

ASBURY UMC

February 2019 | Vol. 1

*Progressive and Inclusive Christianity
Practiced and Preached*



LENTEN CLASSES

Sign up in the Wel. Center

As we prepare for Lent, we look forward to offering a variety of classes and gathering to further our fellowship in this time of spiritual discipline. (pg. 6)

UMC IN ST. LOUIS

Week of: Feb. 23-26

Rev. Lee will be attending the 2019 Special Session of the UMC General Conference in St. Louis Feb. 23-26. Read more for updates...(pg. 2)

ASBURY 101

Sun., Feb. 24

Interested in joining our faith community? We invite you to our Asbury 101 luncheon hosted by Rev. Gayla and Rev. Lee on Feb. 24 after the 11am service in Rm. 208! RSVP to 913.432.5573 or email: phyllisW@Visitasbury.org

SCRIPTURE, SCIENCE, & SEXUALITY

pub. Jan. 23, 2019

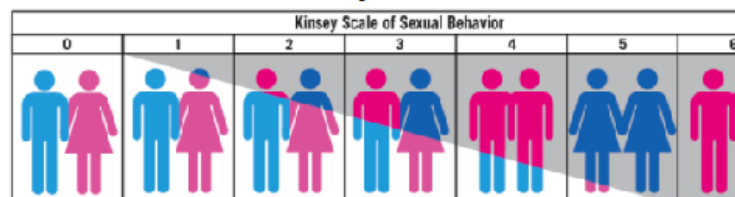
Rev. Lee Johnson and Dr. Barbara Lukert co-authored this article in response to the current UMC debate on the inclusion of LGBTQ peoples in the United Methodist Church.

KINSEY SCALE OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Kinsey, 1948:

“Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats... The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects.”

The Kinsey Reports found that 37% of males and 13% of females had least some overt homosexual experience.



PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH...

Current Sermon Series

If the Church Were Christian...

Feb. 9 & 10: We would care More about Love and Less about Sex

Feb. 16 & 17: Meeting Needs Would be more Important than Maintaining Institutions

Feb. 23 & 24: This Life would Be as Important as the Afterlife

March 2 & 3: Reconciliation Would Be Valued Over Judgement

Upcoming Series

Seven Questions of Lent

Dear Asbury Friends,

Our new series, "If the Church Were Christian..." borrows its name and themes from a book by Quaker minister, Philip Gulley. We will examine some ideas and beliefs that are sometimes challenging and even offensive to others. I have said more than once, "Jesus was crucified because many people did not like what he said!" For the next five weeks, we are going to look at some different teachings of Jesus and how they challenge some ideas that popular culture and even the church sometimes teach.

I look forward to seeing you this weekend as we gather together to, "practice what we preach..."

Blessings,

Rev. Gayla Rapp

Rev. Gayla Rapp,
Senior Pastor

Current
Classes:

- "If the Church Were Christian"
1. January 30-Feb. 27 | Wed(s) at 10 am | Rm. 208
 2. Sundays during Sunday School Hour through March 3 in Rm. 208

SPECIAL SESSION GENERAL CONFERENCE 2019



THE VOTE | FEB. 23-26

Rev. Lee will be attending the Special Session General Conference in St. Louis, MO Feb. 23-26. He will be working with Mainstream UMC and other progressive organizations to provide updates on the events of this general conference. He will be updating us via a blog account which will be available on our website, Facebook page, and Twitter account.

We will be providing the opportunity to watch the Special Session live in our Asbury Cafe. You are welcome to join us Sunday, Feb. 24 - Tuesday, Feb. 26 during church office hours.

On Sunday March 3 at 3:00PM there will be a meeting in the Sanctuary to hear the report of the outcome of the General conference, This conference was called specifically to decide whether LGBTQ persons will be fully included in the United Methodist Church without restrictions. This is an historic moment in the life of our denomination.. Rev. Dr. Mark Holland, Executive director of Mainstream UMC will be speaking.

Sunday, March 3
3 pm in the Sanctuary
Rev. Mark Holland

MUSIC AT ASBURY

Let your voice be
heard...

*Led by Director of Music,
Lindsey Lang*

We hope you enjoyed our musical sermon series on "Protest Songs of the '60s and '70s." Our choir, worship team, and soloists had a fantastic time sharing these powerful songs each week. Videos of Rev. Gayla, and Rev. Lee's sermons, along with all offertory solos, can be found on our website and on Facebook. As we learned throughout this sermon series, music has always taken it's place in the pursuit of justice.

We had the honor of hosting renowned gospel choir, "Isaac Cates and Ordained." Through their work they continue this legacy of using music to inspire, protest, and lead. If you are interested in participating in the life of Asbury through music, please contact Director of Music, Lindsey Lang via email at LindseyL@VisitAsbury.org or phone at 913.432.5573!





The Importance of Finding Your Tribe...

DIRECTOR OF FAMILY MINISTRIES, HEATHER JACKSON

Okay, I confess. I used to be a K-State fan. From the time I was born until about age nineteen I bled purple and white. I grew up going to K-State games (football and basketball). I hated Danny and the Miracles and I cheered for Mitch Richmond and Steve Henson. I even had a collage of K-State quarterback Michael Bishop strategically placed behind my dorm room door at KU. I was there to take classes not change my loyalty.

Then, I sat in Allen Fieldhouse and watched my first KU basketball game in one of the greatest environments ever. I got goosebumps listening to—yes I refused to join in—the Rock Chalk Chant. However, it wasn't the tradition, Rock Chalk Chant, or the beauty and history of the environment that made me a KU fan...umm fanatic. No, it was experiencing a sense of belonging, community, and commonality in the midst of 16,000+ strangers. They screamed about calls and great plays, just like me, and we're unashamed about talking for hours about the intricacies of the game. I finally felt like I belonged. This was—and to this day still is—my tribe.

Finding your tribe is an important part of growing up and is what several of our Asbury youth will be searching for over the next four months during confirmation. They're here because their families are here. They're participating. They're evaluating their loyalties. They're wondering if they belong here at Asbury. They're wondering if we, Asbury and Christians, are their tribe.

My hope for our confirmands is that at some point in the upcoming months every one of them experiences a sense of belonging, community, and commonality. I hope that when Sunday, April 28 arrives these young people will stand in front of all of you and be able to declare they belong and that they've found their tribe.

Dates to Save:

Confirmation Classes

January - April 2018

Confirmation Sunday

April 28

Youth Mission Trip to DC

June 1-8, 2019

VBS

June 16-20, 2019

Institute at Baker Univ.

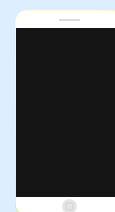
June 24-29, 2019

Youth 2019

July 10-14, 2019

GodSquad

July 29-August 2, 2019



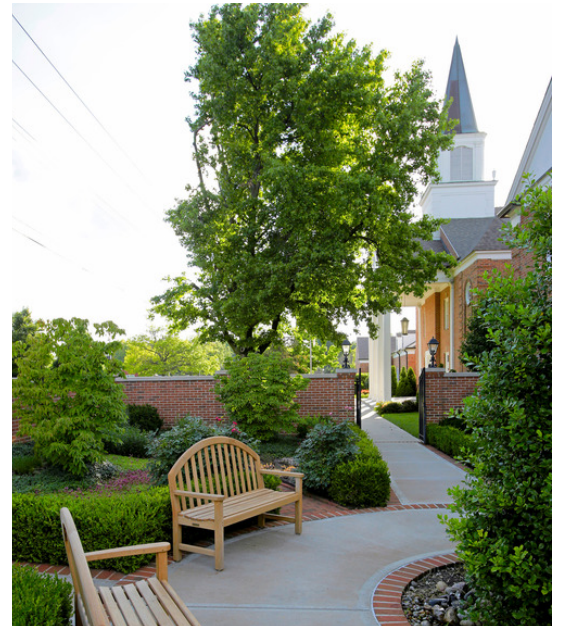


Memorial Garden Stories...

The Memorial Garden is a sacred space here at Asbury. It's a place where we honor and celebrate our loved ones. In this coming year we will feature stories of those who work hard to keep this garden in its beauty. As we reflect on what it means to our community, we hope it will inspire others who might feel called to use their gifts to benefit this important place in our church.

Donetta and Bernie Shaner:

"We donated to the Memorial Garden for the first time last year because we have seen what the "Garden Angels" have done over the years to keep this a lovely and sacred space and we wanted to be part of it! We see it as a peaceful resting place and a great source of comfort for those who know their loved ones are forever a part of Asbury."





A time of reflection | March 6-April 21

LENTEN CLASSES

Sign ups will be available in the bulletins, you can also call the church office at 913-432-5573!

Fat Tuesday Indulgence | Tuesday, March 5 | 6:00-8:00 pm in Hager Hall

Pot luck and Bingo

Let's celebrate the beginning of Lent with a pot luck dinner and Bingo! Please bring a dish to share and if you wish to play BINGO, please bring a wrapped white elephant gift (or several) as Bingo prizes.

Be-Attitudes: Some Benchmarks for Progressive Spirituality

Sundays, March 17—April 14, 10—11 a.m. in Hager Hall

Please join Rev. Nick Warner for this 5-week course: Be Kind and Compassionate, Be Accepting and Inclusive, Be Involved, Be Prophetic, and Be Hopeful. Each session will begin with a presentation followed by table discussion and end with sharing of insights from those conversations.

Family Ministry Book Club

Starting Wednesday, Feb 27th, 7—8:00 p.m. in the Parlor (other dates forthcoming).

Just what you have been waiting for! Join Heather Jackson as we read the Shane Claiborne book "Jesus for President." Please email HeatherJ@visitasbury.org or see Heather for more details or questions.

Join us for Yoga, Meditation and Spiritual Discernment. These Sunday evening classes will provide an opportunity to relax our bodies, center ourselves, and connect with God before we head back into our week. If you are interested in joining both, we will be hosting a light dinner in-between classes.

Yoga and Meditation (This class is limited to 10 people. 7 spots are available.)

Sundays, March 10—April 14, 4:00—5:00 p.m. in Hager Hall

Join Kim Peck for Yoga! Although people may think of meditation as a practice used by Buddhism and other eastern religions, Christianity has its own forms of meditation. This class will compare and practice the different types of Christian and eastern meditation. The class will also include gentle yoga poses to be used in preparation for meditation, for relaxation and for staying flexible. Please bring a towel or yoga mat and any yoga props you may have.

Spiritual Discernment for Your Life Now

Sundays, March 24-April 14, 6:30-8:00 p.m. in the Parlor

Please join Pastor Lee to discuss—What is the spirit calling you to discern about your life?

NOTES FROM THE OFFICE

PHYLLIS WILLIAMS, OFFICE COORDINATOR AND FINANCIAL SECRETARY

EMAIL: PHYLLISW@VISITASBURY.ORG

PHONE: 913.432.5573



Altar Flowers: Help us increase our altar flower sign up!! Available dates are listed on our website or you can contact Phyllis Williams via email (PhyllisW@VisitAsbury.org) or phone call.

Phyllis does need the following information:

1. What weekend dates would you like to donate the altar flowers?
2. Would you like to donate these in honor, memory, or celebration of a loved one or special event?
3. Would you like to take the flowers home at the end of weekend services or should we donate them to a home-bound member of our Asbury community?
4. The altar flower donations are \$50.00. How would you like to submit payment - Cash or check?
(We have a standing order for a weekly arrangement from Village Flower Company. Your payment will be made to Asbury)

Purchasing an 2019 Directory:

We will be taking orders for a 2019 Asbury directory. They will be in a 3-ring binder and we are asking a \$5 donation to supplement the cost. Please call the church office or email phyllis.

Food Pantry: We are looking for more non-perishable items to stock our Food Pantry. This pantry provides food for individuals and families who stop into Asbury during the week. Necessary items include: peanut butter (and alternatives), jelly, crackers, soup cans with the pull tab, canned meats (tuna, and chicken) with the pull tab, breakfast bars, jelly, nuts and trailmix, etc. If you would also like to provide a package of diapers or formula we have provided these in the past. Thank you for your generosity in helping us practice what we preach!

SCRIPTURE, SCIENCE, & SEXUALITY

*Co-Authored by Rev. Lee Johnson
and Dr. Barbara Lukert*



Co-Author: Reverend Lee Johnson has been in ministry for more than 30 years. He is an ordained Elder in the Great Plains Annual Conference and currently serves as Minister of Congregational Care at Asbury United Methodist Church in Prairie Village, Kansas.

Co-Author: Dr. Barbara Lukert is Professor of Medicine Emerita at the University of Kansas School of Medicine in Kansas City, Kansas. She practiced Endocrinology at the university for over 30 years. She is a member of Asbury United Methodist Church in Prairie Village, Kansas.



At its 1972 General Conference in Atlanta, The United Methodist Church (UMC) declared homosexuality “incompatible with Christian teaching”. (1). The addition of this phrase to the Book of Discipline has caused 42 years of turmoil within the UMC, and has resulted in increasingly punitive language directed at LGBT persons. Now, the UMC has arrived at a defining moment when we must decide whether the denomination will continue to deny full inclusion to individuals with homosexual orientation. This important decision requires us to learn from our history, and to find new ways of looking at the church’s view of sexuality, and more importantly, at how science, experience and tradition, the traditional Wesleyan method of truth finding, inform our understanding of scripture as we seek to understand sexuality.

In response to the 1972 declaration, delegates voted to conduct a four-year study of homosexuality with the intention of returning to the discussion in 1976. Since then, further studies have ensued. Perhaps most well-known is “The Church Studies Homosexuality,” established by legislation passed at the 1988 General Conference with a “mandate to conduct a study and report to the 1992 General Conference.” (2) Within those four years, the 24-member committee met eight times engaging the Wesleyan tradition of theological truth finding as the committee gathered information from “recognized scholars in the fields of biblical interpretation, theology, psychology, medicine, and sociology.” (2)

Subsequently, the report of the study committee was rejected by the 1992 General Conference. A majority report wrote, “The present state of knowledge and insight in the biblical, theological, ethical, biological psychological, and sociological fields does not provide a satisfactory basis upon which the church can responsibly maintain the condemnation of all homosexual practice.” (2) However, the report was rejected and a minority report adopted. It held, “The present state of knowledge and insight in the biblical, theological, ethical, biological, psychological, and sociological fields does not provide a satisfactory basis upon which the church can responsibly alter its previously held position that we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching.”

While The General Conference retained the prohibitive language, two years later the entire report became a study document for local churches. In the study document, the discussion of reason and scientific investigation is particularly revealing. Initially, there was openness from committee members to the revelation of reason hoping “scientific facts could settle our debates. We expected to find answers.” However, the document went on to say, “Complexities of human nature and behavior cannot be reduced to an elementary level. Scientific answers are seldom, if ever, absolute and science cannot be used to prove moral conclusions.” (2)

In making a choice to understand homosexuality as a moral issue, the document, intended to guide discussion in the local church, dismissed the authority of science. By dismissing the revelation of science and reason the church was left with a “moral” conversation defined by scriptural holiness with “both sides” believing in a correct interpretation of scripture and its relationship to the morality of homosexuality.

Today, though, there is consensus among human sexuality researchers and therapists that homosexuality is unchosen and in most cases unchangeable. Such consensus reveals that although homosexuality is a minority sexual orientation, it is one of three natural, normal orientations determined by the hormonal environment in-utero, or shortly after birth, and perhaps in some instances determined by genes. (3) While science has revealed new insight into homosexuality, The United Methodist Church has persisted in its language of moral choice. The result has been a conversation increasingly marked by conflict, sorrow, frustration and confusion within the church and its families.

Recently, at the Reconciling Ministries Network (RMN) Convocation held July 26-29 in Saint Louis, four members of the “Commission on A Way Forward” took questions. The commission had made a recommendation to the United Methodist Council of Bishops. When asked if the commission had considered recent scientific investigation in its recommendation, the answer was, “No.” In making a decision to retain its 1992 understanding of scientific reason, it is not surprising The United Methodist Church finds itself on the brink of division.

Instead the church seems determined to hold a conversation on a selected core of scripture without illumination from science and reason, let alone tradition and experience. This brink of division now extends up and down the Wesleyan family tree. Because the church has failed to model how to engage in a theological discussion using its own proven method of truth finding, division and frustration continues to build.

Examples of this divisiveness are most painfully reflected on a familial level where, without guidance from the church, the authority of scripture and its interpretation often become literal in conversations.

This past April, an extended United Methodist family gathered for Easter. Following worship at a UMC, during Easter dinner, family members begin to discuss “A Way Forward.”

Discovering they held dis-similar views, the conversation ended when one family member said, “I will never be able to look at a rainbow again and enjoy it.”

The family member was referring to the rainbow flag, designed and sown by Gilbert Baker who grew up in southeast Kansas. (4) The other rainbow is thousands of years old. Its history is located in the Book of Genesis. The rainbow concludes the story of Noah when God promises to never destroy the earth again by a flood (NRSV, Genesis 9.12-17). Whether one interrupts this story literally or not, over time, the Genesis rainbow has been extended to become a larger covenantal metaphor of God’s promise to care for God’s people. This promise has been etched into most theological orthodoxy. It embodies scriptural holiness.

The LGBTQ community, which sides with reason and science in understanding one’s sexuality as un-chosen, has embraced the rainbow as an affirmation that God’s promise is extended to all, including LGBTQ persons. The flag, then, is a source of pride with roots in the scriptural holiness of the Genesis story. Yet, some believe the rainbow flag stands outside of biblical orthodoxy and is a perversion of God’s promise.

Left only with a debate over a literal interpretation of scripture, without the illuminating lens of reason, experience and tradition, The United Methodist Church appears to have set itself up for division. This need not be so.

Even The United Methodist family called the Council of Bishops has been afflicted with conflict. It was expected the COB, drawing upon the work from the Commission On A Way Forward, would recommend a plan to move the church forward. The COB met in late April to consider its recommendation. Bishop Bruce R. Ough, the council’s immediate past president, began the process acknowledging a need to reframe the question of homosexuality and the church telling the council, “False dichotomies and single narrative thinking have been used to try to fix the problem. The mandate for the work of The Commission on A Way Forward is to reframe the question.” (5)

That next week, the council was to recommend one of two proposals from the commission. However, The United Methodist News Service reported on May 15 that conflict within the council became pronounced when “Bishop Scott J. Jones of the Texas Conference asserted that Bishop Ough engaged in misrepresentation in a brief to the Judicial Council, the denomination’s top court.” (6) The brief also had been submitted in the week following the COB meeting in Chicago. Said Bishop Jones, “In my years as a bishop I have served on more than 20 decision-making groups. This is the only one where members began disagreeing within 48 hours of adjournment on what they decided.” (6)

As a result of the conflict within the Council of Bishops, three plans will now go before The General Conference next February in Saint Louis. One of the plans, the “Traditional” model, not previously recommended by The Commission On A Way Forward, even retains the prohibitive language from The Book of Discipline and calls for greater enforcement. How this proposal came about has become a source of confusion and debate within the church. At the RMN Convocation in July, commission members refused to talk about how the “traditional” model was later added.

Such a public display of conflict, sorrow, frustration and confusion by The Council of Bishops makes Bishop Ough's call to reframe the question all the more immediate. But, how do you reframe a moral question that refuses to engage the Wesleyan method of truth seeking?

Any attempt to do so requires a re-engagement of this Wesleyan tradition. Such re-engagement begins with scripture before proceeding to reason, experience and tradition. Here, John Wesley "interpreted the Protestant sola Scriptura to mean Scripture is the primary, rather than the exclusive Christian authority." (7) However, in calling homosexuality a moral choice, there is a temptation to understand scripture as the exclusive authority.

Some locate the authority of scripture in Romans 1.26-27. Others cite the Holiness Codes in Leviticus 17-27 written first for the people of Israel as a book of law. Still, others point out nowhere in the Gospel narratives does Jesus carry forward the Holiness Code law that prohibits homosexuality. Whether or not the Commission On A Way Forward engaged the cultural, historical, and religious contexts from which these scriptures were written is not known.

Differing interpretations, then, appear to be at the root of the churches division. As though he anticipated this division, Wesley encouraged testing the revelation of truth as found in scripture saying the authority of scripture is "never adequate until it is conferred upon the believer by the Spirit." (8) And, Wesley believed the Spirit worked through experience, reason and tradition to confer scripture's authority.

Yet, Wesleyan truth finding is a complicated task. It is especially complicated to ascertain "the confirmation of experience" when homosexuality is first seen as a moral issue. How do you invite the self-avowed homosexual into a conversation about experience when church law holds the individual stands outside of Christian teaching? For example, does one choose their sexuality or is it a natural born state? Here, experience can help confirm a revelation of scripture's authority. But, aware the church has chosen a moral interpretation of scripture, many from the LGBTQ community choose to stay silent. Thus, experience is not easy to come by. Yet, Wesley once said of a friend, "The theory of religion he certainly has. May God give him the living experience of it." (8).

It becomes clear, then, the call to reframe the question of the church and homosexuality necessitates a re-engagement of reason and scientific research. Wesley recognized and studied many of the issues of the Enlightenment that touched on Christianity. In doing so, he valued new science and believed science, if understood, could serve the cause of Christ and need not be feared. He was unwilling to subscribe to the antiscientific sentiments expressed by the leading Tory intellectuals. Instead, Wesley pursued a middle road which considered both faith and reason.

In assuming this position Wesley offers a pattern for those, two centuries later, who seek to remain responsive to Christianity in a culture infinitely more attuned to science. Wrote Wesley about the role of science in God's Approbation of His Works (1782): "How small a part of this great work of God is man able to understand! But it is our duty to contemplate what He has wrought, and to understand as much of it as we are able." (10)

In 1972 the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders. (11) It did so aware of the pioneering research of Dr. Alfred Kinsey. In 1948, Dr. Kinsey reported the results of a large study of sexuality introducing the concept of a spectrum of sexuality ranging from individuals who have no attraction to others of the same sex, to people who are sexually attracted to both sexes, to individuals who are attracted only to people of the same sex.

(Figure 1) This finding led to the realization that there are multiple factors that influence the development of various forms of sexual attraction. This spectrum still holds true today. More recently, scientists have discovered the etiologies of sexual preference include hormonal effects on the sexually dimorphic nucleus of the preoptic area of the brain (SDN-POA) during fetal development, effects of specific genes and mutations of genes, immunological factors in the mother, the interaction of molecular and environmental factors, and interactions between genes and hormones. (3)

Sexual preference for same or opposite sex is determined by the SDN-POA, which is programmed by prenatal hormones. (Figure 2) Studies have shown the number of cells in SDN-POA of males is 5-6 times larger than in females due to action of testosterone during embryonic development and/or during the first days after birth. This effect is irreversible. Absence or low concentrations of testosterone will lead to a female pattern in the male fetus; i.e. preference for male partners. (13, 14)

Although specific genes associated with homosexuality have not been determined, the pattern of homosexuality in families indicates genetics plays a role. If a boy is gay, there is a 20-25% likelihood his brothers will be gay. Similarly, lesbian women have a greater probability of having a lesbian sister. If an identical twin is gay there is 65% chance his twin brother will be gay. (15)

Also, research has revealed sexual orientation tends to be transmitted through the matriarchal lineage: a gay man has a higher probability of having gay uncles and cousins on his mother's side of the family. It is also likely immunological response affects the development of sexual orientation during gestation. In any family the second-born son is 33 percent more likely than the first to be gay, and the third is 33 percent more likely than the second. It is postulated that the mother develops an immunological response (antibodies) to the hormones of each new male fetus. This would lower the testosterone available for its effect on the developing brain resulting in the development of female sexual orientation; that is, attraction to males. (15)

There are important interactions between genes and hormones, too. The Y chromosome codes for the development of male sex in the fetus. Males have an X and a Y chromosome while females have two X chromosomes. XY babies (males) with complete insensitivity to testosterone are born with female genitalia and raised as girls. They are sexually attracted to men. This is evidence that hormonal effects on the brain during development prevail. Even though genetically a male, the absence of a testosterone effect on the prenatal brain results in female sexual orientation, that is, the individual is attracted to males. (16)

Given the development of scientific research, this spring, nearly 50 bills were introduced in 24 states targeting conversion therapy (17). Currently, 11 states, plus the District of Columbia, have laws or regulations that prohibit the practice of conversion therapy used to convert someone from his or her sexual orientation. The decision to pass such legislation reflects the evolving research of reason and science concerning homosexuality.

Yet, the church lags behind and continues to debate only a moral discussion based on a narrow interpretation of scripture. So, where do we go from here? Is it necessary to reframe the question using a re-engagement of Wesleyan truth finding? Or, do we continue to tell the young man whose brain was exposed to lower than average levels of testosterone while in the womb that he is abnormal, and that his predetermined sexual attraction is incompatible with Christian teaching?

Or, citing the authority of scriptures, do we draw a line and become ever more prohibitive? Do we tell the woman with an XY chromosome pattern and resistance to testosterone, who has always thought she was a woman, that she can't marry the man she loves because she is really a male? Is the woman who has congenital adrenal hyperplasia, which caused her brain to be exposed to higher than average levels of testosterone during fetal development, and caused her to be attracted to other women abnormal and not entitled to the same treatment by the church as a heterosexual woman? Do we deny ordination to a person who has been called to ministry and is very gifted, because he/she was born with same-sex orientation, and is in a committed relationship with a person of the same sex?

To persist in a revelation of truth that morally judges homosexuality incompatible with Christian teaching is to believe science and scripture are conflicted and at odds. History, yet another source of Wesleyan truth finding, reveals this to be a dangerous path. The failure to acknowledge that the illumination of truth changes as an understanding of God's creation expands, manifests itself in the division the church currently experiences. It is important to remember, then, the role of history in further illuminating the truth. (18)

It wasn't until the 1956 General Conference the Methodist Church granted full clergy rights to women. And, it wasn't until 1939 that the Methodist Church re-united after a 95 year split between the "north" and the "south" over slavery. The discussions leading up to both events reflected different understandings of scripture. Eventually, though, the Spirit worked through experience, reason and tradition to further illuminate the authority of scripture.

So, here we are in 2018 looking back at the history of our United Methodist Church's response to God's revelations about the nature of God's creation. Why is it so challenging to accept the discoveries of scientific investigation as being God's revelation to guide us in our understanding of the world in which we live and love? We embrace the discoveries that affect our physical world; for example, discoveries which help us treat disease, provide an adequate food supply, and provide safe and comfortable housing. Why is it difficult to embrace the discoveries affecting relationships? Will we learn from our history, or will it take us 96 years of debate to include persons in the LGBTQ community as it did for the issue of slavery, or literally hundreds of years as it did before deciding to ordain women? Now that we have scientific evidence that homosexuality is part of the rich diversity of God's creation, will we embrace this revelation and end the punishment and exclusion based upon sexual orientation?

Whether or not The United Methodist Church embraces the worth of Scripture, experience, tradition, and reason depends on the willingness of each of us to respect the holiness of scientific understanding as it reflects upon Scripture. Jesus was a champion of inclusion, consistently pointing to the need to change the understanding of ancient laws. Should we not emulate His behavior?

Figure 1

KINSEY SCALE OF SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Kinsey, 1948:

“Males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats... The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects.”

The Kinsey Reports found that 37% of males and 13% of females had at least some overt homosexual experience.

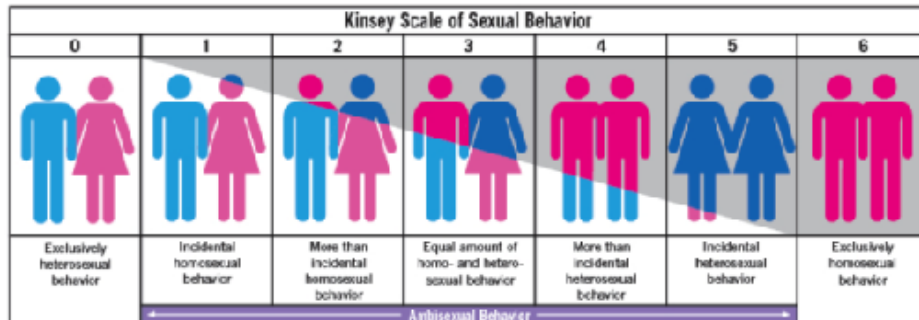
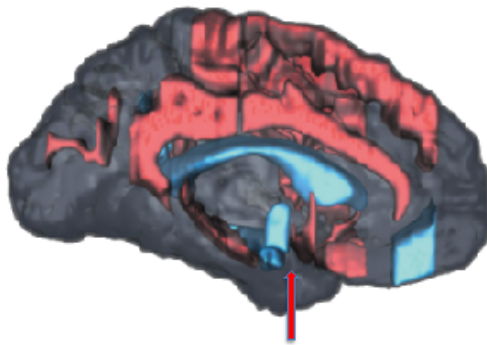


Figure 2

Prenatal Determinants: Effect of Hormones on the Sexually Dimorphic Nucleus of the Preoptic Area (SDN-POA)



The number of cells in the SDN-POA is 5-6x larger in males than females due to action of testosterone during embryonic development.

This effect is irreversible.

Sexual preference for same or opposite sex is determined by the SDN-POA, which is programmed by prenatal hormones.

Boa: *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology* 32:214. 2011

In males, testosterone induces preference for females.

Absence or low concentrations will lead to female Pattern; i.e. preference for male partner.

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WHERE ALL MEANS ALL.

We believe in being a church where Progressive and Inclusive Christianity are practiced and preached.

We are a thinking congregation. We depend on our United Methodist tradition of looking at scripture, tradition, reason, and experience to inform our faith. Recently we voted to become a Reconciling Congregation which means we are open to all people including LGBTQ people as an official partner in the Reconciling Ministries Network.



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Rev. Gayla Rapp is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church with over 20 years experience in the Kansas West and Kansas East Conferences. Gayla has served in a variety of church settings--urban and rural--small, medium and large size churches as well as campus ministry. She has found blessings in every size and setting of ministry. Her particular passions in ministry include vibrant worship and ministry with children and youth. Gayla is excited to serve at Asbury Church where thoughtful and compassionate people of faith are creating a community where all are welcome.

Rev. Lee Johnson has been in ministry for 30 years. He began his journey as a student at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City. Throughout his years in ministry, Rev. Lee has served United Methodist churches of all settings and sizes in Nebraska, his home state, and the Kansas City Area. This is Rev. Lee's third time serving at Asbury, where he is the Associate Pastor with a focus in pastoral care and older adult ministry. Rev. Lee's passion for ministry comes from people. He loves experiencing, caring for, connecting with, learning from and sharing stories with all people.