

THE COVENANT

August 2011

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Saving Jesus From the Church - Class

We're Saving Jesus in September! Countless thoughtful people are now so disgusted with the marriage of bad theology and hypocritical behavior by the church that a new Reformation is required in which the purpose of religion itself is reimagined. In his book, Robin Meyers takes the best of biblical scholarship and recasts the following core Christian concepts to exhort the church to pursue an alternative vision of the Christian life:

- Jesus as *Teacher*, not Savior
- Christianity as *Compassion*, not Condemnation
- Prosperity as *Dangerous*, not Divine
- Discipleship as *Obedience*, not Control
- Religion as *Relationship*, not Righteousness

Join us for a 5-week study of Robin Meyer's *Saving Jesus from the Church: How to Stop Worshipping Christ and Start Following Jesus* beginning Monday, September 12th from 7-8:30 p.m. Simply sign-up at <http://www.holycovenantmcc.org/SavingJesus.html> or on the sign-up sheet on the Pastor's office window.

The class is free; students, however, must purchase their copies of the book. Copies are available on www.amazon.com for as little as \$10.00. If you do not have Internet access, notify the church office and we will order a copy for you.

We need a minimum of 4 people for this class to happen.

Hats Off for Cancer

Hats Off for Cancer (<http://www.hatsoffforcancer.org>) are an international non-profit that brings awareness to childhood cancer. They are collecting hats and donations for *Hats Off For Cancer's Mad Hatter Day* to benefit pediatric cancer patients. In the past, groups have held a special hat day where people are allowed to wear hats and pay \$1 (or more) to donate to the charity, or they have a hat parade, a Mad Hatter tea party or hat drives to help kids who are fighting cancer. Not only are you helping to make a child's day happier, but you're helping to get people involved in giving back to others!

You can register online at <http://bit.ly/MadHatterHOC>. Once you've registered, they'll send your official informational e-packet that includes all the tools you'll need for a successful donation drive. A grand prize will also be awarded to the winner who collects the most hats/donations during this event.

Be creative, have fun, but most of all remember the good that you are doing by joining them for this amazing event! Put a smile on the face of a child with cancer. The date for the event is October 6th, but you can hold your drive or party at anytime in September or October.

Hats Off For Cancer is a registered 501 c 3 non-profit organization that has been in existence since 1996. They have collected and donated more than 1 million hats and sent them to childhood cancer patients across the world.





Pastor's Corner - Rev. Danny Spears



Can We Talk? The Annual Stewardship Article

"You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure." 2 Corinthians 9:7 (NLT)

I remember a conversation I had with my mother several years ago. I was in my first pastorate, and we were planning our annual stewardship pledge campaign. To be honest, it wasn't going all that well; so I asked Mom, "How do you guys handle the annual pledge campaign at your church?" After all, she attended a Southern Baptist church that had grown from less than 100 to over 300 people—in rural western Kentucky no less—and they had just paid cash for their newly-built, yet modest church. Plus they also had enough land to expand if needed—land that was paid off, as well. So they HAD to be doing something right.

Mom looked at me like I was from another solar system. "What annual pledge campaign? We don't do those. People are simply taught that generosity in all forms is part of what means to be a Christian. In fact, I don't think I've ever heard Brother Bobby (her pastor at the time) even preach on money."

After that conversation I spoke with my sister who still attends the Pentecostal church where we were raised in our initial faith. Same question, same answer. So as I started organizing my thoughts for this article, I thought about these conversations; and I began wondering if the "normal" way many Christian churches handle the topic of stewardship *is* from another solar system—or at least from another era.

The area of stewardship is admittedly full of challenges. First the word "stewardship" is often equated with the word "money," and we all know how sensitive we are when it comes to this topic. I think Jesus did, too; which is why he is reported to have addressed the topic of money and possessions more than any other topic—with the exception of the kingdom of God.

So anticipating resistance to discussing the topic of stewardship, some religious professionals—like me—rush to remind people that stewardship is about far more than *just* money—and it is (more on that later). Still, let's be honest, OK? Living out our mission and vision requires money—period. There is no separating caring for the property and paying the pastor from feeding the hungry and speaking out for equal-

ity. Everything we do to live out our mission and vision is ministry; and ministry requires an investment of our time, our skills, and our money. To be blunt, that is simply how life works, folks.

Some people may say, "OK. That makes sense; but why use a pledge campaign?" Well, a pledge campaign serves a few very useful purposes. One, it helps the Board assemble a sensible budget for the coming year. See, dreaming is wonderful—and I encourage it—at the same time, our dreams require an investment of our time, our skills, and our money. Second, the pledge campaign reminds us that, as part of a community, we have a sacred privilege and responsibility to support that community as best as we are able. That reminder, in turn, helps *us* build such support into our personal financial budgets for the coming year.

Then there is the matter of that annoying annual stewardship sermon.

This is the place where I think much of Christendom really is still operating in a previous era. Here is how I interpret the "annual stewardship sermon drill." 1) The pastor must preach at least one sermon a year on stewardship (preferably with an emphasis on money and preferably more than once); 2) that sermon will be preached during budget season in the fall after summer vacations, and before the holiday season when people will already be spending money on Christmas gifts and planning holiday trips; and 3) the sermon will be sufficiently guilt-inducing while at the same time not offending anyone. Yeah, good luck with that last one!

During my almost 10 years of pastoring, I have received both praise and criticism regarding my approach to preaching about stewardship. Some people like the fact that I tend *not* to emphasize money specifically too often; others believe I should be more "cash specific"—and speak far more often—on this topic than I currently do. As I look back on my preaching, however, I see that it frequently reflects my theology of stewardship. I just don't use the word "stewardship" that often. Allow me to explain.

My theology of stewardship is pretty simple. To me, all

(continued on page 3)

Pastor's Corner (continued)

of life is stewardship because how we live our lives reflects our priorities--and priorities are at the core of stewardship. How we schedule our time, how (or if) we care for our emotional, spiritual, and physical health, how we spend our money, how we conduct our relationships, the hobbies and careers we develop, all speak volumes about our life priorities. I preach regularly on these and related topics; therefore, I preach regularly on stewardship.

Is it possible for us then to start seeing the annual pledge campaign as a practical and useful "reminder" of what is really a lifelong reality, and perhaps also as a guilt-free checkpoint for reassessing our life priorities? I think so.

With those goals in mind, in the coming months you will be invited to pledge your support to the mission and vision of Holy Covenant MCC as part of our "Growing Together, Seeking God Together" campaign. When you receive your invitation, I encourage you to use this opportunity to examine your life and its priorities. And then, as the opening passage from Second Corinthians reminds us, "decide in your heart" what happens next.

Growing and Seeking With You,
Pastor Dan

New July 2011 Directory Printed



The new July 2011 Directory is now printed and copies are available in Fellowship Hall.. If you know of anyone who may need a copy of the new Directory mailed to them, please contact Ian Tiele in the church office on 708-387-1611 or via his email Ian@holycovenantmcc.org.

**The deadline for articles and information for the September issue
of the Covenant is Friday, August 26th!**

August 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4 <i>Dewane Barnes' birthday</i>	5	AA Meeting 8:00 6
7 Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	8	9	10	11	12	AA Meeting 8:00 13
14 Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	15	16	17 <i>Therese Cantore's birthday</i>	18 BOD Meeting 7:00 p.m.	19 AA Meeting 8:00 <i>Effie McCully's birthday</i>	20
21 Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	22	23	24	25	26	AA Meeting 8:00 27
28 Worship 9:00/11:00 Sunday School 9:00 AA Meeting 6:00	29	30 <i>Aniya Killis' birthday</i>	31			

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**We Accept
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Use email address
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*We celebrate Christ's call to:
Care for one another
Reach out to others
Explore our faith
Worship God*

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August Prayer

Do everything with a mind that lets go.
Do not expect any praise or reward.
If you let go a little, you will have a little peace.
If you let go a lot, you will have a lot of peace.
If you let go completely, you will know complete peace and freedom.
Your struggles with the world
will have come to an end.

[insight meditation - achaan chah]

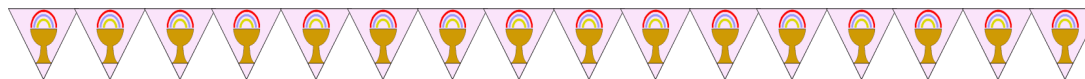
Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why

The nature vs. nurture wars over the development of homosexuality have been pretty definitively decided in favor of nature. In Dr. Simon LeVay's book *Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why: The Science of Sexual Orientation*, he takes a look at what makes people gay, lesbian, bi, or straight. LeVay brings readers up-to-date on the current state of knowledge by tackling the seemingly simple question "What is sexual orientation?" As the book progresses, he discusses how gayness is not monolithic; rather, there seems to be different kinds of homosexuality.

Some people claim to be able to identify gays using "gaydar," but LeVay says differences between straights and gays go beyond body language to include visuospatial abilities (e.g., lesbians, like straight men, have better spatial abilities than straight women) and verbal fluency. He reviews current thinking on the role of genes and how testosterone levels may influence the fetus's development, although LeVay does come close at times to dry recitation of research results. The book is available for \$18.45 at Amazon.com and other book stores.

Church Mice

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Covenant Publications

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The Covenant welcomes new items, articles, poetry, and of course suggestions. Written contributions may be submitted to the Editor of the Covenant at the address herein or by email to ian@holycovenantmcc.org. Contributions will be published at the discretion of the editor and may be subject to revision and space limitations.

The September 2011 COVENANT DEADLINE for any articles is NO LATER THAN Friday, August 26th, 2011. Late submissions will be made on an "available space basis."