

HEARTBEAT

The Hope in Christ Church Monthly Newsletter

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Black Lives Matter Critique

By Pastor Scott

Increasingly, the Bible is being obscured in our conversations around nearly everything. Therefore, as the pastor¹ of Hope in Christ Church, I would like to examine the movement known as Black Lives Matter, to see where it is on target with Biblical instruction and where it is missing the mark. My intent is to help bring clarity to our church and to help other faith communities that believe in the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God.

So, what is Black Lives Matter (hereafter referred to by its initials, BLM)? BLM is a movement that began with the mission, “to build local power and to intervene when violence was inflicted on Black communities by the state and vigilantes.”² But this isn’t where the movement stopped; it has since broadened and clarified its emphasis and is “committed to struggling together and to imagining and creating a world free of anti-Blackness, where every Black person has the social, economic, and political power to thrive.”

So, what does this mean in practical terms? BLM declares that they want to “co-create alongside comrades, allies, and family a culture where each person feels seen, heard and supported.” Where differences and commonalities are “acknowledge[d], respect[ed] and celebrate[d].” They declare, “We are unapologetically Black in our positioning... To love

and desire freedom and justice for ourselves” which “is a prerequisite for wanting the same for others.” They are “part of a global Black family” that pays no attention to “sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or location.” They are doing the “work required to dismantle cisgender privilege.” They want a space to “affirm Black women” and be “free from sexism, misogyny and environments in which men are centered.” They “engage comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts... make our spaces family-friendly... dismantle the patriarchal practice that requires mothers to work ‘double shifts’... disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure by supporting each other as extended families and ‘villages’ that collectively care for one another, especially our children... foster a queer-affirming network” to be free from the “tight grip of heteronormative thinking.” And finally, BLM is a network “free of ageism.”

This is a lot to take in and analyze. So, let me begin with two overarching Scriptural passages that every Christian needs to consider as they evaluate the BLM movement:

Galatians 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Galatians 5:6 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

¹ In addition to being a pastor, I am also the father of 8 children – 5 biological, 3 adopted (China and Ethiopia). To some this will matter, for I speak not as a white father only, but as a white father with children of different races and ethnicities whom I love and care for and desire for each of them to thrive in the world in which we all must live.

² <https://blacklivesmatter.com/what-we-believe/> All quotations come in this document not otherwise noted, come from this webpage.

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The Scriptures declare that ‘in Christ’ and in Christ alone, is where true unity is found. All else contributes to the separations and the divisions that the world creates. Unity is not and cannot be found in focusing upon any specific attribute or quality and making it the rallying cry for unity. Christ alone has the power to unite people of every race and tribe and language because Christ calls all people to confess their sin, humble themselves and repent and believe that God truly is the King of Kings. It is for this King that we live and no other banner, motto, slogan or agenda should take the Lord’s place. It is this overarching reality that BLM seems to miss. In fact, by elevating Blackness, focusing on sexual identity or gender, or other things, the movement itself is set not to unite people. Rather the movement divides people by elevating something other than repentance and submission to Christ.

The Good Parts of the BLM Movement

But with that initial statement, when viewed from a Biblical lens, the BLM movement has some things which it longs for that are correct and some things that are misguided. So, what parts does the movement have correct?

The longing to intervene in violent situations and bring about peace and change is a Biblical theme. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” declares Jesus in Matthew 5:9. The Sabbath practice of rest was one meant to bring about wholeness and lack of strife. The cities of refuge in the OT were meant to be places where violent actions were stopped when the actions were unjust and not premeditated (Num 35). The scriptural call to have only “one law for the native and for the stranger who sojourns among you” (Ex. 12:49) is a call to ensure that race or ethnicity are not dependent upon whether justice and the rule of law are enacted and carried out.

The call to social, political and economic thriving is also a laudable call that has echoes of the early church’s care for all her members (Acts 2:42-47). Scripture calls believers to pay attention to the needs of others and to care for the brother and sister in need (James 2:16). Are there people in our communities who don’t have access to what is needed to thrive? BLM is asking the church to look to their communities and help. This is a legitimate call to which Christians in America need to pay attention and respond.

The desire for people to feel “seen, heard and supported” is broadly speaking a Biblical injunction.

The Bible calls believers to pay attention to the widow, orphan and alien (Mal 3:5, Ps 68:5, Dt 27:19) but more than paying attention, we are to visit them (James 1:27). In visiting, people are “seen, heard, and supported.” Covid-19 has taught us the power of personal interaction and the longing that every person has to be in community. BLM is right in calling for people to see one another and ensure that no one is forgotten.

Furthermore, the desire to be free of ageism and to be family-friendly is also good. (Though the specific way that family-friendly is envisioned is not.) Each person is created by God (Ps 139:13-14). Because of this, each person, regardless of age, is worthy of respect, worthy of being heard and worthy of having their thoughts and ideas considered. Simply being young or old should not itself be a reason for discounting anyone or their perspective. The desire to be family-friendly is also laudable, for Scripture exalts the family. One of the 10 commandments is to ‘Honor your father and mother’ (Ex 20:12). It is through families that the promises of the Messiah were given (Abraham, David). It is families that are called to protect one another and not to sexually exploit one another (Lev 18:9-11). It is every family, Paul says, that derives its origin from the Father in heaven (Eph 3:14-15).

As you can see, there are a number of items which a Christian could support in the BLM movement.

The Bad Parts of the BLM Movement

But there are also numerous items that Christians must critique in the movement and stand against. So where is the BLM movement incompatible with the Bible?

The language of the movement which extols Blackness is a downfall of the movement and is itself opposed to the Scripture. For in setting up a trait that cannot be changed, the movement is essentially mono-ethnic. If a white person were to use the language of BLM and be ‘unapologetically White,’ other ethnicities would critique it, and critique it rightly. God creates people, all people – of every color and shade – in his image. All of them bear his stamp (Gen 1:27). People of every tribe, race, and language are called to join in worshipping the Lord (Rev 5:9).

In the focus on self, which is articulated in the statement, “To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a prerequisite for wanting the same

for others,” the scriptural injunction to be a servant to others is eclipsed by serving oneself. Paul reminds us, “For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). As does Peter, “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace” (1Pet. 4:10). The Scriptural call is to work for the benefit of others, and in so doing we find the freedom of being released from the incessant need to be self-focused and preoccupied. However, the BLM movement is focused upon itself, not upon others.

All of the focus on sexual identity, gender identity, cisgender dismantling, queer affirming and becoming free from heteronormative thinking is strongly opposed to the Biblical teaching on sexuality. For many, the terms listed above may not even be understood. So, let me quickly define the terms:

Sexual Identity – the gender to which one is sexually/romantically attracted.

Gender Identity – a person’s perception to having a particular gender. Does someone see themselves as male, female, etc. regardless of the genitalia they have?

Cisgender – when a person’s sense of personal identity and gender correspond with one’s birth sex.

Queer – not heterosexual, but not necessarily homosexual. Queer denotes sexual and gender identity that is not cisgender.

Heteronormative – view that heterosexuality is the normal and preferred sexual orientation.

For those seeking a more exhaustive treatment of these terms and desiring to explore how Christians should respond, I recommend Mark Yarhouse’s book *Understanding Gender Dysphoria*.

But to stick with my initially stated aim of providing a quick Biblical reflection upon the BLM movement, all of the above items that BLM is seeking to do, support, etc. are things that the Scriptures condemn. The Bible records that God created people male and female (Gen 1:27). Furthermore, it records that our sexual perversions and gender dysfunctions are the result of failing to worship God and instead worshipping the creature rather than the creator

(Rom 1:25-27). Throughout the Bible, all people are called to practice abstinence unless married to a single person of the opposite sex (Heb 13:4). “He answered, ‘Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”?’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matt. 19:4-6). But the BLM movement stands in direct opposition to all that the Bible teaches regarding sexuality and the Biblical definition of family.

Further Reflections:

In addition to the above articulated stand, the BLM movement has also identified ‘defund the police’ as another aim it has adopted.³ There is much debate about the actual content or policies of this slogan with some arguing that we need to get rid of police completely and others arguing that what is meant is a shift in macro-economic policies. One policy that is specifically mentioned on the BLM website is “acknowledgment and accountability for the devaluation and dehumanization of Black life at the hands of the police.” This is a call to justice, repentance and confession when police brutality is practiced. Such should be the case and every Christian must support such a call. There is no place for the government nor its agents to be above the law. The Scripture calls for one law to be implemented and all people, high and low, rich and poor to be subject to it (James 2:8-9, Ex 23:8, Dt 16:19).

But this is not where ‘defund the police’ ends, for BLM’s next policy related to this point is to defund police and invest in our communities.

Since the BLM website contains no actual policy specifics, I will turn to one of the cofounders of the movement to see what she is writing/saying:

“So much of policing right now is generated and directed towards quality-of-life issues, homelessness, drug addiction, domestic violence,” Garza said. “What we do need is increased funding for housing, we need increased funding for education, we need increased funding for quality-of-life of communities who are over-policed and over-surveilled.”

³ <https://blacklivesmatter.com/defundthepolice/>

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"Are we willing to live in fear that our lives will be taken by police officers who are literally using their power in the wrong way, or are we willing to adopt and absorb the fear of what it might mean to change our practices, which will ultimately lead to a better quality of life for everyone."⁴

It appears to me that the desire which Garza is proclaiming is not a desire to be rid of the police as her slogan declares, but rather it is a desire to build up the social fabric of poorer communities by increasing housing and education. Again, these are laudable goals, and the church ought to be prepared to step in and fill the gap by bringing solid Christian education to the urban poor.

If, however, the movement truly desires to defund police in the hopes of some form of community justice, then there is great concern. For the reign of terror that a community can dish out in its 'hunger for justice' is nothing short of mob hysteria without any sense of right and wrong. It is the world of the judges in Israel's time, or the community policing that gangs currently provide in many urban centers. God has given government in all its forms – personal, familial, ecclesial, civil – to keep peace and ensure that there is the ability for the non-partisan application of the law to thrive. Is it broken?

⁴ <https://www.axios.com/defund-police-black-lives-matter-7007efac-0b24-44e2-a45c-c7f180c17b2e.html>

At times. Is it perfect? No. But the abolition of government leaves us with a world where the strong rule over the weak without any check and balance, or any ability to appeal to a greater, stronger Law to hold the immoral nature of humanity in check. Remember, we are all sinful (Rom 3:23).

Summary:

It should be evident that this reflection has not been centered on sociology, economics, or even political reflection. All of these have their place and may also speak into the critical reflections of the movement. But I have only sought to give a Biblical sketch of how a Christian ought to respond to the movement. And it is truly only a sketch. There is so much more that the Bible would say about each area and topic. However, my time and your patience in reading and prayerfully considering the above demand that I be brief.

So, let me conclude with this final statement:

Based upon this reflection, it is imperative that Christians not identify too closely with the BLM movement. The aspects of the movement that are Christian deserve our attention, but the entire movement as a whole cannot be supported by the Church.

Deacons Digest

By Elaine Snapper

At the June meeting of the deacons, we extended a warm welcome to the two new deacons, Daniel Obbink and Barb Zylstra, and we gave a hearty and heartfelt thank you and farewell to the two retiring deacons, Tena and Rockelle.

The current deacons then gave a review of the roles that they had currently served and then positions were assigned. They are as follows:

Chair – Daniel Obbink

Treasurer – Barb Zylstra

Secretary – Jennifer Boer

Special Events – Ruth Stadt

Communication – Elaine Snapper

We then discussed the signing of the church bank accounts and discussed members in our districts.

Hope in Christ Church

Giving in May 2020

	<u>May</u>	<u>Year-to-Date</u>
Designated Fund Offerings:	\$ 3,127	\$ 12,998
General Fund Offerings	\$16,975	\$111,654
Rent / Utilities Income	2,196	15,662
Interest Income - Undesignated	11	163
Total Undesignated Income	19,182	127,479
General Fund Expenses	(17,650)	(103,787)
Income Over(Under) Expenses	<u>\$ 1,532</u>	<u>\$ 23,692</u>

Total 2020 budget, including ministry quotas \$ 273,588

Year-to-Date Budget for 6 months \$ 136,794

Total Undesignated Income 127,479

Income Over (Under) Budget \$ (9,315)

Loan Balances:

Classis: \$ 12,500

Family Promise Update

It may seem soon, but our next week to serve is July 12-19!

On June 18, Carolyn Roy, Family Promise Director, hosted a Zoom meeting to bring all the host and supporting congregation volunteer coordinators up to date as to how homeless families are being served during the ongoing Corona Virus Pandemic.

Currently two families are being served at First Christian Church and our role will be the same as it was in May. We will be dropping off prepared meals for dinner, lunch, snacks and other items as needed.

Ali and Lorraine will be organizing this as our week approaches. Anyone interested in helping with meals or snacks, please contact them.

And a big thank-you to all those who volunteered with meals and snacks in May. The families and the staff have been happy with how smoothly the past three months have gone under difficult circumstances.

Looking to the future, please keep Family Promise in your prayers as they seek a permanent static site to serve the homeless families in our community.

Finally, please note the fundraiser planned for July 24. You too can participate!

Ali Laninga, HICC Coordinator

Lorraine Brouwer/Herman Laninga, Assistants.

Summer plans cancelled? Join us for #NightWithoutABed!



Join us as we spend a **Night Without a Bed** on July 24th to raise awareness and money to end family homelessness. You, your family, and friends are invited to give up your bed for one night: Put up a tent in your back yard. Make a fort in your living room. Wrap up in blankets on the sofa or in a sleeping bag on the floor. Throughout the event, post photos and comments of your Night Without A Bed on Facebook using #NightWithoutABed and tag @FPWhatcom. The night will be filled with fun virtual activities and contests! Register at <https://familypromisewhatcom.org/night-without-a-bed/>



- 5 Marlene Butenschoen
- 8 Chuck Dean
- 9 Ken Wick
- 12 Jay Kaemingk
- 15 Karen Funk
- 15 Michal Ruitter
- 15 Donna Van Beek
- 16 Evan Boer
- 19 Tena Vanderpol
- 29 Jeannette McConnaughey
- 29 Keith Sentkowski
- 31 Winnie Konn



Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior

By Darlys Recker

GEMS started as Calvinettes in 1958, changing the name in 1995 to better convey their mission and vision. Now GEMS has clubs in 17 countries: Australia, Belize, Canada, China, Ghana, India, Kenya, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Rwanda, South Africa, Spain, Uganda, United States, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

GEMS' focus is to equip women and girls to live radically faithful lives - acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

The mission of GEMS Girls' Clubs is to help bring girls into a living, dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ. Our vision is to see girls around the world actively and enthusiastically expressing love for God and others, AKA "the sisterhood." Covid might have shut down the physical meetings of the clubs; it hasn't shut down the sisterhood. We've continued to meet as club coordinators through FB live and ZOOM Coffee Chat sessions. There's a new website for the girls, called **GEMS On The GO**. It is a safe, online place for all girls to grow in their faith, make new friends, and have a lot of fun! Girl Tested. Mom Approved. @gemsonthego



One activity that was a highlight this year was making hearts to hang on the tree in front of Steve and Gina's home to send a message of love to them



as Steve was walking the last days of his earthly journey. I got a call from Ida with the idea to make hearts for their tree and she was wondering if I could laminate them. I do have a laminator and not only could I laminate them, I have a machine that can cut hearts of all sizes. Packages of hearts were dropped off at the homes of our children at HCC as well as all our GEMS. They did an amazing job of designing a variety of hearts with messages. My goal was 100 hearts, however, with some children not able to



participate, my count was off. Then I realized that our GEMS theme included an A-Z list of our identity in Christ, from A-accepted, B-beautiful, C-chosen...to Z-zealous and that would be a perfect list of God's love for us. So with the additional A-Z hearts we exceeded 100!

Our theme this year was "LOVED. Period." based on 1 John 3:1: *See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!* Each lesson was taken from one of the A to Z identity list terms naming our identity in Christ. We talk about the capital T-truth, God's word, and that "lies do not stick to truth-filled

girls.” Our theme for next year is “Friended” John 15:15. We will have our GEMS Sunday in the fall when we resume meeting, whether in person or continue with ZOOM. Besides our theme curriculum, we have access to several other valuable resources.

1. The LOVED. U & ME Conversations Kit is now available. It’s an engaging Bible study that strengthens a girl’s relationship with God and her mom. Each kit includes a Grown-Up Guide, Girl’s Guide, plus fun, girl-friendly items to engage your daughter. <https://bit.ly/GEMSUME>

2. We have a subscription to the GEMS ReFresh 2.0: learning videos to equip and encourage us as we impact the lives of girls today.

3. The Annual Leadership Conference at Wheaton College was cancelled, so instead we are having a virtual conference July 30 & 31, 2020, “Unshakable” Hebrews 12:28; a “virtual” conference. Not only is the price reasonable, anyone interested is invited to register.

Our last GEMS event was Friday, March 6, when we had our Baked Potato Dinner and Bunko night. We still have a dream to visit the Esther School in Zambia and raised over \$500. We are very grateful to all of you who participated. Thank You! We look forward to the time we can resume “normal” gatherings. In the meantime, God has blessed us with new experiences. We’ve been able to ZOOM our last four meetings. This was possible with the support and encouragement of the four CIT’s (Counselors in Training): Amber, 2nd year; and Mattea, Gracie MacDonald, and Chantel, 1st year. We ZOOMed to plan the meetings, and provide a fun hour for our GEMS. We played games, had a theme lesson, prayed, recited or “chat” the Micah 6:8 theme, and broke into small groups for a time to share. I cannot find the words to express my gratitude for the blessing God has given me in sharing time with those four girls. They are such a delight to work with, knowledgeable in God’s word, joyful, eager to help, capable, insightful, talented, a strong source of support and encouragement - especially during our last meeting when plagued with technical difficulties and they rose to the occasion and “rocked it!” So here’s the rest of the story.

Don and I were traveling to each GEMS’ home to deliver a care package with the BINGO game for the last meeting June 1. What I thought would take only 2 hours, actually took 4 due to unexpected scenic tours and unexpected traffic. So at 6:15 we decided Don would deliver the remaining packages and I would set up the ZOOM meeting at church. Obviously, I violated the #1 teaching rule, “Have all your ducks in order and always practice what you are going to teach!” I set up the meeting, however, when it opened I had no sound or video. My laptop was in the car and I was left observing Amber, Mattea, Chantel and Gracie leading the meeting from start to finish. I could hear and see the entire meeting unfold with these amazing leaders - anyone else might have thought it was planned that way. Then before I even get a chance to debrief, they were running ahead with improvements for the future. So BLESSED! Their actions speak louder than any words I have, to describe what a joy they are. Not only do they care for me and check that I’m OK, that I know where my phone and keys are; they also appropriately know when to tell me that I need to “mute myself,” a lesson I’m still working on.

Finally, a big thanks to the counselors for all their help and support: Rockelle Ruiter, Hildred Abee, Jolene Skovron, and Jennifer Boer; and CIT’s Mattea, Chantel, Amber, and Gracie. Next year Amber has “99% decided” to fill the counselor position for grades 1-2. We are looking for one more counselor for grades 5-6 since Jenn is taking leave for a couple years. Jenn, we will miss you, and God bless you as you serve Him in other capacities.

Again, thanks for your continued prayers and support.



Getting to Know Our Church Family

By Elaine Snapper

This month I am featuring Joanne Schultz. Joanne was born in Seattle, but her family moved immediately to Raymond, Washington, which is 26 miles south of Aberdeen. She attended school in Raymond until she dropped out at the age of 16 when she was a junior to get married. She had three daughters, but only one is living now, and she lives near Lake Samish.

Joanne moved to Tillamook, Oregon, and also lived in Seattle for awhile, and then she moved up to Bellingham.

Over the years she has had different jobs. She was a waitress for a time, also worked in housekeeping in a motel, and she worked in medical records at Children's Hospital, worked for Safeco Insurance and she fished on a fishing boat. When she moved to Bellingham, she attended Bellingham Technical School and got her GED. She then took the LPN course and she worked as an LPN for nine years.

Joanne has six granddaughters, 12 great grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild.

She was attending a community Baptist church in Bellingham, but it folded, and she was looking for a church that offered a Sunday School, especially for her great granddaughter, Kylie. They happened to come to our church and liked that we had a Sunday School. They have been attending our church for the past several years. They both got involved in Sunday School, and Kylie has also been involved with the praise team. They both enjoy our church.

Kylie is so sweet, that she likes to make different desserts, and she brings them over to her great grandmother frequently, and they both indulge in the delicious treats.

We are very glad that they both have found a place in our church and that they are part of our congregation.

To: Wednesday Morning Bible Study Ladies

Hi Everyone,

It seems like it has been ages since we have met for coffee, goodies, interesting conversation and getting into our weekly lesson. During this time, I hope that you have kept busy with extra projects that needed to be completed or at least started. I have been busy doing yard work, working on long overdue photo albums, and the different things that still need to be done on a daily basis. Am I bored? Not really, but will be glad to get back to normal. I guess it will be called the new normal.

Take care and hope to see everyone soon.

Ruth

