



Mary and Martha Mail Circle



United Methodist Women
Christ United Methodist Church
Mobile, Alabama

May 2016

You Are That Temple

Healthy sexuality is knowing our value and self-worth as God's holy creation.

by Stephanie Greiner

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.



In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul tells us we are sacred to God, our bodies are sacred to God. Yet many of us struggle with this concept when it comes to the value we place on ourselves and specifically on our bodies. Most women will agree that at some point in our lives, we have all hated some aspect of our physical bodies. Advertising thrives

on our insecurities, with depictions of the perfect (airbrushed) woman and claims that their product will produce that "perfection." We might hate the way our eyes look, the tone of our skin, the shape of our hips, or some other facet of our appearance. But Paul tells us, "God's temple is holy, and you are that temple." This does not mean that we shouldn't strive to improve ourselves, both physically and mentally—it means that God loves us as we are, all shapes and sizes, and we should love ourselves as God loves us.

Care for the temple

So my body's a temple. Well, I think my temple needs a little less cheesecake and a little more water. Maybe a little more sleep and a little more skin care. This temple is exhausted—chasing after two children, working full time and trying to have a personal life. I can hear many of my seasoned United Methodist Women friends telling me: just wait until you hit 50 or 60 and you won't care anymore what people think! But I've come to realize it's not what people think that has caused me to question my value; it's my life experience, my self-talk, my toxic relationships of the past that have started to crack my temple.

I am my own worst enemy. I spent my 20s in multiple long-term relationships because I simply was not going to graduate college without a husband. When that didn't happen, I became more determined to not finish my master's degree without a husband. I had two degrees but still couldn't be proud of myself because I did not have a husband. If I had no significant other to value me, how could I value myself?

In attempts to seem more appealing to a potential partner, I would transform into a person that even my closest friends didn't recognize. I would be whomever the person I was dating wanted me to be. It's no surprise, then, that I ended up in multiple failed relationships that left me feeling worthless. I would allow a partner to speak to me in ways I would never expect someone who loved me to speak to me. I made excuses for physical violence, so much so that when I found a man who was willing to marry me I excused all of this behavior. My value was in being someone's wife, not in being someone.

Supportive community

My story is not much different than many others. So many women believe they aren't worthy of love or respect. When we reject ourselves we reject God and the value God has for us. We are temples and we are sacred—but being broken and beaten down, it's very hard to remember this.

Sometimes we project our own shortcomings onto other women, or are one another's harshest—and most unfair—critics. We put other women down instead of lifting them up. The whispers, name-calling, competition and judgment chip away at our individual and collective value. It's often hard not to pit ourselves against one another in a world that preaches scarcity and individualism. But we are people of faith, we are United Methodist Women, and we believe in God's abundance and a table with a seat for all.

Sex and self-worth

As I started studying *The Bible and Human Sexuality: Claiming God's Good Gift* by Ellen A. Brubaker, the 2016 United Methodist Women spiritual growth study, I realized that one of the strongest themes is the value we place on ourselves in regard to our sexuality. Sexuality has so many different meanings, in society and in the Bible, and we all have our own interpretations of what sexuality is or is not, but the concept of self-worth and sex is one that really connected with me while reading this book.

"As we form a sexual ethic, we must understand our bodies as a gift from the God who created us and called us good," Ms. Brubaker states. Our bodies, all shapes, sizes and colors, are good because they are a gift from God. When we can begin to understand that our physical, sexual, body is a gift from God and not dependent on another person's perspective we begin to honor ourselves as the sacred temples God made us to be. We begin to set boundaries, set standards and set out to be comfortable in our own skin, and this begins to change how we see everything, including

(Continued on page 4)

Selections From the Prayer Calendar
+ *Mary and Martha Birthdays*

- MAY 1 Shirley Townsend-Jones
 MAY 2 Kathy Kuhn
 MAY 3 Sierra Leone United Methodist Church
 MAY 4 Saory Pon
 MAY 5 Harriett Olson
 MAY 6 Home repair in the Mississippi Delta
 MAY 7 Pamela Johnson
 Kim Pratt
 MAY 8 Katherine Wrona
 MAY 9 Irma Figueroa
 MAY 10 Sherlette Lee
 MAY 11 Ellen Hoover
 MAY 12 Cynthia Rodriguez
 MAY 13 Kathleen Masters
MAY 14 Kristen Brown
 MAY 15 Moore Community House, Biloxi, Mississippi.
 MAY 16 Hikari Chang
 MAY 17 Methodist Church of Indonesia
 MAY 18 Nora Marker
 MAY 19 Angela Moorer
 MAY 20 Nandona Chikomb
 MAY 21 John Elmore
 MAY 22 German Gomez
 MAY 23 Melisa Abdool
 MAY 24 Robin Minick
 Lynn Hamric
 MAY 25 Elizabeth Lee
 MAY 26 Lourdes Magalhaes
 MAY 27 Joanne Finley
MAY 28 Donna Pewo
 MAY 29 Judith Santiago
 MAY 30 Methodist Church in Uruguay
 MAY 31 Celeste Caton

May 28, 2016 - 9 a.m.
Christ UMC Unit Meeting
Christ Center, 2nd Floor Assembly Area
Mobile District UMW Action Workshop

- Bring a brunch item to share
- Bring your own cup (green day)

Members who cannot attend the workshop may sponsor kits for \$15 each, which covers supplies and shipping.

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Happy Birthday
May 14
Kristen Brown!



Kristen Brown is a missionary with the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church serving as coordinator of interpretation, education, and advocacy through the Methodist liaison office in Jerusalem.

This office is a joint project of Global Ministries, the British Methodist Church, and the World Methodist Council. It relates to ecumenical organizations, churches, and church-related institutions in the Holy Land, and it provides educational venues for Methodist pilgrims to the region.

Born in New York City, Kristen grew up in many places, including Zambia and Libya, and graduated from high school in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in French from Oklahoma City University and a Master of Divinity degree from Duke University Divinity School. Kristen was ordained as a United Methodist deacon in 1997 and as an elder in 2000.

Her first pastorate was at Nichols Hills United Methodist Church, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Her second appointment was to Mounds United Methodist Church in Mounds, Oklahoma. She then spent eight years as campus minister through the Wesley Foundation at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford, Oklahoma. From June 2009 to January 2011, she was senior pastor at the First United Methodist Church of Blackwell, Oklahoma.

"From a young age, I have known that I have been called to mission," Kristen says. "My first recollections of church are of a home-church we had in Benghazi, Libya. Later, I would learn about Methodism. Our home was one where there was always room for one more and the door was never shut on anyone in need." She felt a specific call to ministry and mission as an undergraduate student spending two months in Burkina Faso.

"God's call upon my life has taken me many places," says Kristen. "God's faithfulness in my life has enabled me to go where God leads."

Read more about the
 Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem at
[General Board of Global Ministries](#)

Responsively Yours

by Harriett Jane Olson



Why would United Methodist Women undertake a study on the Bible and human sexuality at this time when there is so much conflict in the church and world about matters connected to sexuality? One response might be: When would such a study be more important? Our study is not to create or extend controversy but to help us to delve more deeply into the ways our thoughts and feelings on sexuality are shaped and to help us look at what the Bible says and how we understand it.

Our study starts with the Bible and outlines the development of thought and doctrine related to sexuality in the church. We will also ask ourselves what sexuality means to us. This will be challenging for many of us. Some of us don't have experience addressing sexuality in church at all, or if we do, we may have addressed only a particular issue or the behaviors of others.

As we undertake this study, we do so keeping our Purpose in mind. As members of United Methodist Women, we are becoming whole people through Jesus Christ. This means we bring our whole selves into the mix—our bodies, minds, souls, hearts. **We need the theological space to reflect on God our creator's view of our sexuality, to think about what this means for how we see ourselves and others and then to talk about how we act in the world.**

We choose this study because we have much to learn from our sisters. All of us have experiences, feelings and perspectives to offer, and all of us can learn from the perspectives, feelings and experiences of others. We desperately need to undertake this work in a theological framework, reminded of God's love, rather than the judgmental, exploitative and sensational context created by media, politics and entertainment.

As we initially discussed the importance of this study, I remembered some of the conversations with our young women of Limitless. They shared that they were in phases of their lives when matters related to sexuality and relationships can be confusing and

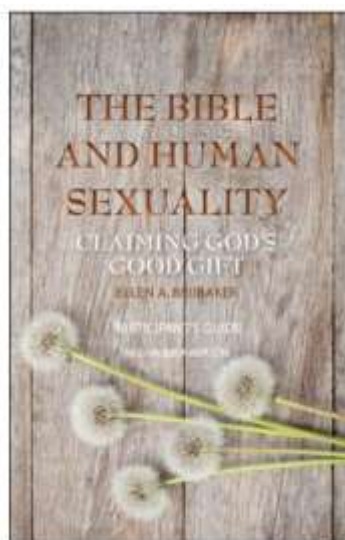
challenging and that they would value trusted relationships with God-following women with whom they could talk.

They are not the only ones experiencing confusion and challenge as well as pain and joy. I know that United Methodist Women members have stood for and with one another through a variety of issues connected to sexuality, and I pray that this study will strengthen this ability.

As a member of United Methodist Women becoming a whole person through Jesus Christ, I hope this study helps me bring my whole self more fully into the practice of loving God. I hope it prepares me to express God's love as I work on matters related to sexuality, and I expect that our organization's commitment to the wholeness of all persons, particularly women and girls, will continue to be grounded in our theology and expressed through our mission and advocacy.

That's why United Methodist Women is studying the Bible and Human Sexuality at this time. I hope that you will be a part of it, expecting a blessing in your own life and prepared to be a blessing to someone else.

*Harriett Jane Olson is General Secretary
United Methodist Women
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This study explores the Bible and human sexuality as two essential components of our Christian faith. The Bible is part of the foundation of our faith. Human sexuality is part of who we are as human beings, created by God and called good. The study invites us to explore the complexity of the biblical text and our varied understandings of it in light of human sexuality. 156 pp. Available from

[United Methodist Women Mission Resources](#)



The other studies -
Click covers for
additional
information



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sex.

Sex! We hear about it, we see it and we even talk about it, but what value do we place on it? Sin, lust, discrimination, abuse are all words that many of us have come to connect with the word sex. We forget that sex is ultimately God's good gift and that sex is also love, intimacy and trust. Sex, like anything else, can have two sides, good and evil, but part of ensuring that we have a healthy sexuality is knowing our value and appreciating ourselves.



in my life who value me for me and who I want to be. I will no longer settle for less than I deserve—and I know now that I deserve to be loved and respected. I know God's love for me, and now I can love myself.

Stephanie Greiner is president of United Methodist Women at Wesley United Methodist Church in Jefferson City, Missouri, and communications coordinator for the Mid-State District of the Missouri Conference United Methodist Women. She works full time as an e-learning curriculum design specialist for the Missouri Department of Corrections in Jefferson City.

Author and professor Kristin Neff has written about self-compassion, specifically researching how failure leads us to be highly self-critical and how mistakes can make us so insecure and anxious that we give up early when faced with future challenges. When you're in a relationship and experiencing domestic violence, whether physical, emotional or financial, you are in a constant environment of losing. You believe that you are not good enough, and you start to allow that to filter into other areas of your life.

After my divorce it took a lot of time before I could really feel good about who I was again. Everything I had done for six years was never right, or good, in my spouse's eyes. I started down the same path I had previously traveled: basing my self-worth on what a man thought about me, needing a man to tell me I'm beautiful and worth loving. Thankfully, I noticed that I had fallen back into this pattern and I decided that was it! I am a sacred temple! I have value, and if I didn't start finding it for myself no other person would ever be able to fill that need for me.

It's been a long road. Four years and I'm just now starting to really feel comfortable with and accepting of myself. I'm starting to see my value past what is on the outside, and now I make decisions about my body and my sexuality based on what I want too—not only on what someone else wants. I feel healthier and stronger. I enjoy knowing that I am a sacred temple, all of me, and I make room for those

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Supplies needed for health kits

1. NEW HAND TOWELS – 15"x25" to 17"x27" +++No kitchen, cleaning or microfiber towels, please.
2. NEW WASHCLOTHS – Do not wash hand towels or washcloths.
3. COMBS – Sturdy, at least 6 inches long. No pocket combs or picks.
4. NAIL FILE OR CLIPPERS – No emery boards or toenail clippers.
5. BAR SOAP – 3 oz. or larger only. +++No Jergen's or Ivory brand soap, please. Do not remove packaging.
6. TOOTHBRUSHES – Adult size only. Do not remove packaging.
7. ADHESIVE BANDAGES – 6 per kit; ¾" to 1"-size Common household band-aids.
8. \$1 per kit - For bulk purchase of toothpaste to be completed by UMCOR.

Member Involvement

Beginning anew in this New Year 2016

Your involvement will be published here as you accept responsibility

- ☛ Weekly Prayer Focus - Norma Spiller
- ☛ Members Cards - Patsy Adams
- ☛ Missionary Cards - Melissa Motes
- ☛ Circle Coordinator - Vera Moore
- ☛ Reception April 24 - Faye Sellers
- ☛ Bake Sale Workers - Glenda Contos
- ☛ Bake Sale Bakers - Glenda Contos, Sheila Hare
- ☛ Bake Sale Contributor - Vera Moore
- ☛ April 24 Celebration Workers - Faye Sellers, Melissa Motes, and Mary Anne Bemis.
- ☛ April 24 Celebration Bakers - Angel Dahlgren, Blair Parrett, Dawn Seese, Donna Alexander, Mary Anne Bemis, and Shay Bruton.
- ☛ Monthly Reflections - Mary Anne Bemis
- ☛

Service Projects

Your involvement in service projects will be published here as you report them to us.

- ☛ Shay Bruton - Camp Rap-A-Hope
- ☛ Tips 20% to Service Persons - Renea Burns
- ☛ Magazines to Nursing Homes - Patsy Adams
- ☛ Ryan LaSource - Bone Marrow Transplant - Vera Moore
- ☛ Medicines to Victory Health - Patsy Adams
- ☛

This publication is the monthly virtual meeting of the Mary & Martha Mail Circle, United Methodist Women at Christ United Methodist Church, Mobile, Alabama. Our Circle is just like each of the other Circles of Christ UMW with the exception that we do not have monthly meetings other than by this "virtual" program, devotion, prayer calendar/concerns, and Response moments. We make annual pledges to mission and participate in the projects of CUMW in all ways possible. We attend General Meetings as we are able. We constantly keep each other and each woman of UMW in our prayers.

Questions? Contact: Circle Coordinator
Vera Moore e-mail - vmooore4474@gmail.com

My Favorite Bible Study Leader

by Mary Anne Bemis

April 15-17 Marcia Jacobs and I drove to Chattanooga TN to Kay Arthur's Spring women's conference where Kay and 2 other Precept leaders presented the first 3 chapters of Revelation and the last chapter 22. We knew we were in for a "revelation" weekend! Also Alicia Williamson Garcia was there as worship leader inspirational singing, "The Bride" preparing for the Groom, Jesus Christ, that brought the Holy Spirit down in the house!

Ladies the gospel must be shared everyday. For the time is near!

I wish every woman in our church would travel once to Kay's Fall or Spring conference for a true meeting with God and the word presented in power and understanding. You receive so much more, sharing with other women from all over the country who come to hear Kay's inductive study method and prophetic word for this generation, their mission focus here and around the world!

You do have an opportunity to hear Kay this coming January 13 & 14, 2017 at the Daphne Civic Center, sponsored by Alicia Williamson Garcia, Women In Worship.

I've added her bio here at the end for your information. Read for yourself her life changing ministry!

Thank you allowing me to share my favorite Bible study leader for over 35 years!

Kay Arthur - Co-Founder of Precept Ministries

Kay Arthur's exciting, practical approach to the Scriptures has influenced thousands to use the Inductive Bible Study Method in their personal studies. Her distinguished Christian character, Bible teaching, championing of the Inductive Bible Study Method, and national radio and television programs motivate others to discover truth for themselves. Kay's passion is for people to be established in God's Word.

At the age of 29, a divorced mother of two working as a nurse. She had a religion but did not possess a relationship with God. On the morning of July 16, 1963, she fell on her knees as a sinner and rose as pure and whole in the Lord's sight. "For 'Whoever will call upon the name of the LORD will be saved'" Romans 10:13, (NASB). "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NASB). She hungered and thirsted for



This is me, Mary Anne, in a photo taken recently at the Tidal basin in Washington, DC. The cherry blossoms were in full bloom and falling petals felt like snow flakes around me! It was a magical moment.

My daughter, Christy, said I was giddy as a child and she loved seeing that in me.

the Word of truth and began studying the Bible. Her relationship with the Lord and scriptural findings turned her sorrows into joy and her mourning into laughter.

God's love poured down upon her in 1965 when she married a missionary with the Pocket Testament League named Jack Arthur. Together they served as missionaries in Mexico until health issues led them back to the States. In Chattanooga, TN, Jack managed a Christian radio station, and Kay began a teen Bible study. Though the study started as a small gathering in the living room of the couple's home, it soon grew from teens to college students to adults. From the beginning, Kay's and Jack's desire was to establish people in God's Word. Precept Ministries International 1970.

As one of the principal Bible teachers at Precept Ministries, Kay speaks extensively domestically and internationally teaching the Word of God and the Inductive Bible Study Method, which takes the student through the Bible book-by-book, verse-by-verse using the Inductive Bible Study Method.