



THE ROCK



JULY 2015

Volume 1, Issue 35

Epworth UM Church

1540 Camp Road
Charleston, SC 29412
www.epworth.net
office@epworth.net

Church Office:
(843) 795-3722

Pastor Ben Burt:
(843) 532- 0146



Editor:
Thelma Ford

Designer:
Karey Gogolin

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 5

Military Appreciation
Cookout 11:15 AM

July 11-18

Salkehatchie Team in
Rock Hill

July 12

EMS Appreciation
Cookout 11:15 AM

July 14

Charlotte Herbert 10:30 AM

July 18

Crafters Meeting 10:00 AM

July 19

Fire Fighter Appreciation
Cookout 11:15 AM

July 20

Carrie Bull 7:30 PM

July 21

Administrative Council
7:30 PM

July 26

Salkehatchie Cookout 11:15 AM

The shooting at Mother Emanuel AME Church has rekindled debate over the confederate battle flag's prominent location on state grounds. Most people have deep feelings about this flag, what it stands for, and whether it should (or should not) be flown on the capital grounds. As I prepare to throw my two cents in, I approach this conversation with humility. After all, I am a Yankee from New Jersey, so who am I to have an opinion on this topic, right?

Pastor Ben's Corner

I must confess, I do not understand people's appreciation for this flag. I did not have anyone in my family fight for and/or die for that flag. So from my perspective, I am not sure why anyone who is American would desire to celebrate a flag that stood in opposition to America. In other words, people who flew the confederate battle flag shot at (and killed) American troops. So as a patriotic, tax paying American, I do not fly any flag that stood or stands against America. I understand that I am approaching this from a rather unpopular perspective. But, what if we put our Southern and Yankee differences aside and look at this from a Christian perspective.

When we read the Scriptures, we are constantly challenged to have an altruistic worldview (Matthew 5:43-48). Jesus is constantly telling us to give of our selves for the well being of others (Mark 10:17-31). Jesus motivates us to serve, rather than be served (Mark 10:43-45). Even in the Old Testament, God challenges the establishment in favor of the oppressed (Isaiah 1:17). So what does Scripture call us to do in this situation?

I believe Jesus would ask us, "What is more important, the 'history' some claim this flag stands for or the pain others claim it stands for?" Regardless of what some people may hope this flag stands for, it is a symbol of slavery and countless racist groups have used it. Jesus says the greatest commandment is love God and love neighbor. So is fighting to fly this flag at the state capitol an act of love to those who see it as a sign of pain? Once again, the greatest commandment is not about having our own way, rather it is about sharing the love of Christ with the entire world.

Just for fun, let's play a game of "worst-case scenario." I'll go first. What if the worst-case scenario is I am wrong about the flag? What if it truly is not a symbol of hate, pain, and racism? What if we take it down anyway? Well, the worst-case scenario is people can still visit the flag in a museum and individuals can remember their family heritage while continuing to live out the southern culture of hospitality. When Christ returns to judge the quick (living) and the dead, I doubt He will be upset that this flag was moved to a museum.

Now lets flip this around and say the worst-case scenario is this flag is a symbol of hate, pain, and racism (at least to some). What if flying this flag on state grounds continues to lead some people to think that racism is acceptable? What if flying this flag on state grounds is painful for some of our brothers and sisters in Christ? When Christ returns to judge the quick (living) and the dead, I believe Jesus will judge those who care more about protecting a symbol of hate/pain than hearing the cries of those it hurts.

Jesus reminds us that we (Christians) will be known by how we love others (John 13:34-35). Our defining characteristic is not where we spend an hour each Sunday, or how often we can quote Scripture. Our defining characteristic is loving others. Taking the flag off state grounds and putting it in a museum does not prevent us from loving anyone. However, fighting to keep the flag flying on state grounds keeps us from fully loving our brothers and sisters who are hurt by it.

Editor's Page *Thelma Ford, Editor*

We always think of July as the freedom month. We rejoice and party on the fourth day of the month. This day in July 1776 marks the day that America received its freedom from Britain.

The result of the American Revolution War -

There were thirteen colonies established and they were taxed without representation. They rebelled—the British came. Who was right and who was wrong? Out of the Declaration of Independence came the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They cover a lot, but still, only Christians accept Jesus Christ.

There should be a law against it was the outcry of everything that happened. Well, there is a law against it. It is called the Ten Commandments.

There were many laws made and recorded in the Old Testament. Lots of them were broken. God sent His Son Jesus to teach us how to live.

The New Testament records the Ten Commandments which if they were recognized and lived by would be sufficient. Moses received the laws and they have been passed down from generation to generation, and yet with all the laws recorded in the Old Testament and all the laws that have been made since the Bible was published, we still have things that happen and the outcry is "there should be a law against it."

Well, there are some things that you cannot legislate. You cannot legislate LOVE. Jesus announced that he did not come to

*Let us not love
in word or talk
But in deed
and in truth*

abolish the law. But he added one more -
-LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

The goal isn't to get people to church. The goal is to get people to Christ. Being a Christian does not change what you deal with—it changes how you deal with it.

Charleston, which has been called the Holy City, has certainly displayed how Christians deal with the recent tragedy that has taken place. It has been dealt with unity and love.

Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, with ties that cannot be broken. Bind us together, Lord. Bind us together with LOVE.
God bless.

Love, Thelma

*“Owe no one anything,
except to love each
other, for the one
who loves another
has fulfilled the law.”
~ Romans 13:8*



The Charleston tragedy: How should we respond? By F. Willis Johnson

God is with us. While we may not understand the providential nature of God, it is what it is. God is, even in tragedy, God who is present. It's not by accident that, even in this moment, God reminds us of that by fact by the very location where such things happen. There is no right place for wrong action. There's no right way to do things that are unrighteous. For evil, there are no lines of demarcation in this life. God is Emanuel. God is with us. Even right now, people are most disturbed by the brazen nature of this and other violent acts. The malice and the motivation is obviously racial intolerance. The fact that a 21-year-old could be so biased in his beliefs, and diabolical in arriving early, listening to the word of God, and then think he is doing someone a favor by not killing them so that she would tell the community why it happened leaves even the most devout bewildered. Still, God is Emanuel.

Christ our Redeemer. What is our response? Our response at all times, in Christ, is focused on redemption. I don't know how you redeem or reconcile at this point other than expressions of forgiveness, expressions of tribute. At some point we have to take off our sack cloths. Likewise "lady justice" must be unmasked to the reality that what is politically and constitutionally right is not always righteous. We need to live up to the spirit of law, not the letter of the law. Our practices have to be consistent with our faith because no one knows the day or the hour.

The only thing that will conquer hate is our deciding to love. Such is the imperative of discipleship to love. Love that is unconditional. Situations may result in catastrophe. Circumstances may seemingly justify condemnation, but that's not what Christians are allowed to do. We are not allowed to counter-punch. We are required to love in the face of pain, prejudice and persecution, doing so unconditionally.

This is a tragedy not just to Emanuel AME Church in Charleston. It is a tragedy felt across faith traditions. An evil enacted against the human family. The African Methodist Episcopal church is a strand of the Wesleyan tradition, and we need to understand how its trauma inextricably impacts us, then infinitely enlist to respond to it.

F. Willis Johnson is the senior minister of Wellspring Church in Ferguson, Missouri.



JULY BIRTHDAYS

- 1** John McGill
- 1** Don Cook
- 1** Jonathan McKeown
- 4** Pastor Ben
- 5** Terry Huggins
- 5** Veda McMillian
- 5** Anna Smith
- 8** Neil Chavis
- 10** Kiyah Garten
- 10** Kenny Hunt
- 16** Kenny Holloway
- 17** Patti Hunt
- 20** Judy Cook
- 22** Layla Holloway
- 24** Candace Majors
- 25** Pam Nelson
- 27** Jason Pullen
- 31** June Williams

Our birthday prayer for you is that God's abundant love forever fill your heart, your mind, and your life!

Happy Birthday!

JULY 2015

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<i>"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8</i>						
			1 Prayer Meeting 10:00 AM Youth Meeting 6:00 PM Choir Practice 7:30 PM NA Meeting 7:30 PM	2 Contemporary Band 6:30 PM	3 Family and Friends Game Night 6:00 PM	4
5 Sunday School 9:00 AM Traditional Worship 10:00 AM Military Appreciation Cookout 11:15 AM Disciple Bible Study 2:00 PM	6 Finance Meeting 6:30 PM Serenity AA Meeting 8:00 PM	7 Visitation Team 10:00 AM Boy Scouts Meeting 7:00 PM	8 Prayer Meeting 10:00 AM Youth Meeting 6:00 PM Choir Practice 7:30 PM NA Meeting 7:30 PM Youth Meeting 6:00 PM	9 Contemporary Band 6:30 PM	10 Family and Friends Game Night 6:00 PM	11 Salkehatchie Team in Rock Hill
12 Sunday School 9:00 AM Contemporary Worship 10:00 AM EMS Appreciation Cookout 11:15 AM Disciple Bible Study 2:00 PM	13 Serenity AA Meeting 8:00 PM	14 Visitation Team 10:00 AM Charlotte Herbert Circle 10:30 AM Boy Scouts Meeting 7:00 PM	15 Prayer Meeting 10:00 AM Youth Meeting 6:00 PM Choir Practice 7:30 PM NA Meeting 7:30 PM	16 Contemporary Band 6:30 PM	17 Family and Friends Game Night 6:00 PM	18 Crafters Meeting 10:00 AM
Salkehatchie Team in Rock Hill July 11-18						
19 Men's Breakfast 7:30 AM Sunday School 9:00 AM Traditional Worship 10:00 AM Fire Fighter Appreciation Cookout 11:15 AM Disciple Bible Study 2:00 PM	20 Carrie Bull Circle 7:30 PM Serenity AA Meeting 8:00 PM	21 Visitation Team 10:00 AM Boy Scouts Meeting 7:00 PM Admin Council Meeting 7:30 PM	22 Prayer Meeting 10:00 AM Youth Meeting 6:00 PM Choir Practice 7:30 PM NA Meeting 7:30 PM	23 Volunteers at J10 9:30 AM Contemporary Band 6:30 PM	24 Family and Friends Game Night 6:00 PM	25
26 Sunday School 9:00 AM Contemporary Worship 10:00 AM Salkehatchie Appreciation Cookout 11:15 AM Disciple Bible Study 2:00 PM	27 Serenity AA Meeting 8:00 PM	28 Visitation Team 10:00 AM Boy Scouts Meeting 7:00 PM	29	30	31	
Pastor Ben is covering Pastoral Care for Folly Beach UMC July 12-31						