



The Way

July 2015

NEWSLETTER OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF HOMESTEAD, FL

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

On Friday, June 26, America profoundly changed. With the passage of same sex "marriage" in all fifty states, America has crossed what may well be a point of no return. The case, *Obergefell v. Hodges*, was not simply about how to define marriage. It is a re-making of the very fabric of society. Everything is different and the ramifications for churches and individual Christians are tremendous.

For those who believe that same sex "marriage" is merely about two people having the right to "choose who they love," consider the following. It took less than forty-eight hours for the New York Times to begin discussing how to penalize Christians, churches and faith-based organizations who object. Many are already calling for churches to be stripped of tax exempt status. This would mean eliminating the separation of church and state for those churches the state deems unworthy and taxing churches whose theology is not state-approved. Calls are being made

for Christian universities to lose accreditation if they refuse to capitulate. Some are suggesting that those who object to same sex "marriage" be forced out of certain professions. The list of professions, however, grows by the minute. The same sex "marriage" crowd always seems to have a reason why a conservative Christian should not be allowed to work in any given field. Whether it's the baker, florist, caterer or clerk who refuses to participate in a same sex wedding, or teacher who refuses to indoctrinate children with the new sexual ethos, the expectation is that Christians must get in line or suffer the consequences. In Canada, which has had legal same sex "marriage" for a decade, efforts are underway to strip lawyers of their license if they do not agree. Counselors are prohibited from counseling in a way that discourages same sex behavior. Churches who broadcast their sermons can be penalized or even imprisoned if they broadcast

a message on any of the biblical passages which denounce homosexuality as a sin. Simply put, this ruling affects every single American, whether they realize it or not.

I recently spoke to the attorney for the Florida Baptist Children's Homes, John Stemberger. This organization has ministered to orphans for over a century. Not once during that time were they ever asked to adopt out children to a same sex couple...until recently. Governor Rick Scott, in a separate, but equally tragic case, signed HB 7013, eliminating the state's ban on same sex adoption. Within days, Stemberger said, the Florida Baptist Children's Homes were inundated by requests from same sex couples. Obviously, it was not a coincidence that homosexual couples started requesting children from our Florida Baptist Children's Homes while the Governor's ink was still wet on this legislation. This was planned. Their intent is to force us to deny them children so they can sue us. Their intent is to force Florida Baptists to place children in the homes of same sex couples or be forced to shut down our ministry. Needless to say, many children will suffer if the numerous faith based adoption agencies and orphanages are

"God's definition
of marriage has
not changed."

forced to shut down rather than deny God's Word. The welfare of the children, however, has never been at the forefront of this issue. This attack is coming. We must brace ourselves for it.

One source of comfort in light of this coming storm is the fact that the Supreme Court is not the highest court of the universe. The highest court is the judgment seat of Christ which never gets overturned. And God's definition of marriage has not changed. When Jesus was asked a question about divorce in Matthew 19, he responded by appealing to the very definition of marriage. ***"Haven't you read," He replied, "that He who created them in the beginning made them male and female," and He also said: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, man must not separate."*** Jesus defined marriage by appealing to the first marriage as the prototype for which all others should follow. He did this, even though the Greco-Roman culture pervasive at that time elevated homosexuality as much as today. Jesus was aware of the concept of homosexual unions, He simply rejected them. This is why those who claim Jesus had nothing to say on the topic of same sex "marriage" are either woefully ignorant of the Scriptures or intentionally misleading people about them. God's definition of marriage is one man in a covenant relationship with one woman for a lifetime.

We also don't have to appeal to the ever changing standards of the world to know the truth about homosexuality. Romans 1:26-27

says, ***"This is why God delivered them over to degrading passions. For even their females exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. The males in the same way also left natural relations with females and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Males committed shameful acts with males and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error."*** We know why some persons experience this particular temptation. People experience same sex attractions because we live in a fallen world. And part of that fallenness is that we desire what we should not and would not were it not for sin. The Bible also makes it clear that when we collectively, as a people, turn away from God, one of the first areas in which it shows is in sexual immorality. Friday's same sex "marriage" ruling is merely another symbol that America has turned her back on God. As Southern Baptist Convention president Ronnie Floyd said, "This decision shows one thing: Our desperate need for the next Great Awakening and the hope of the Gospel given to all persons. We must rise up like never before with great urgency, to forward the message of Jesus Christ to every person in America and across the world."

Those who take biblical prohibitions against homosexuality seriously don't have to worry about being on "the wrong side of history." As Russell Moore pointed out, Christians began on the wrong side of history when the Romans were feeding our predecessors to the lions. Two thousand years later, the Roman Empire has fallen but the Kingdom of God has not. You're never on the

"wrong side of history" when you stand on the Word of God.

All of this being said – and I say this with a heavy heart – I do believe many Christians who are frustrated over the Supreme Court's decision have some soul searching to do. While there are some things we have gotten right on the issue of homosexuality, there are some things we have gotten wrong. And when we have been wrong, we must confess and repent of the wrongdoing. I believe there are five areas in which many churches and many Christians have failed. These failures have contributed to where we are today.

Some churches are guilty of DISHONESTY about what the Word of God says. I'm talking about evangelical leaders willing to deny the clear teachings of Scripture denouncing homosexuality, and all sexual immorality, as sin. I am grateful to be a part of one of the few denominations which has not capitulated on this issue. And yet, even among professed followers of Christ, we find our ranks becoming thin. So let me assure you of this: First Baptist Church of Homestead will not compromise what the Word of God says about this. We will continue to stand against all forms of sexual immorality, including homo-

"We dare to be angry when the world does not respect biblical marriage as a matter of law when we do not respect biblical marriage as a matter of practice."

sexuality. We will not host same sex ceremonies, even if we are penalized or taxed by the state for refusing to do so. Your pastors will not participate in same sex ceremonies in any way, shape or form. We will suffer any consequences required of us to remain faithful to God on this issue. We plead to God for mercy for the dishonesty of some churches on this issue, but we also commit we will not join them in that dishonesty.

Another area in which churches have failed is HYPOCRISY. There is an urban legend that suggests Christians divorce at the same rate as nonchristians. While this is not true, the divorce rate among Christians is way too high. The sad truth is, many of those who proclaim a biblical definition of marriage have been all too willing to walk away from the marriage vows. I am not referring to those who suffered a divorce against their will. I am not talking about the woman who was abused or the husband who has been abandoned. I am talking about professing Christians who publicly speak out against same sex "marriage," but have left a husband or wife for outright *petty* reasons. We dare to be angry when the world does not respect biblical marriage as a matter of *law* when we do not respect biblical marriage as a matter of *practice*. This is pure hypocrisy, the kind Jesus denounced in the strongest of terms. It is inexcusable that we have expected the world to hold marriage to a higher standard than the people of God. The world will not and should not find such hypocrisy acceptable. Perhaps it is time for us to admit our message about marriage has not been heard, in part because it does not line up with our behavior.

Another transgression some Christians need to confess is HATRED. No, I am not saying, nor do I believe that it is hateful to speak against homosexuality. In fact, it is hateful *not* to. When I say many believers have been guilty of hatred, let me explain what I mean. We have not always succeeded in speaking the truth in love to the homosexual community. I have seen way too many facebook posts and heard way too many crude jokes from way too many Christians who have known Christ for way too long. The spirit of Christ who pleaded "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," is strangely absent from most Christians today. I struggle to understand why some of us can lovingly confront those who sin in other areas while having no love for those who struggle in this area.

Let me give a personal example. There are two sermons I have preached in my lifetime that I truly wish I could take back. One was a sermon I preached on Romans chapter one which dealt with homosexuality. Everything I said in the sermon was technically true. But looking back, I don't believe I displayed the love of God in the way I brought it. I was angry and it showed. Making matters worse, a man struggling with same sex attractions heard that message. I am afraid he did not hear the gospel that was preached because of the tone that was used. He concluded that we who cherish God's Word know little about mercy or compassion. It is critical that we learn to speak the truth in love. It is critical that we are full of grace and truth.

Another way we have failed on this issue is HUMANISM. What is humanism? Humanism is the be-

lief that man has within himself the ability to overcome his own problems. When applied to homosexuality, the "humanistic Christian" says, "the homosexual can, by his own sheer resolve, will himself out of same sex attractions." This is a popular response by many Christians to the issue of homosexuality. It is popular, but it is wrong. Furthermore, when humanism is applied to homosexuality, it comes as a substitute for the one and only true solution: the gospel of Jesus Christ.

What is ironic is that few, if any, Christians would appeal to humanism as the solution to any other sin. For example, to the adulterer we say, "God will remove your sin as far as the east is from the west." To the liar, we say, "Call upon the Lord for He is mighty to save." To the drug addict, we say, "If you confess your sins, God will not only forgive you, but *cleanse* you." But inexplicably, to the homosexual we often say, "You dug yourself in this hole, now dig yourself out." We tell them to "flip a switch" and start being attracted to the opposite sex. For this, we should be ashamed! The solution for the man or woman with same sex attractions is *not* that they would "do better" or "try harder" to be heterosexual. The only solution and the only hope for the homosexual is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the glorious truth that those who are in Christ have become a new creation. The old is passed away and everything has become new. It's the fact that the grace of God is more than capable of enabling the child of God to resist any temptation, including the temptation of homosexuality. It's the revelation that as Christians, we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us. The

gospel brings the freedom of forgiveness, the peace that passes understanding and the hope of eternal life. Why in the world have we replaced it with humanism when it comes to homosexuality? Many Christians need to get on their knees and ask God to forgive them for straying from the gospel on this issue. For if we succeed in standing against homosexuality but fail to give the homosexual anything other than the gospel as the solution, we have simply failed.

A final error we have made is what I call MISPLACED HOPE. Many Christians have chosen to place their hope in legislators and legislation instead of the LORD. For years, evangelical Christians were told that the solution to our nation's social ills was to elect the right leaders who will pass the right laws. For some, membership in a particular political party was akin to basic Christian discipleship. Last Friday's ruling, however, obliterated this line of thinking. How so? The ruling to force same sex "marriage" upon the nation was made by judicial appointees from both major political parties, with the majority decision read by a man appointed by Ronald Reagan. The recent decision in Florida to eliminate the ban on gay adoption was very much bipartisan. The day in which Christians could look at a party's written platform and know whether they share our values expired some time in the late twentieth century. This is the twenty-first century, and the Bible believing, life respecting, traditional marriage proponent has no political party in which to take refuge. God alone is our refuge!

Now this does not mean we should retreat from the political

processes. Far from it! We should continue to be our nation's conscience, proclaiming the truth of God's Word whenever and wherever it speaks. We should vote for those we truly believe meet the criteria of Exodus 18:21: Those who "fear God, love truth and hate dishonest gain." We should remember the truth of Proverbs 29:2 which says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, people groan." I am not advocating a form of Christian isolationism. I do believe we must remember that political solutions do not win spiritual battles. As important as Christian citizenship may be, it is no replacement for prayer, fasting, witnessing, missions, faith or love.

This leads us to the question many Christians are asking: What now? Please allow me to offer a few suggestions: First, we must love our enemies. I personally read where one homosexual commented on a New York Times article two months ago. He said he longed for the day when same sex "marriage" was legal, adding, "My, how I look forward to making them suffer." That day has come. For millions in the "gay rights" campaign, this is the opportunity they have longed for to "make us suffer." So how do we respond? Jesus has already made it abundantly clear in Luke 6:27-31. ***"But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also. And if anyone takes away your coat, don't hold back your shirt either. Give to everyone who asks you, and from one who takes your things, don't ask for them back. Just as you want others to***

do for you, do the same for them." This is not going to be easy. I have been saying for some time now, Christians in America are about to have the first opportunity of our lives to put this commandment into practice on a regular basis. Persecuted Christians in other countries have been doing it for years. Many times, a little persecution is what spurs the church on to greater boldness and Great Commission fulfillment. Will that happen here? We may soon find out.

A second thing we must do is train our children. As a result of Friday's ruling, every Christian parent has a huge burden placed upon them. You must lead the way in instructing your children and explaining to them why same sex "marriage" is wrong. With same sex "marriage" the law of the land, public schools have a green light to force a radicalized view of sexuality upon your children, even at the earliest of grades. It is not a matter of *if* your children are taught to accept this new definition of marriage, but *when* and *how often*.

Our brothers and sisters in Cuba provide us with an example for how to handle this. Their government tightly controls the schools and what is taught. There are no private schools and homeschooling is illegal. The students hear what the government wants them to hear. Numerous Christians there have told me how diligently they have to work in order to offset and counteract what their children are taught in school. Parents there understand their children are going to be taught values contrary to the Word of God. They are diligent about explaining to them why what they have been

told at school is wrong. And yet, Cuban Christians rise up to meet this challenge. Even with such a handicap, the churches in Cuba have grown while churches in America have not.

The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission has extensive resources prepared to assist parents in talking about this issue with their children. I encourage you to look over them and take the initiative to prepare your children for what is coming.

Another step we should take is to prepare for civil disobedience. Earlier, I referenced some of the ways Christians will be expected to conform in light of the same sex "marriage" ruling. It is my hope that Christians of all professions will stand together and refuse to do anything the Word of God forbids. For example, at some point, our Baptist College of Florida will be told they must admit homosexuals into their student body. I trust that when that time comes, the president, Dr. Kitchen, will say, "We will not comply." When that

time comes, who will stand with him? When faced with the choice of obeying God or man, the book of Acts demonstrates how we should respond. When Peter and the apostles were commanded not to preach or teach in the name of Jesus, they replied, ***"We must obey God rather than men."*** (Acts 5:29)

I also believe it is time for us to recommit ourselves to the gospel. What would happen if every follower of Jesus Christ spent some of the time we spend entertaining ourselves on praying for our lost friends and neighbors? What would happen if every follower of Jesus Christ used social media to promote the gospel as passionately and as actively as they have promoted any number of silly, secondary issues? What if we were so clear about the claims of the gospel that it were impossible for our nonbelieving friends to not be familiar with it? What if we were as excited about our neighbors knowing Jesus as we are how our favorite sports team performs next season?

Finally, I want to exhort you to be courageous. The days ahead will require more courage from the people of God than at any other time in our nation's history. So let me remind you of the words the Lord spoke to Joshua in Joshua 1:9. ***"Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*** The God who defeated Israel's enemies is the same God who is our defender. We need not fear what the future holds. Even if we must suffer for our faith, we do so knowing our afflictions are momentary compared to the glory that awaits us.

Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor.

*Pastor
Howard*



IT'S TIME To say "CHEESE!"

In the month of July, we will begin taking pictures for a new church directory. This directory will primarily be an online publication, available to FBCH members at www.fbchomestead.org. As such, we will be able to keep it perpetually maintained as new members join and their pictures are added. The church directory is a great tool for praying for your church family. A separate letter giving instructions for your photo shoot will soon be mailed. Please sign up for a thirty minute time slot for one of the following days.

Monday, July 13 - Friday, July 17, 6:00 - 9:00 pm

Monday, July 20 - Friday, July 24, 4:00 - 9:00 pm

Monday, July 27 - Wednesday, July 30, 4:00 - 9:00 pm

Thursday, July 30, 2:00 - 9:00 pm

Friday, August 1, 4:00 - 9:00 pm

Happy Birthday!

07/01 - Ameen Khan	07/08 - Brittany Davidson	07/17 - William Bender	07/26 - Michael Biichle
07/01 - Rachel Kinkade	07/09 - David Catlin	07/18 - Cindy Castro	07/26 - Miriam Gonzalez
07/02 - Cassidy Alzamora	07/09 - Jacob DeVary	07/18 - Kameron Fox	07/26 - Elijah Lucas
07/02 - Brence Davis	07/09 - Nicole Wynne	07/19 - Jorge Perez	07/26 - Mercy Rodriguez
07/03 - Rachel Hernandez	07/10 - Sherri Jackson	07/19 - Brooke Story	07/27 - Diego Torres
07/03 - Alessandra Vargas	07/10 - Patti Sourber	07/20 - Melissa Breen	07/28 - Heather Hedges
07/04 - Theresa Diaz	07/11 - Christian Theodore	07/20 - Nora Coule	07/28 - Sean Ramos
07/04 - Jessie Garcia	07/12 - Tracy Keith	07/20 - Robbie Dolan	07/29 - Indy Drury
07/04 - Mae Tanner	07/12 - Michael Sosa	07/20 - Victoria Duenas	07/29 - Zachael Eldridge
07/05 - Alyssa Ritfeld	07/12 - John Tompkins	07/20 - Robbie Dolan	07/29 - Kaylee Fordyce
07/05 - Nilcia Santana	07/13 - Krystal Borrego	07/22 - Lourdes Alonso	07/29 - Alberto Guzman
07/06 - Katherine Carroll	07/13 - Grace De Marco	7/225 - Sarah Ecklof	07/29 - Edwin Hadden
07/06 - Robert Jones	07/15 - Jay Clason	07/23 - Dedrick Bailey	07/30 - Sherri Claderwood
07/06 - Marilyn Maldonado	07/15 - Mingjian Geng	07/23 - Suzy Davis	07/30 - Sabrina Delgado
07/06 - Allison Medich	07/15 - Michael Grimes	07/21 - Ivey Rodriguez	07/30 - Marlene Jackson
07/06 - Amber Walters	07/15 - Madeleine Rivso	07/25 - Stan Cason	07/30 - Lesley Sytsma
07/07 - Connor DeLeon	07/16 - Ryai Giddins	07/25 - Jovany Lopez	07/31 - Sharlene Kossuth
07/07 - Ryana Lewis	07/16 - Debra Morris	07/25 - Emiliano Silva	07/31 - Theodore Quammie
07/07 - Brandon Ross	07/17 - Wayne Bell	07/25 - Megan Wells	



Music Ministry



What a wonderful way to end the month of June! First, I would like to start by wishing Ruth Campbell an Happy, Happy belated 95th Birthday!! She celebrated her birthday June 27th. What a tremendous vast amount of knowledge Ms. Ruth has of Homestead. I have told her several times she needs to write a book or all her history will be gone. You can visit her at the Homestead Museum. Yes, that's right, this woman still holds a job! Ruth has been an active choir member way before my time. I think she is kin to the Energizer Bunny!

Second, I would like to share a little about Vacation Bible School, "Journey off the Map!" This was a remarkable week of hard workers. Workers that are ready and committed to God. Ready to share Him through

stories, song, games, snack, recreation, counting the offering, and don't forget about driving the bus! I don't want to sound like I'm boasting but, our VBS seems to run like a well oiled machine. Our workers continue to return year after year; as well as our youth workers. Some of our youth workers have grown up with us through Vacation Bible School and continue returning. What a testimony! Talking with one young girl this past week, she planned to return every year until she starts college. I like her planning!

We averaged over 300 children plus workers daily. Our highest day was 206 children, with 102 workers. Children made decisions and our Family Night was packed. It was fun watching the parents sing the theme song along with the children. The view from the tree

house was amazing!

Thank you Lynda Melton for taking on the roll as our VBS director. Thank you Bible, Missions, Rec for a job well done. Thank you kitchen crew for working constantly without a break, while keeping everyone's tummy happy. Thank you bus drivers for keeping the road "hot" driving several different routes numerous times a day. Thank you construction workers and designers for the platform and the tree house!! The list goes on, and on. We can't wait for next year's VBS theme, "Submerged". Maybe we'll have a submarine with hydraulics???

Singing for HIM,
Pam



Stewardship

June 2015

Contributions for June 2015:	\$ 43,044.80
Monthly budget requirement:	\$ 46,491.16
YTD Contributions:	\$ 460,695.43
YTD Budget:	\$ 453,288.81

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES



CHAPMAN
partnership
Empowering the Homeless

28205 SW 125th Ave
Homestead, FL 33030



FEEDING HOMELESS

Join us June 11, 11:30 a.m., as we serve meals and distribute Bibles to the homeless.



July 4th

First Baptist Church will be hosting a booth at the Homestead Miami Speedway on July 4th. If you would like to volunteer to help with the Homestead booth, between 5:00 pm to dark, please contact the Church office (305) 247-1662.

Student Ministry Mission Camp

We have several students who are in need of financial assistance for our Mission Camp scheduled this Month. If you can donate any amount toward making it possible for a student to go to camp or if you have any work a student could perform to earn money for camp, please see Pastor Joe.

Now Hiring Custodian/Maintenance

Immediate position available for full time experienced janitor. "Some landscaping and maintenance is included."



Please bring resume to the church office.

Cuba Mission Team



Please pray for Pastor Howard and the Mission Team as they minister in Cuba, July 7 through July 21.

A great big THANK YOU to all the volunteers who made Vacation Bible School a huge success this Year! We really couldn't have done it without you.





Women on mission is collecting school supplies for children in need.

Needed items:

- Notebook paper
- Pencils
- Blue and black pens
- Erasers
- Backpacks
- Color folders
- Spiral notebooks
- Glue, glue stick
- Pencil boxes
- Colored pencils
- ETC.



It's that time of year again! We are collecting school supplies for children in our church and community who are in need of assistance. Please give generously!

ONLINE:
WWW.FBCHOMESTEAD.ORG

NEWSLETTER OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF
HOMESTEAD, FL

PO Box 900428
29050 SW 177 Ave
Homestead, FL 33090
Office: (305) 247-1662
Fax: (305) 247-0117
E-mail: fbchoffice@bellsouth.net
Web: www.fbchomestead.org



**Building bridges...empowering
people...changing lives!**



We are well into our summer schedule and I couldn't be more excited about what God is doing in our Student Ministry! Our students really jumped in and served well at VBS; attendance at our Wednesday night E3 services has been fantastic; and God is bringing new students and adults to participate in the ministry with us. I can't wait to see what else He has in store for us for the rest of the summer! Here's a look at what we have going on this month.

First, on Wednesday night, we'll continue holding our **ENCOUNTER** services at a different location each week. We call this E3 (Epic ENCOUNTER Excursions). If you do not have an E3 schedule, you can either download one from our Student Ministry website (www.633students.org) or contact the church office so we can get one to you.

Second, on Friday, July 17, we'll have our next **FRIDAY NITE LIVE**. This month, the theme is "Fear Factor" and we'll be playing some fun but messy games. Students should wear clothing they don't mind getting messy in addition to a change of clothes. The

night will start with a meal at 6:00 p.m. and will end at 10:00 p.m. Please sign up in the youth room or contact the church office to **RSVP**.

Third, at the end of this month, our students and adult volunteers will be traveling to West Palm Beach to attend **Student Life Mission Camp**. Students and adult volunteers will have the opportunity to participate in worship and bible study while also serving at Seagull Industries for the Disabled. Seagull Industries serves developmentally challenged children and adults in Palm Beach County. We'll have an opportunity to interact with the residents with drama, music, arts and crafts, and much more. Please be praying for us as we strive to demonstrate the love of Christ to those God allows us the privilege of interacting with. I'd also like to take a moment to thank those of you who have given financially to make it possible for several of our students to go to mission camp! You have been such a blessing to our students and our ministry to them and I am grateful that God has placed you as a partner with us! I pray that God would richly reward you for your gift to Him! We still have a need for finances to help students go to camp, so if

you'd like to give, please contact the church office and let us know.

Finally, this month I'd like to highlight the core value of **Cultural Relevance**. This core value emphasizes the importance of contextualizing the gospel for our teenagers. The world in which they live is constantly changing at a very rapid pace. While our ministry leaders and volunteers are firmly convicted of the unchanging truths of the gospel; we also realize that we need to communicate those truths in ways to which our students can understand and relate. For this reason, we are constantly asking questions about whether what we are doing and how we are doing it is relatable to the students to who we are seeking to minister.

As always, thank you for the opportunity to serve you and to serve with you for the glory of God!

For His Glory,
Joe

