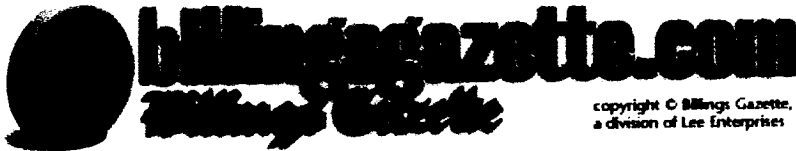
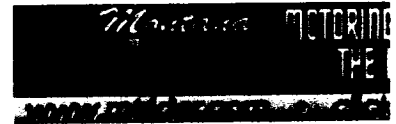


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## Life

# Faith and values: Recognize sacredness of life, lov

Gazette Staff

"God is love. Those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them."  
- 1 John 4:16

As a minister I have the honor to be present at the most sacred moments in people's lives.

In addition to Sunday worship, I preside at weddings, funerals, baptisms and other special occasions that mark transitions.

Some of these transitions are sad, others joyful, but all are sacred. All of these moments are holy, hallowed and touched by grace.

That is my job, really. I am there to announce, through ritual and prayer, the presence of God. Through my role as minister, I simply state on behalf of the community what already is:

This moment is holy.

This life is sacred.

This relationship is blessed.

Some have referred to worship as "holy play" in which we enact through ritual, song, prayer, and emotion what God has done. In so doing, we recognize the sacredness of our lives.

In 1863, Abraham Lincoln said at the consecration of the Gettysburg cemetery:

"But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground to the brave men, living and dead who struggled here have hallowed it far above our poor power to detract."

This summer, in addition to all the myriad ways I am called to declare the experience of humankind and sacred, I have the honor to preside at a commitment ceremony for two members of my congregation.

They have never had their relationship publicly acknowledged. I am blessed and humbled to the joyful task of declaring what love has hallowed between these two men. This summer the their 15th anniversary.

I am proud of this couple.

Their relationship is indeed sacred and a light to the world.

In the midst of a summer in which attempts are made to harden state constitutions and even constitution in regards to what is "sacred and holy," I think it is important to share what my co

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is doing.

We went through a process of discernment. Not all agreed with the decision. We do not all agree what this decision means.

But, after dialogue, education, prayer and hearing the witness of this couple, the heart of the congregation said, "Yes. We are to be a place of blessing."

Mel White, author of "Stranger at the Gate," wrote: "Like our heterosexual friends and neighbors, gay people have the God-given right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; the right to live, to develop long-term loving relationships, and to have those relationships honored and officially by our community."

This is what the church is about.

We are to be a blessing.

We are to declare as sacred and holy what God has already blessed.

I am proud to serve a congregation that knows this.

*The Rev. John Shuck is pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Billings.*

*The Faith & Values column appears regularly in the Saturday Life section of The Billings Gazette.*

*Pastors, ethicists, educators or other experts who would like to write a column about faith, ethics and values for the section, should contact: Susan Olp; Billings Gazette; 401 N. Broadway; Billings; 59101.*

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### Homosexuality wrong according to Bible

I am writing in response to the Rev. John Shuck's Aug. 7 column. First, I would like to point out that unlike Shuck, I did not attend the seminary nor have I studied theology. But, also unlike the reverend, I can read and understand the Bible.

Leviticus says, "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them."

The Lord has no tolerance for homosexual behavior. This is not to mean that we hate them with our "homophobe" intolerance, for there's a better way.

As God-fearing Americans, it is our duty not to embrace their chosen lifestyle but to point out how detrimental it is to their soul and to help them change that lifestyle. Dr. James Dobson has a program to assist homosexuals in changing their lifestyle — and saving their soul.

Two former homosexuals operate Dobson's highly acclaimed program, so they know from personal experience what a person may be going through. More information can be found on their web site at [www.dobson.org](http://www.dobson.org).

Persons who will embrace this lifestyle in my mind, are no better or maybe worse than a murderer. When a person is murdered, only their body dies. By encouraging behavior forbidden by God, you are playing a large part in the eternal damnation of their very soul. Now that's dangerous.

Leon B. Hammond  
Harlowton

### Dangers in following every Biblical phrase

I am writing in response to Leon B. Hammond's letter from Aug. 22.

Apparently he has read the Bible, but apparently he's very selective of which passages he likes (never mind that the passage he cites clearly states to kill all homosexuals and then he turns around saying we shouldn't, thereby disobeying the Word of God).

Did he forget Leviticus 11:13-19 which states that bats are birds? Did he forget Leviticus 11:16 which states that rabbits chew cud? Did he forget 1 Kings 7:23 which states that the number pi equals exactly 3? Did he forget Exodus 35:2 which states that anyone who works on the Sabbath should be put to death? And did he forget Deuteronomy 22:28-29 which states that if an unbetrothed virgin is raped, then she must marry her rapist?

The point, if it's not clear already, is that the Bible says a lot of things, but that doesn't mean we should always follow them (especially when they come from the Old Testament). Biologists aren't going to reclassify bats as birds because the Bible says so; engineers aren't going to punch three in their calculators in place of pi because the Bible says so; and the courts aren't going to force little girls to marry their rapists because the Bible says so. Doing so, now that would be dangerous.

Munday  
BG 8-30-04

Greg Tholen  
Billings

### Christian salvation offered to all people

Regarding Mr. Hammond's letter in the Aug. 22 Gazette, neither am I a Biblical scholar, but I do seem to recall that, according to the old covenant:

You shall not eat pork or shellfish.

You shall not wear clothing made of two different fibers.

If your wives (yes, concubines wives) weren't virgins at marriage, they shall be executed.

No tattoos, along with a bunch of other stuff.

B. Lozette Sunday  
Aug. 29 '04

Sure, the homosexuality thing's in there, but are you not also condemned by Old Testament law? Revenge is mine, saith the Lord.

... we have ... the New Testament.

... the old ... and that ... of the adulterous woman: "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone" (judge not, lest ye be ... proved superior!).

So if you're an "Old Testament Christian" by all means heed Matthew 6:6 and pray like a "New Testament Christian" ... who are saved only by the grace of God.

R. Crasser Loes  
Billings