

# ***COMMUNITY CHURCH OF THE MIDLANDS***

***Unapologetically Christian, Unapologetically Progressive***

## ***A Mothers' Day Article***

### **FORGET THE “#ME TOO” EFFORT TO HIGHLIGHT WOMEN’S RIGHTS!**

That’s right. You can forget “#Me Too” completely. It pales into insignificance compared to the incredible radicality of Jesus’ personal relationships with women, *especially* when we remember the unpalatably repressive strictures with which women had to contend in the era in which Jesus lived.

It is easy, in our time, to forget how *few* rights women had during that period of Jewish history. The situation was far worse than a mere “What you said or did made me feel uncomfortable.” Women were *seriously* disenfranchised. Of course, there were *some* dissenting voices raised in favor of more freedom, rights and badly needed respect for women, but there were too few to make a difference.

I am not exaggerating. Women were not allowed to be witnesses in a court of law, and they did not have the ability to divorce their husband; but husbands could initiate divorce proceedings against women for virtually *any* reason. In the area of religion, women could not be taught the *Torah* (Jewish law). Only men had that privilege. Women were deemed ritually “unclean” for merely menstruating or just giving birth to a baby. In fact, their dismal lot was not unsimilar to that of women in parts of the Arab world today. They had to be veiled when they were in public. Only men were allowed to eat a meal outside the home; and if a woman did so, she was vilified as a

prostitute. In short, every woman's identify was limited to being the *property* of some *man*—usually her father or, if married, her husband.

But the fate of women during the time of Jesus did not stop there. They frequently were blamed for any supposed problem in society, even by biblical writers. Remember the Old Testament story of Adam and Eve? When both the woman *and* the man disobeyed God, who got blamed? Eve—not Adam, and she is portrayed as being punished by God who *multiplied* her pain in childbirth and told her that a man (her husband) would “rule” over her. Also, if a woman and a man were caught in the act of adultery, who in that stern society usually suffered punishment? It was the *woman* who was punished, ordinarily by being stoned to death, while the man with whom she was caught usually was allowed to go free. That was considered “justice”!

As most of you know, we have an account of one of those aforementioned experiences recorded in the gospel of John. What is truly *remarkable* in that report is that Jesus dared to be the *only man* who risked taking a stand to do what was right. Of course, as we know, he saved a woman from being put to death, but that is not the only thing he did that was remarkable. In the face of society's vilification, finger pointing and angry denunciation, he went against accepted tradition and even his own scripture by treating the woman with unanticipated tenderness and deep respect. With uncommon compassion for that era, he told her that he didn't condemn her; but he recommended that she consider not hurting her husband and children by breaking Jewish law again. *Instead of condemning her, he put her in touch with her deepest self; he helped her to claim the depth of her own goodness and to accept her capacity to change.* What if, instead of condemning, attempting to hurt or just avoiding someone else because of inappropriate past or present behavior, *we* were to be the mediators of such a priceless gift?

There are numerous other examples in the gospels of how Jesus went blatantly against prevailing cultural norms that caused people to reject *him* for doing so. During his ministry, he even ignored tradition by actually *traveling* with women—an act that would have been considered outrageous

in his lifetime and caused him to be rejected and condemned by the religious people of his time. I could cite other examples of how Jesus put his own welfare in jeopardy in order to lift the level of women by his own example; but that would be unnecessary, because already, you have got the point of this article.

We already have seen how Jesus dealt with a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. Instead of berating or condemning her as other religious people did, Jesus put her in touch with her higher self and helped her to claim the depth of her own goodness, including her ability to change. But that which is *equally* important is the way in which Jesus dealt with her self-righteous, hyper-punitive accusers—those who wanted to murder her. *How does one deal constructively with people who are quick to condemn what they perceive as evil in others but are too spiritually blind to see the evil in themselves?*

Again, unlike many of us, Jesus *avoided* vindictive *condemnation*, even of the woman's would-be murderers. He didn't yield to the temptation to tell them how deplorable they were—a tactic that would have caused *him* probably to be stoned to death as a heretic who did not follow the Jewish law and accepted traditions; moreover, he would not have accomplished his goal of saving the accused woman's life. Instead, Jesus tried to “educate” those hypocritical accusers by helping them to see any evil, not *just* in the woman but, also, that which existed in *themselves*. “Let the one of *you* who has never done anything reprehensible cast the *first* stone at her.” Instead of arguing with them that to be a murderer is worse than being an adulterer, he helped them to realize that, as finite human beings, they had much in *common* with the woman: We *ALL* have “growing edges.” That *especially* is true when it comes to our tendency to judge others censoriously which, of course, is easy to do when we do not *see* our own shortcomings. And what was the *result* of Jesus's approach? Because Jesus, with exquisite skill, raised the accusers' awareness of their *own* culpability, they “dropped their stones and walked away.” Sometimes, our offering the gift of *insight* to one another *instead* of angry condemnation can be a powerful stimulus for

constructive change. After all, *every one* of us has *some* untapped growing edge, so it hardly is helpful simply to condemn, try to hurt or avoid someone else who needs to grow when we, also, are confronted with the same situation. Self-awareness matters!

Women who are disenfranchised or taken unfair advantage of by our society are doing us *all* a favor (not just themselves) *by* educating us, giving us insight, broadening our self-awareness, thereby putting us in *touch* with our “growing edges.” After all, who does not have one in *some* area of his or her life, perhaps yet unrecognized.

But should we *forget* the “#Me Too” movement as the title of this article seems to imply? Not literally. The point, of course, is that when we compare the situation of women today with that which women faced in Jesus’ era, the state of affairs in *his* time was far *more* appalling. But he did not avoid it—and neither should we.

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

Your pastor and friend,

John

# IT'S HAPPENING AT CCM

*May, 2019*

**Sunday, May 12<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the Month)**

**10:00 a.m. WORSHIP GATHERING: SPECIAL SUNDAY OBSERVANCE**

This Sunday, of course, is Mothers' Day; and it also is the beginning of National Family Week—an occasion which thousands of churches throughout the nation will be celebrating. We, at CCM, will be among those who will be observing this important day.

But *ours* will be no *ordinary* observance. Our pastor's message just may knock your socks off, because he will be talking about some of the most shocking words even attributed to Jesus, a startling comment which you may not even realize is a part of your Bible. That is not exaggeration. Here it is:

“Whoever does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters... cannot be my disciple.”

Based on the above passage of hair-raising scripture, John's message for the day will be entitled “JESUS' *OUTRAGEOUS* VIEW OF THE FAMILY.”

(It is our custom not to have our usual open discussion of the message following worship on Mothers' Day. Rather, we seek to

maximize the qualitative time that families, especially those with persons visiting from out-of-town, have to spend together on this special day of family togetherness. Consequently, we plan to adjourn by about 11:15 a.m. *instead* of at 12 noon.)

### **Sunday, May 26<sup>th</sup> (4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Month)**

#### **10:00 a.m. HOW TO USE MINDFULNESS TO EXPERIENCE A BETTER LIFE AND MORE MEANINGFUL RELATIONSHIPS**

Yep. That's what we've been striving to do in our informative series on Mindfulness: to help ourselves to experience a better life and more meaningful relationships.

In our *last* session, we learned about how mindfulness can contribute to our overall experience of happiness. But today, our topic will be "HOW MINDFULNESS CAN HELP US TO DEAL MORE CONSTRUCTIVELY WITH *ANGER*."

The truth is that we human beings—every one of us—have experienced and will *continue* to experience anger. It is an emotion that *no* one can escape; and it has the potential to make our life, as well as that of others, miserable. But what if anger can be utilized in a manner that can make our life and that of others *better*, more deeply fulfilling? Today, assisted by insightful research on mindfulness, we'll explore that possibility. (Out by about 11:30 a.m.)

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## *EMBRACING*

We embrace the family of Gloria Jean Beard with our love and caring. Gloria Jean departed her physical journey with us just before Easter and will be deeply missed. Gloria is the daughter of Inez Resister and the niece of Gloria Stroud.

## *REMEMBERING JOYFUL EXPERIENCES*

Judging from your gracious comments, last month was a very special month for us because our times together were so memorable.

## *FIRST EXPERIENCE*

On Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, we experienced our first Conversations with the Pastor session of 2019—a time reserved for you to pose questions to our pastor on any issue related to our spiritual journey on which you would appreciate his reflection. When we began offering that opportunity, we really had no idea whether it would meet a need. However, the initial session was so meaningful that we received a request to have more of those opportunities in the future. Consequently, we scheduled three for this year instead of one.

When we announce a Conversations with the Pastor Sunday, we never know what will happen. Will no one *have* a question? Will questions be of little or no value to the group? Will John feel that he has little or nothing to contribute? However, each session that we've had thus far has been excellent, propelled by truly significant questions from you with which all of us have been able to identify. Our last time together was no exception. We'll have *two more* opportunities this year—one in July and another in November. Let us hope that they will be as meaningful as our previous ones have proved to be.

## ***SECOND EXPERIENCE***

Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup> was particularly meaningful because it was *Easter* Sunday. John's message was one that you would not be able to hear in *any* other church because it included a number of his personal experiences that give credence to the likelihood that life *does* continue after our earthly journey. However, *one* of John's experiences was *so* powerful and convincing that it comes closer than any scripture, sermon, or philosophical argument to proving that deceased persons not only live on in another dimension but, under certain circumstances, can and do often communicate with us in multiple ways. The sharing of that incident left a number of our people convinced, beyond all shadow of doubt, that not only does *Jesus* live and communicate with us, but loved ones, no longer alive physically, probably continue to be with us in vitally significant ways that may not always be recognized by us.

So, at CCM, both Sundays in April rendered for us some marvelously memorable, joy-filled occasions that could not be duplicated anywhere else—and, even here, will never again be experienced in the same way. Our fellowship has so very much for which to be thankful, and we stand on tiptoe looking forward to the possibility of other similar experiences.



# **CCM:**

**HELPING PEOPLE TO CONNECT  
MORE DEEPLY WITH GOD,  
THEMSELVES, AND  
ONE ANOTHER!**

**WHOEVER YOU ARE, WELCOME  
TO CCM!**

AS FOLLOWERS OF THE PATHWAY OF JESUS,  
WE ARE A SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP IN WHICH WE  
SEEK TO GROW IN LOVE FOR GOD, SELF, AND  
OTHER PEOPLE IN A WAY THAT AFFECTS ALL OF  
OUR RELATIONSHIPS, ACTIONS, AND DECISION  
MAKING, THEREBY HELPING TO MAKE THE WORLD  
A BETTER PLACE IN WHICH TO LIVE. WE WELCOME  
WITH OPEN ARMS, MINDS, AND HEARTS ALL WHO  
DESIRE TO CONNECT  
WITH US

***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 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> 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!***