



## Teen Scene Newsletter

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### **5th Edition**

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### **GROUND HOG DAY, VALENTINE'S DAY, PRESIDENTS DAY, AND BLACK HISTORY MONTH, ASH WEDNESDAY, AND LENT BEGINS**

Hello, and happy February. It has been a cold winter so far here in Florida! As I am writing this it is still January, but I am anxiously awaiting to see if the groundhog sees his shadow or not. Sure **not** hoping for 6 more weeks of possible freeze warnings! As I say that I think what a silly society we are looking for a simple groundhog to tell us the weather this coming February 2nd! Then I think of all this global warming science that we hear about. Truth is, only God controls the weather! We can wish, have superstitions, and scientists can argue their cases and run their experiments, but it all boils down to trusting in God and His will. What a peace we can experience when we let go and let God.

Then comes Valentine's Day, February 14th. A holiday when we think about love and relationships (oh yes, candy, dinners out, and fancy cards too). Once again, we can try to express our love for one another, and/or someone special to us. That is not a bad thing. But in the midst of all this remember God created us for relationships. He is our ultimate relationship, the one who we need to go to for guidance in all things, especially human relationships. It is interesting that St. Valentine was not actually a romantic! If you are interested in the history of this day you can go to

<https://theconversation.com/the-real-st-valentine-was-no-patron-of-love-90518?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIIsOLi-IXe AIV2MiGCh3-VAfCEAAAYASAAEgK6tfD BwE>

On President's day, February 20<sup>th</sup>, we celebrate and honor all of our presidents. Some we like more than others, but they all committed to a BIG job. When you get to voting age, pray and seek God's guidance in this decision too. For now, pray for our president and government that our government officials put aside their egos and ambitions and do the will of God.

Black History month. We celebrate diversity. Our country has been known as a Melting Pot. A blending of many ethnicities. We praise God for the ability to share all our heritages, differences, and blend them together as Americans living in a free society where all men are created equal. We note mistakes and wrongs that took place in history, and are thankful for the lessons learned and positive changes made.

But there is another big calendar event. It is part of our Church year. Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent.

So although the Christmas and Epiphany seasons have ended, our lives are still full and alive with God's glory!

### **THE CHURCH YEAR: The Time of Easter**

**“Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”**

**–Luke 24:26**

*Ash Wednesday*

This year Ash Wednesday is February 22<sup>nd</sup>. This is the beginning of Lent which starts 40 weekdays before Easter. It is a day for us to remember our mortality and our need for our Savior, Jesus Christ. Churches traditionally have Ash Wednesday services when the ancient custom of imposition of ashes takes place. The minister dips his thumb into ashes (which traditionally is the ashes of palm branches from the previous year's Palm Sunday that have been burned) and marks a cross on the parishioner's forehead and says “Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return” –Job 42:6. We have then started the process of preparing for Holy Week, looking at the suffering of our Lord, and then the Resurrection, Christ's victory over death and the devil! Our Lord Lives!

*Lent*

Throughout Lent we see the color Violet adorning our sanctuary. Violet is the color for royalty and for repentance. This is a reminder to repent and look to Christ for his mercy and forgiveness.

The singing of the Alleluia will be deleted from our divine worship service again so we focus on repentance and forgiveness. Alleluia means praise the Lord. It is actually a Hebrew word. The Gloria in Excelsis is also eliminated in Lent, as it was in Advent for this same reason.

In addition to the imposition of ashes, there are other customs we observe during the Lenten season. We will have midweek services to help us prepare for Holy Week and Easter. Many will observe a

time of fasting, when they give up eating something particular or skip a meal and devote a special time for prayer and to meditate on God's Word. Some will give something up for Lent, such as a favorite habit or hobby as a reminder to devote time to prayer and meditation.

We will talk about Holy Week and Easter in our March newsletter. For now, think about your life, spend some special time with God in prayer and His word. Repent and look to Him for his mercy and forgiveness as together we prepare for Holy Week and Easter.

### **HEARING FROM YOU**

I enjoy preparing these newsletters, but it would be so much more meaningful if you gave me your input. Please call, text, or email me and let me know topics you are interested in. Let me know what you want to see and hear about. Also, it would be awesome to include your activities and achievements so we can get to know one another better!

### **HOT TOPIC:**

#### **TRANSGENDERISM/GENDER DYSPHORIA**

Wow! What a challenging issue! This brings up so many confusing questions and the topic can go on and on as each case is different! So here are some of the common questions:

- What do each of us feel or think about this issue?
- What is this exactly?
- What does God say?
- What does Science say?
- What is the truth?
- How do I react if I meet someone experiencing these feelings?
- What if I have these feelings?
- Is this worse than other sins such as adultery, homosexuality, addictions, cursing, and so on?

Well, as I said, this is a BIG issue and there is no way I can cover all the details and research in this newsletter, but I will try to touch on the basics.

According to the DSM-5 (manual used for diagnosis by physicians) the proper name is Gender Dysphoria. This diagnosis focuses on a person's distress that is often associated with gender incongruence, which is a state in which one's birth identity is not in harmony with their feelings (Yarhouse, Mark A., "Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture"). Not all who struggle with gender identity are at a clinical level. For many it may just be a matter of where they fit in or acceptance. (Langewisch, David, "A Biblical Response to Transgenderism")

Transgenderism is a broad term that covers many issues regarding gender identity. Some may dress different than is traditional for their birth gender. Others many go so far as to undergo hormone therapy and/or surgical alterations to their body. One thing to remember, as I stated in our topic on homosexuality, no matter what a person does, their DNA, their XY chromosomes, do not change. This can be a very confusing and frustrating time for those who experience this type of confusion about their identity, and also for those around them such as parents, siblings, class mates, and others in the community.

I am going to give you a web site to go to. This is the story of Christopher Todd Beck, a retired member of Seal Team 6. In 2013, Christopher came out as a trans woman, Kristin. Now he has regrets. The article referenced in this site is his warning to teenagers. Please take time to read it. The title of the NY Post article is:

**“Ex-Navy SEAL who detransitioned warns transgender teens: ‘You need to slow down.’”**

By Joshua Rhett Miller December 12, 2022 6:17pm Updated

<https://nypost.com/2022/12/12/ex-navy-seal-who-detransitioned-warns-transgender-teens-slow-down/>

Although there have been some brain and genetic studies done by the scientific world, there has been no empirical evidence of biological differences in a gender dysphoric individuals. So what if a person claims they were born that way. That is how they feel. Then they must consider all the alternatives and we, as Christians, must look at what God says.

In the Holy Scripture, God defines who we are. He created us, male and female (Genesis 1:26-27, Matthew 19:4, Mark 10:6). He knitted us in our mother’s womb, designed us (Jeremiah 1:5, Psalms 139:13-16, Galatians 1:15). He knew us from our earliest beginnings. He knows everything about each one of us, even the origin of our desires. He knows man is sinful. So what is the definition of sin? Sin is doing something contrary to God’s word and will. As one reads God’s Word it is apparent that sin always hurts the person who sins. Sin never benefits the sinner. Take a moment to think about this. When we fail to follow God’s will for us, we experience consequences. Just imagine a world that had no sin. There would be no diseases, no suicides, no divorces, no hate, no bullies, and the list goes on and on.

In today’s culture we focus on “self” on “how I feel” and most of us fail to check out God’s word or pray for His guidance. That actually becomes a form of idolatry if we aren’t careful. Back to our topic. Is transgenderism or gender dysphoria a sin? Based on God’s definition of male and female as He created them to be, yes it is. Is this sin greater than other sins? No. God says no sin is greater than another as we see in Romans 1:18-32 where many sins are listed and death is the penalty for all of them...Thank God for other verses that show His mercy and forgiveness to those who repent (by the way repentance doesn’t only mean saying “sorry”, it also means to change). John 3:16-18 (ESV) says: <sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world,<sup>[a]</sup> that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he

has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.” So although we, as humans, cannot keep the commands and laws as written in His Word, Jesus Christ came into the world for us. Here we see the importance of His human birth, death, and resurrection.

So what do we tell those who have these gender identity questions and/or feelings? What do we do if we meet someone who has gone through the process to change from a man to a woman or a woman to a man? We do what Jesus did when He met sinners. We offer compassion and love. We don't have to agree with them, but we are called to care, to witness to them through how we live our lives allowing the light of Christ to shine through our words and actions. We can walk along side of them and not participate in their choices.

What do we do as a church? We do the same. Invite them in to hear The Word. If they haven't repented, they will not be allowed membership in our church, nor allowed to participate in the sacraments; but once they do repent, that too will be accessible to them.

I realize that should you encounter a person with this issue, it may be uncomfortable to identify as their “friend”, as it may seem like a stigma that would attach to you. I also know that if it is you questioning your identity, you may not know who you can trust to express your feelings and thoughts. But trust God. Follow in His way. Everyone needs a safe place to express their thoughts, desires, and feelings. We, as Christians, need to be open to listen to them and walk alongside them as they learn about God's grace, mercy, and love. We need to offer them what Christ offers us.

I realize I have just touched the surface of this issue. If anyone wishes to discuss this further, or to just be heard, please feel free to contact Pastor Griffin or me. We will gladly be there for you.

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