

COVENANT CHRONICLE

A NEWSLETTER FOR COVENANT CHURCH PCA OF FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS

Pastor's Note

Dr. Paul Sagan



In a recent message on Daniel 3, I spoke about what the recent overturning of the Defense of Marriage Act by the Supreme Court, which heretofore has prevented the recognition of homosexual marriages at the federal level, might mean for the church going forward. I spoke about the fact there is a real possibility that the Bible's teaching on homosexuality will not only be ignored but may come to be considered a crime to hold to and proclaim as the truth that God shared. There are several cases in Canada and in Britain where preachers have been arrested for telling what the Bible says about this issue. These instances show us the path we are heading down as a culture and the pressure will increase in all parts of the visible church to conform to the government mandate. We must be firm to speak the truth of God no matter what the consequences.

Such occasions challenge the church to be faithful to our calling to speak the truth and to ask ourselves what these things mean. Whatever else it might mean, it does illustrate rather starkly that the Christian consensus that once shaped the United States view on the family and marriage no longer exists as more than a memory in the cultural consciousness of American society.

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*Our purpose is to glorify God by
loving Him and loving people.*

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Romans 1:30 makes it clear that homosexual relationships are the end of the downward spiral of moral decay that occurs as a result of rejecting the truth about God. We are living at the end of that spiral in our present culture.

The Supreme Court decision is the end of a long series of moral issues that have eroded the truth of biblical worldview that are the result of an erosion of a biblical worldview that began much earlier in our history with the failure to maintain the sanctity of marriage. The widespread adoption of no-fault divorce laws in most states, or the de facto practice of such laws as is in the in Arkansas have so cheapened marriage that this Supreme Court ruling should not surprise us. The cheapening of life in the 1972 Roe v Wade decision has further divorced sexuality from its main intended consequence which is the procreation of life and fulfillment of God's mandate to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:22).

It was the kindness of God that brought us to repentance, may the Holy Spirit produce in us that same kindness to those who are lost and struggling with sin.

Our church and all churches are called to be faithful to the scriptures in this and all matters that come to us from the world. And what we need to be

keenly aware of is that it is not enough to engage in hotheaded indignation about this or any other moral issue. Rather, we must squarely face the issues of where we as a church have failed and live according to the Gospel of grace, and to love God and others according to the principles of the moral law. To those we encounter in our culture who are struggling with sexual sin and indeed all matter of sins we must not judge with an arrogant attitude of self-righteousness. The Apostle Paul after condemning all sinful behavior and describing homosexual sin as the end result of total rebellion against God, warns against the sin of self-righteousness, "Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things". (Rom 2:1 ESV) All sin, not just homosexual sin, condemns. We all stand deserving of judgment, as the apostle further reminds us in 1 Corinthians, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: either the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. "(1Co 6:9-11 ESV)

Announcements

Officer Nominations: The Session has opened the nomination process for Elder and Deacon. Nomination forms are available at the back of the sanctuary.

Ice Cream Social: This year's Covenant Ice Cream Social will happen on Sunday, July 28, at 6pm, following the evening service. Bring your favorite homemade ice cream or your favorite store bought variety. We will need toppings and desserts as well. A sign-up poster will be in the foyer Please join us!

Fellowship Committee Meeting: There will be an organizational meeting of the Fellowship Committee after church Sunday, July 21, in the church library. All members and friends that have expressed an interest in serving need to attend. If you are interested in serving in the kitchen, please join us!

Mission Trip: July 26-Aug. 4. Pray for these who are going: Doug, John, Charles, David and Isabella Nystrom, Jeff, Susan and John Chewning, Ken and Jan Hargis, Esther Atkinson, Ed Walker, Joseph Shelby and Pete Golden.

Sunday School Teachers Needed: We will begin the new Sunday School Year on September 8th and would like to recruit and train additional teachers and workers for our growing Christian Education department. If you are interested in learning more about becoming a Sunday School teacher, or participating in the Children's or Youth Programs on Wednesday night, contact Pete Golden, Matt Gumm or Ken Hargis for details.

Ordination/Installation of Ken Hargis: Sunday, July 21, 5pm.

General Assembly Report

Ken Hargis

The 41st General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America met in Greenville, SC from June 17 through 21. Key issues and debates that were discussed at the GA this year follow:

1. **Paedocommunion:** this is the practice by a very few congregations in the PCA that would allow young children to receive the Lord's Supper before making a public pro-fession of faith. This issue was brought to the attention of the Assembly by the Committee that reviews Presbytery records. In their report it was discovered that at least two Presbyteries – Pacific Northwest and Central Florida – had granted exceptions to the Westminster Standards to candidates for the ministry. The Assembly has dealt with similar cases since 1988. Paedocommunion is still considered an exception to the Westminster Standards that is not allowed most Presbyteries. Those who hold this view are not supposed to teach or practice it in our churches.
2. **Insider Movement:** This involves evangelistic efforts to Muslims. This is the second year that the PCA has addressed this issue which was based upon the theory that the best way to reach Muslims with the Gospel of Jesus Christ was to contextualize the Bible and Christian terminology in order to make the Scripture more acceptable to Muslims. Last year, the PCA study committee reported on the first part of the debate that dealt with principles of Biblical interpretation and on divine familial names (i.e. "Father" and "Son"). This year, the second part of the report dealing with theology, gospel missions, and the Insider Movement was presented. The main debate concerning this report concerned the "Minority Report" written by a PCA Elder who was a former Muslim – His attempt to address the practical realities associated with Muslim evangelism got tangled up in a poor use of words that suggested that the God of the Bible and Allah were the same God. The Assembly sent the report back to the study committee to rework the language and concepts that were most confusing or offensive.
3. **Standing Judicial Committee (SJC):** This committee is the "supreme court" of the denomination. The SJC has the final say on all cases dealing with doctrine or discipline so it is a very important that the right individuals be elected to this committee. Like ever organization, the PCA has members from different perspectives. Some in the PCA want to be very strict in their interpretation



and application of the Westminster Standards, some want to be much more lenient in their interpretation and allow broad exceptions. These two wings in the PCA attempt to make sure they are represented on the SJC, so much effort goes into the nomination process. The report from the Nominating Committee on the first day of the Assembly took an extraordinary amount of time due to the parliamentary maneuvering that was occurring to get each side's nominees for SJC on the ballot. The results were that neither side completely prevailed.

4. **Overtures Committee:** This is the committee that reviews the various requests from Presbyteries to have the General Assembly make decisions regarding issues that impact the entire denomination. Essentially, the Committee makes a decision and then presents it to the Assembly to vote "up" or "down". The hot issues this year involved a request to retry a case that had been formerly ruled on when it was discovered that one of the judges had left the PCA and joined the Roman Catholic Church. The overtures were ruled "out of order" because the constitution of the PCA states that the rulings of the Standing Judicial Committee are final.
5. **Mission to the World:** Paul Koostra, MTW Coordinator announced his retirement and reported that a search for his replacement may take as much as eighteen months.
6. **Resolution on Child Abuse:** A personal resolution was presented early in the Assembly concerning the PCA position and response to cases involving child abuse. Although the entire GA was supportive of this overture, it was decided to recommit the resolution to committee to make sure the language and content was compatible with the civil legislation already in most states.

Generation to Generation

The Poor in Spirit

Ken Hargis

Continuing our series on the Beatitudes and their application to child raising; we look this month at Jesus' teaching, "*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*". People often use this passage in an attempt to comfort friends or family at the death of a loved one, however, the proper application for Matthew 5:4, relates to sin not to death.

We live in a world that has dismissed the idea of sin as something only religious fanatics believe in. We explain away disobedience as physical disorders or natural consequences of a dysfunctional environment. No one is to blame, everyone's a victim and there is always a rational explanation for bad behavior.

Our children learn very early how to avoid the consequences of their sins (disobedience and rebellion); they lie or blame others or conjure up excuses to justify and defend their actions, and if we as parents and grandparents aren't careful we may even find ourselves accepting these responses as "normal" or "acceptable" based upon our culture. But remember, it is our responsibility to train our children to be more like Jesus NOT like other sinners.

Ignoring sin is dangerous! In fact, what Jesus is teaching us in this beatitude is just the opposite! He is telling us that when we confront sin and call it what it is we will be blessed", *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*". Comfort never comes from making excuses for sin; it only comes when we listen to our conscience and confess our disobedience and rebellion as an offense against God. True comfort comes when we can honestly mourn for our sin by repenting of our actions and begging God for His forgiveness.

As difficult as it may be, we must use those moments when our children disobey to teach them about God, about sin, and about forgiveness through Jesus Christ. If we want the next generation to be comforted by the gospel we must teach them about the greatness of God and the ugliness of sin so that they may learn to truly mourn when they offend His Holiness.

***"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered."
~ Psalm 32:1***

Camera Club

Lee Mekkes

Church Photo Exhibit entries should have been submitted now. They will be in the library for all to see. Come by and take a look.

Stay tuned. Camera club is on a break for the summer, but we'll be posting a new schedule of photo themes soon. Check next month's newsletter.

Financial Summary

Doug Nystrom

General Fund	JUN '13	YTD
Non Designated Giving	\$ 24,471	\$ 122,733
Designated Giving	\$ 1,060	\$ 14,175
Total Giving	\$ 25,531	\$ 136,908
Total Expenditures	\$ 22,993	\$ 141,660
Balance	\$ 2,538	\$ 4,752

Missions Fund	FEB '13-JUN '13
Giving	\$ 38,391
Expenses	\$ 36,795
Balance	\$ 1,596

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