i>	13 <i>Barb F Bible study 10 am SGR 7 pm Trustee</i>	14 <i>9:30 am Stroke of Hope FH 10 am Pastor Bible Study LCR 12 pm Rug Hookers FH 7 pm Snowbirds SGR</i>	15 <i>10 am Bible Study FH 6 pm Potluck FH</i>	16	17 <i>United Methodist Women 10 am FH</i>	18
19 <i>10 am Worship 11 am Fellowship Hour FH 11:30 am U of L LCR & CCR 3 pm LOL YR</i>	20 <i>Church office Closed Lois P Small Group 9 am LCR closed group Barb F Bible study 10 am SGR Finance 6 pm LCR Admin 7 pm LCR</i>	21 <i>10 am Aphasia FH 10 am Pastor Bible Study LCR 12 pm Rug Hookers FH 7 pm Flute</i>	22 <i>10 am Bible Study FH 3 pm Joyful Ringers 7 pm Handbells</i>	23 <i>9:30 am ML Small Group (closed) SGR 7 pm Choir</i>	24	25
26 <i>10 am Worship 11 am Fellowship Hour FH 11:30 am U of L LCR & CCR 1 pm Brass 3 pm LOL YR</i>	27 <i>Barb F Bible study 10 am SGR People & Process Group 6:30 pm Fellowship Hall</i>	28 <i>10 am Pastor Bible Study LCR 12 pm Rug Hookers FH 7 pm Flute 7 pm Snowbirds SGR</i>	29 <i>10 am Bible Study FH 3 pm Joyful Ringers 7 pm Handbells</i>	30 <i>7 pm Choir</i>	31 <i>Handbell Concert 7:pm</i> 	
<div>Weekly Room Use Groups Alanon meets Tue & Thurs 7:30 pm LCR AA Closed Session Tue 6:30 FH</div>						

Lenten Devotional Call for Writers



During the season of Lent, (yes Lent! it is just 2 months away!) Pastor John is going to be doing a sermon series that explores who Jesus is according to the different Gospel writers which will culminate with a sermon on "Who Is Jesus According to You?" on Easter Sunday.

So, who is Jesus according to you? We want to know! We are going to create a devotional for Lent written by members of the congregation. If you are interested please write no more than 2 paragraphs on who Jesus is to you.

This should include personal experiences. Please also include a short Bible passage and a prayer.

These should be modeled after The Upper Room devotionals. If you are interested and have any questions please see Pastor John or Megan.

You can email your writings to:

Megan at meganmash@gmail.com or Sharon at johnsonumc@bellsouth.net.

The deadline for submissions is February 9. We are looking forward to hearing from each of you about who Jesus is in your life!



Inquirers' Class

Three-Week "Inquirers' Class" in January

Our Church has developed a three-week "Inquirer's Class" for all those curious and wanting to learn more about the Christian faith, the United Methodist Church, and this congregation. This three-session class will be made available every month on the first, second, and third Sundays of every month, and repeated each month. They will take place during our University of Life hour (11:30 p.m. for 45 minutes) and will take place in

the Small Group Classroom (south side of the education building). This class is designed especially for those who are not yet members of our church to help answer questions folks might have as they make a decision about joining SUMC, however, members may also find it helpful. The sessions are as follows:

Session #1 (Jan. 5): What It Means to Be a Christian

Session #2 (Jan. 12): What It Means to Be a United Methodist

Session #3 (Jan. 19): What It Means to be a Member of Sebastian UMC

Those not yet members may choose to join on "New Member Sunday," the fourth Sunday of each month (Jan. 26). If you are interested in learning more about your faith, exploring baptism and/or professing your faith and becoming a member of SUMC, either as a full or affiliate (seasonal) member, join us for these session and/or contact Pastor John at 321-794-0010 or johnngillumc@bellsouth.net.

Have You Never Been Baptized?



NOTE: On January 12, in our worship, we will invite everyone to renew their baptismal covenant/vows. That service would also be a perfect time for those who have never been baptized to do so! If you feel the nudging of the Holy Spirit to present yourself for the Sacrament of Baptism, please contact Pastor John! (321-794-0010 or johnngillumc@bellsouth.net)



Handbell Concert

"He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"

Friday, January 31, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

At Sebastian United Methodist Church



Sebastian United Methodist Church
1029 Main Street
Sebastian, Florida 32958

Pastor John Gill
Pastor's cell 321-794-0010
johngillumc@bellsouth.net
Church Office: 772-589-5230
Thrift Shop Direct Line: 772-388-0405
sebastianumc@bellsouth.net



As we blow out the Christmas Candles...

Let us carry the Light of Christ with us throughout this coming Year...

Let us feel Christmas Joy in our hearts and let His Holy Spirit Shine

In our hearts, so we may spread His Love to everyone we meet, every

day of the New Year!

Nancy L. Fox
December 6, 2019