

# Valley Views



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Pastor Mike Hill

## What is Christian freedom?

### Question: "What is Christian freedom?"

**Answer:** The Bible states emphatically in Galatians 5:1 that believers are free in Christ: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). Before Jesus died on a cross, God's people lived under a detailed system of laws that served as a moral compass to guide their lives. The Law, while powerless to grant salvation or produce true freedom, nevertheless pointed the way to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:19–24). Through His sacrificial death, Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, setting believers free from the law of sin and death. God's laws are now written in our hearts through the Spirit of God, and we are free to follow and serve Christ in ways that please and glorify Him (Romans 8:2–8). In a nutshell, this is the definition of Christian freedom.

An important aspect of Christian freedom is our responsibility not to return to living under the Law. The apostle Paul compared this to slavery: "Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery" (Galatians 5:1). Continuing to live under the Law after salvation is merely a legalistic form of religion. We cannot earn righteousness through the Law; rather, the Law's purpose was to define our sin and show our need of a Savior. Christian freedom involves living not under the burdensome obligations of the Law but under God's grace: "For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14).

In Christ, we are free from the Law's oppressive system, we are free from the penalty of sin, and we are free from the power of sin. Christian freedom is *not* a license to sin. We are free in Christ but not free to live however we want, indulging the flesh: "For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to

serve one another in love” (Galatians 5:13, NLT). Believers aren’t free to sin, but free to live holy lives in Christ.

Christian freedom is one of the many paradoxes of the Christian faith. True freedom means willingly becoming a slave to Christ, and this happens through relationship with Him (Colossians 2:16–17). In Romans 6, Paul explains that, when a believer accepts Christ, he or she is baptized by the Spirit into Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. At that moment, the believer ceases to be a slave to sin and becomes a servant of righteousness: “But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:17–18, ESV).

Only Christians know true freedom: “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36). But what does Christian freedom look like in a practical sense? What are we free to do and not do? What can we watch on TV? What can we eat and drink? What can we wear to the beach? What about smoking and drinking? Are there limits to Christian freedom?

In 1 Corinthians 10, the apostle Paul gives a practical illustration of Christian freedom: “‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is beneficial. ‘Everything is permissible’—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others” (1 Corinthians 10:23–24, NIV84).

In writing to the church in Corinth, Paul mentions members who were attending meals in pagan temples, just as they had done before receiving Christ. They felt free to continue participating because they thought these festivals were merely a normal part of the social culture. They didn’t see their actions as pagan worship.

Paul laid out several warnings, reminding the Corinthians of Israel’s dangerous flirtation with idolatry in the Old Testament. Then he handled the practical concern of eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

“Everything is permissible,” the Corinthians were saying. True, Paul says; Christians have a great deal of freedom in Christ. However, not everything is beneficial or constructive. Our freedom in Christ must be balanced by a desire to build up and benefit others. When deciding how to exercise our Christian freedom, we ought to seek the good of others before our own good.

In Judaism, restrictions were placed on purchasing meats in the market. Jews could only buy and eat kosher meats. Paul said believers were free in Christ to buy and eat any meat (1 Corinthians 10:25–26). However, if the issue of meat sacrificed to idols came up, believers were to follow a higher law. Love is what limits Christian freedom.

A little later in the chapter, Paul wrote about eating meat as a guest in someone's home. Christians are free to eat whatever they are served without questions of conscience (1 Corinthians 10:27). But, if someone brings up that the meat has been offered to an idol, it is better not to eat it for the sake of the person who raised the issue of conscience (verse 28). While believers have freedom to eat the meat, they are compelled to consider what's best for those who are observing their behavior.

Romans 14:1–13 raises a key determiner in understanding the limits of Christian freedom. In the passage, Paul again brings up the issue of eating meat sacrificed to idols and also observing certain holy days. Some of the believers felt freedom in Christ in these areas while others did not. Their differing perspectives were causing quarrels and disunity. Paul emphasized that unity and love in the body of Christ are more important than anyone's personal convictions or Christian liberty: "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister" (Romans 14:13).

Essentially, Paul's message to the New Testament believers and to us today is this: even if we believe we are right and have Christian freedom in an area, if our actions will cause another brother or sister to stumble in his or her faith, we are to refrain out of love.

Paul spoke again of the matter in 1 Corinthians 8:7–9: "Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak."

The issue in New Testament times was eating meat offered to idols; today there are other "gray areas" that arise in our Christian walk. Romans 14:1 calls these "disputable matters," areas where the Bible does not give clear-cut guidelines on whether a behavior is sin. When we are faced with gray areas, we can rely on two guiding principles to regulate our Christian freedom: let love for others compel us not to cause anyone to stumble, and let our desire to glorify God be our all-encompassing motive (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Please be sure to check the church website [evpumc.org](http://evpumc.org) and Elimsport United Methodist Parish face book for up to date church news.



Hal Drick is in basic training in Georgia. He misses church and would love to hear from his church family.

PV2 Drick, Hal, Roster #145  
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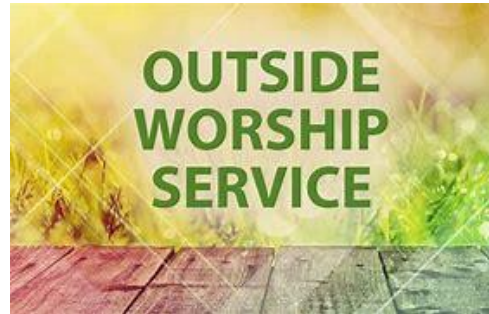
Please include the roster #145 on the back of the envelope too.



- Items for August's newsletter are due July **20th**.
- Items for the weekly bulletin's need to be to the church office by **Wednesday morning** each week.

*(Items received after these dates are not guaranteed to be printed.)*

The special outdoor service on Sunday July 12th , at 9:00 am at the Elimsport Pavilion with special music **has been changed**. We will still have the service, but the special music group cannot come that Sunday.



Vacation Bible School is canceled for 2020.



**Various means to keep updated:**

website: [evpumc.org](http://evpumc.org)

Face book: Elimsport United Methodist Parish

Electronic sign at Elimsport church

email Pastor Mike: [hjebm@comcast.net](mailto:hjebm@comcast.net)

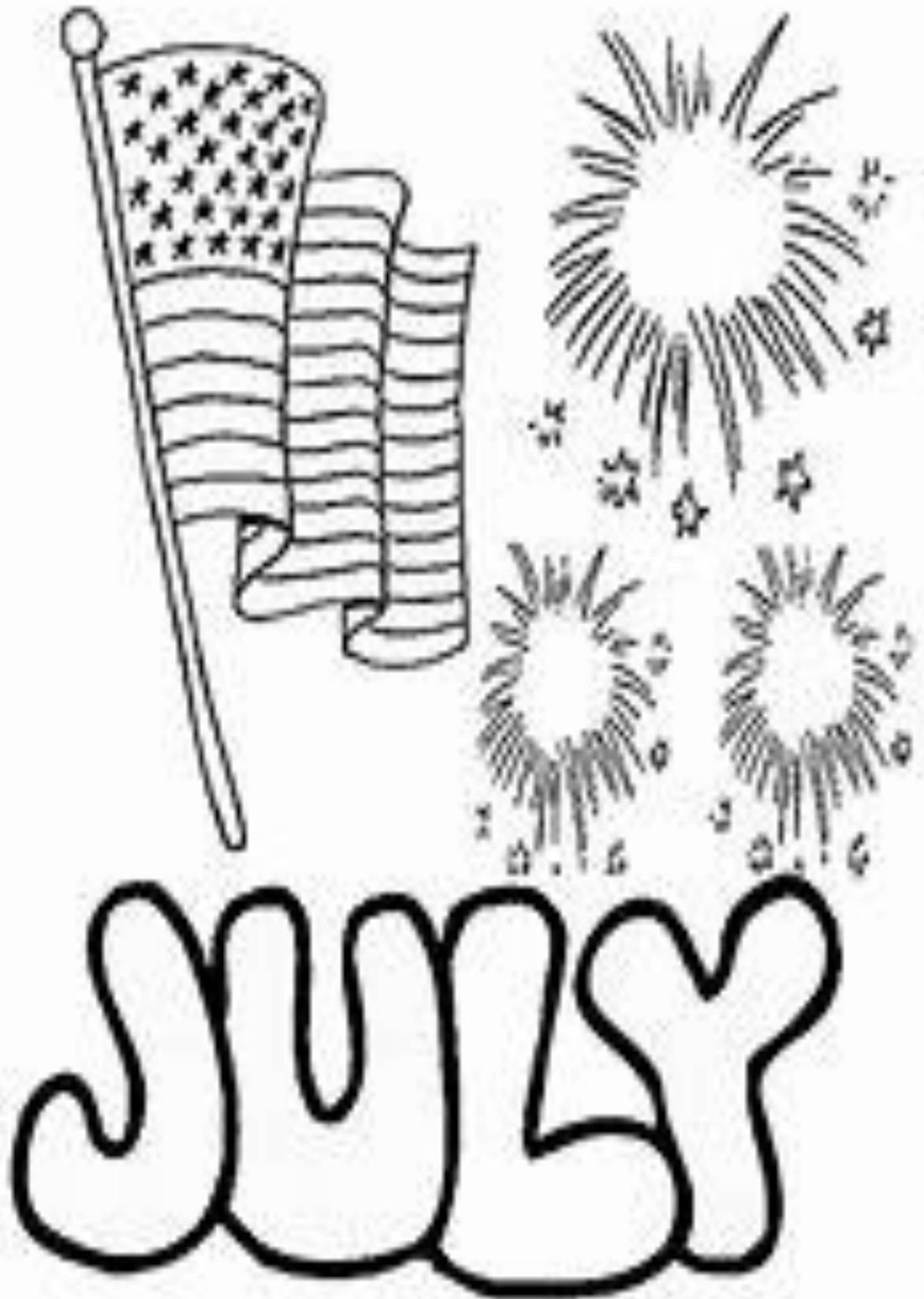
email church: [elimsportumc@gmail.com](mailto:elimsportumc@gmail.com)

Call Pastor Mike: 570-547-1386

Text Pastor Mike: 570-974-8590 (please identify yourself when texting)

Be pro-active in getting the word out to others in the church.

# Kid's Corner



# ELIMSPORT VALLEY UNITED METHODIST PARISH

## Worship Schedule:

### Elimsport UMC

Worship 9:00 am  
Sunday School 10:30 am

### St. John's UMC

Sunday School 9:15 am  
Worship 10:30 am

### Parish Youth Group

Check weekly Bulletin for current schedule and events  
(at Elimsport)

### Parish Bible Study

Varies according to the season.

### Parish Office:

16145S. RT 44 HWY  
Allenwood, PA 17810

### Parsonage Phone:

(570) 547-1386

### Pastor Mike's Cell:

(570) 974-8590

### Parish Website:

[www.evpumc.org](http://www.evpumc.org)

### Parish email:

[elimsportumc@gmail.com](mailto:elimsportumc@gmail.com)

[www.evpumc.org](http://www.evpumc.org)



### Our Mission Statement at Elimsport UMC



We gather together as a community of Christian believers to worship, fellowship, and to learn more about God. By the unity of the Spirit and the support of each other, we are able to reach out to the community and the world.

### Our Mission Statement at St. John's UMC



The purpose of St. John's is to both evangelize and nurture. We are called to show God's love in our world by giving aid and by spreading the Good News of Christ. We in turn provide an atmosphere for nurturing where Biblical truths are shared enabling people to become spiritually enriched. By providing this, people will learn and through learning, become more effective witnesses.