

COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE MIDLANDS

Unapologetically Christian, Unapologetically Progressive

Pastor's Paragraphs

“FAKE NEWS”

We've heard a great deal about so-called “fake news” during the past year—most of it, of course, as political diatribe. According to my dictionary, the word ‘fake’ means a person or thing that is not genuine. However, in politics, it seems that the expression ‘fake news’ has been mistakenly coopted to refer to any news item that the person speaking doesn't like, any article or report with which the person speaking disagrees. In this article, I am not referring to that *misapplication* of the term. Rather, I am referring to fake news that actually *is* fake news, news that, according to the dictionary, is *not* genuine, news that seems to have no basis in fact.

Leonard Pitts, Jr., a writer for the *Miami Herald* has written an excellent article that was published in *The State* newspaper on September 14, 2017. It is entitled, “God Doesn't Waste Time with These ‘Prophets’.” In it, he decries the *genuinely* fake news of a rather large number of ministers (and their followers) who have a habit of making outlandish statements based upon grossly *uninformed* interpretations of scripture. I have noticed recently that so much of it seems to be utilized in unloving ways that intentionally defame the LGBTQ community.

One pastor, Keith Swanson informed his congregation and the general public that Hurricane Irma would not have hit the United States if the U.S. Supreme Court immediately had outlawed same-sex marriage. The minister certainly has a right to be against same-sex marriage and to express his opinion openly, but is his statement that outlawing same-sex marriage would have *diverted* a disastrous storm based on fact—or is it an unfortunate example of pseudo-religious fake news? What do *you* think? My even *asking* the question seems unnecessary!

When Hurricane Harvey recently destroyed much of Houston, a radio preacher by the name of Rick Wiles insisted that *God* wanted to devastate the city because of its “LGBT devotion.” Fact—or more fake news? It seems never to stop!

When Hurricane Sandy devastated New Jersey's shoreline, the Rev. John McTernan announced that *God* was responsible for the storm's serious damage because of God's rage against “the homosexual ‘agenda’.” Moreover, when Hurricane Katrina shattered New Orleans, Gerhard Wagner, a Catholic priest, insisted that God was punishing the city for its “gay-friendly ways.” One more example—proof, that when peeved, God does not limit God's destructive activity to the United States: The noted TV preacher, Pat Robertson, apparently is so familiar with the mind of God, he proclaimed adamantly that the calamitous earthquake that demolished Haiti was an act of God for similar reasons. I could cite numerous other examples, but surely the one's I've mentioned will suffice. It seems that pseudo-religious fake news never stops, and much of it is aimed at the LGBTQ community because of God's assumed distaste for people who

had no part in *choosing* their sexual orientation. Through no fault of their own, they experienced what all *heterosexual* people do. Most, around the age of puberty, simply *discovered* their sexual orientation. No one said, “Now let’s see, I think I’ll choose this instead of that.” No one! So, would God hold someone responsible for something that he or she did not choose?

It just so happens that October is the month in which the LGBTQ community will be having its annual Pride celebration. The word ‘pride’ often carries the connotation of arrogance, hubris, self-importance, or the feeling that one is better than other people. This is not the sense in which the word ‘pride’ is used by LGBTers. Rather, it is employed to refer to the right to self-esteem, self-respect. However, the question TV ministers such as Jerry Fallwell, Pat Robertson, and all the others mentioned earlier would ask is this: Do LGBTers have a *right* to self-respect if they are out of favor with God?

Since this is Pride month *and* the month in which churches celebrate Reformation Sunday each year, I want to take the question of the aforementioned fundamentalist radio and TV preachers seriously by substituting something *positive* and, I hope more accurate, for their fake news. On Sunday, October 8th, I’m going to deliver a sermon on a subject I’ve never addressed and have never heard anyone else even *attempt* to address. It’s entitled, “A *NEW PERSPECTIVE ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION: WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY?*” Is it actually possible to *know*? Come and see!

With deep appreciation and abiding love for each of you, I remain

Your pastor and friend,
John

IT'S HAPPENING AT CCM

October, 2017

Please note that, during the month of October, we will be gathering for worship and spiritual growth on the second and fourth Sunday.

Sunday, October 8 (2nd Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. WORSHIP

Since we will be observing Reformation Sunday today, instead of focusing on an event that occurred in the 16th century, we will be looking at what in our churches—and perhaps in ourselves—might need to be reformed in *this* century!

The sermon topic announced in our pastor's article in this newsletter will highlight an issue that seems not to go away: *God's* attitude toward sexual orientation. So, in a totally *new* sermon with an equally *new* perspective, John will do something that it seems no one else has ever considered-doing: He will ask and attempt to answer the question, "What would *Jesus* say on the issue?" Is it *impossible* to know that, or are there some amazingly important clues that have been overlooked or ignored that could give us an answer? Today, you might discover that there *are* some valuable clues that are *hidden within the Bible*—evidence that can help to clear up a host of misconceptions sincerely held by a large number of ministers and parishioners. Consequently, you just *may* experience the surprise of your life: that reform doesn't have to be *limited* to the 16th Century! Discussion will follow worship. (Out by about 12 noon)

Sunday, October 24 (4th Sunday of the Month)

10:00 a.m. ENLIGHTENMENT: SPIRITUAL VALUES APPLIED TO IMPORTANT CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

At our last session, we looked at the issue of *Health Care*, a subject that concerns each of us as well as those we love. It also is in the news almost every day now, although no one seems to be looking at that vital concern through a spiritual lens. So, we, at CCM, set out to remedy that omission!

Today, we will focus on *another* issue that continues to face our country: that of *immigration*. Again, people seem to be holding strong positions without reference to *spiritual* values! At CCM, we shall do our best to be more prudent. Without telling our people to take one position or another, we present and discuss whatever spiritual principles are available to us and leave each person to

make his or her own decisions based upon them—or not. Our goal in this engaging series is consciousness-raising, an effort to expand our awareness based upon biblical wisdom. Since you aren't likely to find this opportunity anywhere else, we offer it with hope and a prayer that we will become better, more responsible Christian citizens, and that our world will be a better place in which to live because we came together to try to make a difference. (Out between 11:30 a.m. and 12 Noon, depending upon the extent of group discussion)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CCM “NAMES IN THE NEWS”

Harriet Hancock

If you've noticed that Harriet Hancock's regular seat on the front row has been empty, there's a good reason! She recently flew to Crofton, Maryland, to see her namesake, newborn Harriet Mae Hunter, her great granddaughter, born September 3rd. Congratulations to Harriet on another milestone in her marvelously meaningful life.

LaVoice Kallestad

So many of you have asked about LaVoice and told us how much you are missing her. LaVoice is serving as the temporary interim pastor of a local church until that fellowship can engage a *regular* interim minister. In that capacity, she is using her many talents to do both preaching and teaching. We look forward eagerly to her return when those responsibilities come to an end.

Betty Sullivan

We express our love and deep caring to Betty Sullivan and her family on the loss of Betty's brother-in-law. On a recent Sunday, Betty was out of town with her sister and other family members as, together, they shared in the experience of loss.

Timothy Werts

The month of September was a bit of a 'downer' without Tim's valuable presence—but *good news*: Tim and his wife Kim have been celebrating their wedding anniversary with a trip to Italy. At least that's what *Kim* thinks. The truth is probably that Pope Francis needed to engage Tim to tap some of his abundant spiritual wisdom. But cheer up. Rumor has it that Tim's saving at least a *little* of it for us when he returns!

KUDOS TO CCM!

In our worship gathering on Sunday, September 10th, our pastor, based on a reported comment of Jesus to “be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect,” tackled a difficult issue in his sermon entitled, “WERE JESUS’S EXPECTATIONS OF US *UNREALISTIC?*” Our worship experience went extremely well that day as some of those present seemed actually to sit on the edge of their seat.

Afterward, of course, we had our usual time for discussion of the sermon following worship. In the past, some of our congregational discussions have been quite good, while others have been less so, especially when some of us occasionally “chased rabbits!” But on September 10th, the discussion was *outstanding*, with wide participation and so much enthusiasm that it was difficult to stay within our allotted time period. Moreover, interest seemed so high that nobody cared that we went 15 minutes overtime.

There are times when the sky is cloudy and occasions when the heavens seem to open and the light of God shines through. Thank you to our wonderful congregation for sharing so meaningfully in these splendidly fulfilling times together.

ANOTHER KUDO FOR CCM!

Recently, the minister of a new church, who was going from door to door in Forest Acres, stopped by our pastor’s home to solicit interest in becoming a part of his congregation.

John thanked him for the invitation but told him that he wouldn’t be available because he, also, is pastor of a church. The man asked if John had any printed material about CCM that he would be willing to share, so our pastor handed him a copy of the September newsletter and pointed to our multiple websites conveniently printed on the last page.

John’s article, “GO TO HELL,” caught his eye and he wanted to read it then and there; so he did. After he finished, he said, “Why is it that I’ve been going to church all of my life but have never had access to information like this? You don’t need to come to *my* church, *I* need to come to *yours!*”

After a brief discussion, he indicated that he had never had an opportunity to be a part of a *progressive* fellowship in which he could grow *beyond* where he already *is*. Moreover, he said that truly engaging articles and sermon topics that could help him to *deepen* his spiritual journey were never available to him. “I have just begun a church of my own, but I had rather be a part of yours,” he added. “It seems as though CCM has something special going for it, far beyond the ordinary church.”

That encounter was a reminder to John, *especially* coming from a fellow minister and seminary graduate (Duke University) with a master’s degree in theology, that CCM *does* have “something special going for it.” At times, perhaps, we *all* need someone such as my visitor to remind us of that. But it takes an open, receptive congregation to take advantage of opportunities to deepen

personal growth that leads to a fuller life and a better world. So, *kudos*, CCM. Take a bow! Now, let us try continually to live *up* to the wonderful assessment others have of us.

CCM:

SIGNIFICANT SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

FOR THE

21ST CENTURY

We can take you *deeper* on your journey than
most other local venues.

***WHEREVER YOU ARE, THE DIFFERENCE
IS WORTH ANY DISTANCE!***

Our Telephone:

Senior Pastor: (803) 331-9999. Our mobile cell phone is more reliable than our landline phone, because it is on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If no one answers, it usually means that our pastor is in a meeting, in a counseling session, doing regular spiritual mentoring, or is involved in some other form of ministry; but he will return your call as soon as possible, so please be sure to leave a message.

Our Websites:

CommunityChurchMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)

or

CommunityChurchOfTheMidlands.com (Also .net, .info and .org)

Our Mailing Address: P.O. Box 6946, Columbia, S.C. 29260-6946

Our Location: CCM usually gathers on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month, and any changes will be noted in our monthly newsletter. Please join us at the gorgeous Seven Oaks Community Center in beautiful Seven Oaks Park, 200 Leisure Lane (between St. Andrews and Piney Grove roads, just off I-26 West). When you enter the spacious parking lot, you'll see the main entrance to our newly renovated building on your right. Once you are inside the Reception Area, our meeting locality is on your left. For updates on our programming, to verify meeting times, to learn about changes in scheduling, or for any pastoral need, please feel free to call 331-9999, night or day.

ALWAYS, WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!