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**50
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Today...**

50 years ago I was active in the **METHODIST STUDENT FOUNDATION** at DePauw University. That involvement was a stimulating and inspiring connection with other students who shared my faith commitment. In 1964 100's of us from across the country were preparing to attend a national convocation over our winter semester break.

Besides raising funds and negotiating transportation to attend, we were given a series of pamphlets to read; they were to be the focus for addresses, worship and group discussions at the gathering. Here are the titles and authors of the Biblical Study Guide and 6 study papers which I have saved and reread now and then:

- BIBLICAL FAITH AND ETHICAL REVOLUTION** – Theodore H. Weber
- MORALITY USA** – J. Robert Moskin
- THE ETHICAL DEMANDS OF INTEGRATION** – Martin Luther King, Jr.
- CREATORS AND DESTROYERS** – Eric Fromm
- REALIZATION OF THE SEX NATURE** – Helmut Thielicke
- DYNAMICS OF AMERICAN POLITICS** – David C. Amidon, Jr.
- THE CONTEXTUAL CHARACTER OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS** – Paul L Lehmann

Because the 50th anniversary of this convocation was a month ago, I decided to take another look at the 2nd of the papers – **MORALITY USA** by J. Robert Moskin. It was excerpted from a longer piece that appeared in **LOOK MAGAZINE**. They both examined the ethical revolution that was taking place in our country during the first half of the 1960's. Here is the opening paragraph of both articles:

“Morality is the most intensely discussed subject in the United States. We argue about Elizabeth Taylor’s love life, Billie Sol Estes Deals, Bull Connor’s brutalities, Adam Clayton Powell’s junkets, Nelson Rockefeller’s divorce, Jimmy Hoffa’s power. We debate stealing by youngsters in Darien, Conn., sterilization in Virginia, welfare restrictions by politicians in Newburgh, NY, the right to lie by officials in Washington, slantwell digging by Texans in Texas and gouging by slumlords in Chicago.”

Sound relatively familiar to current headlines in today’s news media? If you’re still not too sure, then consider these topical questions from the article that comprise the headings of the various topics addressed in September 24, 1963, **LOOK MAGAZINE** piece:

- ***Who Has Enough Courage?***
- ***Do Scientists Spread Immorality?***
- ***Is Government Clean?***
- ***Can We Mix Morals and Profits?***
- ***Have the Churches Failed?***
- ***Are our New Ideas About Sex Immoral?***
- ***Can A Christian Support Segregation?***
- ***Is money Our God?***
- ***Where Do Your Children Learn to Sin?***

It certainly seems to me that a few of the details may be different for us today, but essentially we are struggling with very much these same issues 5 decades later! I rest my case with the closing paragraph from the article:

*“We are groping, painfully and often blindly, for new standards that will enable us to live morally and decently. The experts feel strongly that we cannot turn back to earlier, more rigid behavior patterns. Almost all the thoughtful, worried people I talked with believe that, unlike people in so many past ages, we have achieved some freedom of choice. We have choices to make about power, money, sex, prejudice and our role in the world. We **must** find a new moral code that will fit the needs of the society we live in. We have a large measure of freedom to carve out lives we regard as moral – if we will take the risks and pay the price.”*

I believe these challenges remain just as real and pressing today as they were 50 years ago, and I pray that we are up to facing them squarely, honestly and **faithfully** even more so today!

Godspeed, Gary

THE SEASONS OF LENT & EASTER – 2015

02.18	ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP
02.22	LENT I WORSHIP & STUDY 1 <i>“How We Domesticate Jesus’ Provocative Stories” †</i>
03.01	LENT II WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION & STUDY 2 <i>“Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, Lost Son”</i>
03.08	LENT III WORSHIP
03.15	LENT IV – PASSION SUNDAY WORSHIP & STUDY 3 <i>“The Good Samaritan”</i>
03.29	LENT V – PALM SUNDAY WORSHIP & STUDY 4 <i>“The Kingdom of Heaven Is Like Yeast”</i>
04.02	MAUNDY THURSDAY SEDER MEAL
04.03	GOOD FRIDAY OBSERVANCE
04.05	EASTER WORSHIP WITH HOLY COMMUNION
04.12	EASTER II WORSHIP & STUDY 5 <i>“The Pearl of Great Price”</i>
04.19	EASTER III WORSHIP & STUDY 6 <i>“The Mustard Seed”</i>
04.26	EASTER IV WORSHIP & STUDY 7 <i>“The Pharisee and the Tax Collector”</i>
05.03	EASTER V WORSHIP & STUDY 8 <i>“The Laborers in the Vineyard”</i>
05.10	EASTER VI WORSHIP & STUDY 9 <i>“The Widow and the Judge”</i>
05.17	EASTER VII WORSHIP & STUDY 10 <i>“The Rich Man and Lazarus”</i>
05.23	WORSHIP & STUDY 11 <i>“The Power of Disturbing Stories”</i>

†# The titles in italics are chapter titles from **“SHORT STORIES OF JESUS – *The Enigmatic Parables of A Controversial Rabbi*”** by Dr. Amy-Jill Levine, professor of New Testament and Jewish Studies at Vanderbilt University Divinity School, Nashville, TN. **The book is our Lenten-Easter Study.**

DISCRETION, FREE SPEECH AND 'CHARLIE HEBDO'

How should Christians react to offensive forms of free speech?

By Jesse Carey

January 12, 2015

"I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." Though it's often misattributed to 18th-century philosopher Voltaire, it was actually his biographer, Evelyn Beatrice Hall, who wrote these words, which have gone on to embody the spirit of free speech.

Part of the reason the simple statement is so enduring is because it dramatically outlines the dilemma that supporters of free speech must reconcile with: Speech is a double-edged sword; if we defend it, we may be, in effect, defending ideas we vehemently disagree with.

For many Christians, the dilemma is further complicated by what the Bible says about the power of words. Proverbs 18 tells us, *"The tongue has the power of life and death."* From the very beginning, we see that God puts tremendous value in words. In Genesis, God speaks creation into existence, and in John 1, He uses the metaphor of His Word to represent the promise of Christ. *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

God cares about words. Our speech matters.

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Last week, 12 people were brutally murdered in the offices of *CHARLIE HEBDO*, because a small group of radical Islamists disagreed with how the newspaper exercised its freedom of speech. In the following hours and days, the violence would claim the lives of five more victims as police hunted the perpetrators, three of whom were killed in shootouts with police. One may have escaped to Syria.

Since then, millions of French citizens, global supporters, social media users and even Hollywood celebrities have worn buttons and carried posters that read *"Je suis Charlie"* (*"I am Charlie"*) as a sign of support for the victims, the newspaper itself and the principle of free speech.

But what exactly are they supporting when they say, *"Je suis Charlie"*? As numerous outlets have pointed out, many of *CHARLIE HEBDO'S* cartoons were intentionally offensive and wildly provocative. Like other media channels have done in the past (to some bit of controversy) they visually depicted Islam's Prophet Muhammad — an act seen as blasphemous to many Muslims. And though non-religious readers and members of religions without prohibitions of depictions of sacred figures may not have a frame of reference for such an act, other of *CHARLIE HEBDO'S* cartoons were more universally offensive.

They regularly made shocking jokes (*warning the images are graphic*) for the sake of making shocking jokes. One cartoon showed Muhammad graphically posing naked for a camera. One showed a very unflattering image of Mary in the act of giving birth to Jesus. They would publish cartoons with stereotypes of Middle Eastern caricatures. This excellent piece in *THE DAILY BEAST* likens their work to the behavior of Internet trolls, pointing to the example of a recent

cover image that showed the kidnapped girls Boko Haram turned into sex slaves pregnant and complaining about welfare checks.

CHARLIE HEBDO didn't just publish things in poor taste. They were deliberately offensive. Obviously, it should go without saying (*although it evidently does not*) that no joke, cartoon or even hateful speech warrants violence. The victims of the shootings were targeted by violent radicals who used bullets to fight ideas, and that's abhorrent.

The victims of the shootings were targeted by violent radicals who used bullets to fight ideas, and that's abhorrent.

The *CHARLIE HEBDO* editors were murdered in cold blood because they challenged ideas, and did so with images and words that many people took offense to. They were murdered because of how they exercised their freedom of speech.

Beyond being a cornerstone value to most modern, Western cultures, free speech is vital to a Christian worldview. As Christians, the freedom to exchange ideas, the ability to criticize those in power for the sake of justice and the liberty to have honest dialogue — even with our Creator — is woven throughout Scripture.

But just because we may want to speak out against threats to free speech doesn't mean we should issue unwavering support to those who choose to exercise their speech in ways we don't agree with. In other words, there is a difference between mourning the deaths of those killed and supporting the work they did in life. To admit so does not demean their deaths or lessen the tragedy.

We should think carefully before declaring "*I am Charlie*," even if it's only intended as a simple act of showing unity, support for victims or values related to free expression.

Much of France's Muslim population are immigrants facing difficult social circumstances and unemployment rates that are twice the national average. Though the attacks were committed by only a few individual radicals, the cartoons targeted the personal faith of a population of 6 million French Muslims. Thoughtfully engaging with ideas we don't agree with is good. And we shouldn't be so overly concerned with offending people that we self-censor ourselves or our ideals. But, as Christians our job isn't to push the limits of free speech to the point of vulgarity just to drive home a point. Sometimes, the most effective forms of speech use discretion, understanding and compassion — not provocation.

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Christians must be able to support the ideal of free speech while recognizing that it can be used in ways contrary to our command to love our neighbors as ourselves.

We can — and should — support freedom of speech, artistic expression, satire and cultural criticism. But, we should also be willing to exercise discretion and understanding when issuing our direct support to certain kinds of free speech — even if we defend its right to exist.

[Reprinted from *RELEVANT* — A MAGAZINE ABOUT FAITH, CULTURE AND INTENTIONAL LIVING]



As the Sunday School continues to grow the children lead the Congregation in singing before Sunday Services. Jesus Loves me and The B-I-B-L-E are favorites. New songs are being learned every week. From left to right: Reese Murphy, Julia Murply, Trey Ehart, Gracie Ehart, Lexi Addison, and Sammi Addison

2015 ANNUAL MEETING

January 25, 2015, the Annual Meeting was held at 1pm following a pot luck lunch. We enjoyed turkey, lasagna, a great array of salads, and desserts. There is no way to describe the wonderful homemade pies from Nita Hays and the brownies, the cakes and those fluffy desserts brought by others. Thanks to everyone for bringing their best recipes.

There were 13 members present and 10 non-members. With a quorum present Moderator, Cindy Price, called the meeting to order at 1:10pm. Minutes from January 26, 2014, were reviewed.

The Clerk made her report and Pastor Gary made the Pastor's Report. He has made the point before, but reminded us that he will probably move on in 2016, as his wife intends to retire that year. He encouraged the church to begin to move forward in searching for another pastor.

The Treasurer's Report was made by Sue Bellotti. She covered the proposed budget and there was discussion about the work that had been done at the church and parsonage over the last year. The work from 2013, involving Belfor, was finally closed out in 2014.

Cindy Price made the Moderator's report and thanked everyone that had worked with the church, holding a position on the Council or on a committee.

The Stewards and Trustees reported followed by Nancy Karlson with a Womens Fellowship report.

New leadership for the year will be as follows:

Julia Cox, Moderator
Sylvia Spangler, Moderator-elect
Monica Klingler Clerk
Sue Bellotti, Treasurer
Past Moderator, Cindy Price

Trustees will be Ann Anderson, Jevon Klingler, and Cindy Price and one open position. Stewards; Sylvia Spangler, Jeannie Reeves, Doris Achenbach, and Peggy Shiflet. Pastor Parish Relations will be Cindy Price, Ann Anderson, Debbie Hamm and one open position (Council Representative). Music Director: Sue Bellotti, Christian Education Chairperson: Sue Bellotti, Nancy Karlson, President of Womens Fellowship; and Cindy Price and Nancy Karlson, Memorial Committee. Stewardship Chairperson; Nancy Karlson

All the reports can be read in their entirety at the Church website

www.collbrancongregationalchurch.org.

If you would like to receive a copy of the Annual Report for 2014 in the mail, please let us know.
Sue Bellotti 970-487-3474

ANNUAL TREASURER'S REPORT 2014

Proposed Budget for 2014	Projected Income \$51,425.00	Projected Expense \$55,712.60
Actual Income/Expense 2014 Loss in 2014	Actual Income \$48,525.55 (\$ 2,899.45)	Actual Expense 52,299.06 (\$3,413.54)
Proposed Budget for 2015	Projected Income 2015 \$49,725.00	Projected Expense 2015 \$ 47,643.60

As you can see the income comes close to meeting the expenses of the church but does not completely cover them. We work hard to keep within the guidelines set in the budget but unexpected repairs and maintenance issues are the problem area.

UC Foundation is the investment firm selected by the Council, several years ago, to hold and invest the generous funds inherited from Everett and Mable Collins and Elna Hall. The interest, generated from

these funds, has paid for large and very necessary repairs made to the church and parsonage this past year.

A sincere, genuine THANK YOU to everyone that contributes to the Collbran Congregational Church, UCC. This church is the oldest church in the valley and an active and supportive member of the community. Your gifts make that possible.

Mustard Seed

Editor – Doris Achenbach is home recovering from a stay at the hospital and Palisade Care Center. She was gone over 6 weeks. We hope she will be back in the driver's seat for the Mustard Seed soon.

Until then, please submit articles or information you would like to see in the Mustard Seed to Sue Bellotti. 487-3474 or contact me through the website under the Treasure Tab.

NEW WEBSITE FOR COLLBRAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, UCC

I encourage you to take a look at the new website. We had great help through McDel Publishing. Kammy is a former resident of the valley and very knowledgeable, which has made this site possible. Take time to cruise through the tabs and historical information for the church. The site can be located by googling Collbran Congregational Church, UCC, or by going directly to the website at, www.collbrancongregationalchurch.org. We look forward to your feedback and input of ideas to keep the site active and vibrant.



VBS FUNDRAISER DINNER MARCH 5, 2015. MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!