

## Oakhurst United Methodist Church

### PASTOR'S PEN DID YOU KNOW?

During the month of July I have been giving a three part series on how to develop your spiritual life. In the first sermon I said that people's relationship with God can be thought of like owning a car, some people have an ancient, rusty wreck in their yard; those are your lost sinners; and some people's relationship with God is like a Ferrari super car; those are your wonderful saints. As a pastor I am a spiritual mechanic and my job is to help get those wrecks in running shape and on the road, and to encourage those who have a good "car" to customize and upgrade their ride. I said that the kind of spiritual car you drive is very much up to you, and that the price of an upgrade is increased devotion to God. I ended by saying that one thing you could do right away to improve your spiritual life is to give whatever concerns, worries and fears are on your mind up to God and trust in God to help.

In the second sermon I quoted Paul, "we must grow up in every way to Christ..." (Ephesians 4:15 TEV) and I talked about the biblical mandate or requirement that we grow spiritually. I said that if we want to grow spiritually our prayer life has to grow as well, that the simple type of prayer we may have learned in Sunday school is not going to take us across the goal line of being fully spiritually alive as adults. I said that a spiritual life consists of three main parts, believing in God, obeying God, and appreciating God. And that we show God we appreciate what He does for us by living life to the fullest. That means being the healthiest we can be physically, emotionally, spiritually and mentally. I ended the sermon by sharing a spiritual exercise to help bring you closer to God, called an examination of conscience.

The way that an examination of conscience works is that you take 20-60 minutes when you know you can be alone and in a quiet place, and you examine your conscience by asking yourself some deep and probing questions. In the spiritual quotes and notes sheet I put the spiritual examination of conscience from Ignatius and 2 different sets of questions you can use to complete the exam. Someone asked that I reprint it in the church newsletter, so here it is. Now this spiritual exercise is a combination of meditation, contemplation and prayer of praise, thanks and supplication (asking God for things).

#### Five-step Daily Examination of Conscience of St. Ignatius

*A modern translation*

1. Give God thanks for the many blessings you have received. (Take at least five minutes for this part)
2. Ask God for His help and grace to know what your sins are so that you may be rid of them, to know what sins you may have committed this day by thought, word or action. (Use the questions below here in your search of your conscience. Take at least 15 minutes for this part, but stop at 40 minutes even if you are not done.)

3. Ask God's forgiveness for the shortcomings that the examination has revealed.
4. Ask God to help you to do better and to conquer or not repeat this (these) sin(s) in the future.

#### The Outer to the Inner examination

"What have I done to help or hinder God's work in the world?"

"What have I done to help or hinder God's work in the church?"

"What have I done to help or hinder God's work in my relationships, in my friends, and relations?"

"What have I done to help or hinder God's leading and transforming my life?"

#### John Wesleys' Questions for the Examination of Self

Am I honest in all my acts and words, or do I exaggerate?

Am I self-conscious, self-pitying, or self-justifying?

Did I give the Bible time to speak to me today?

Did I pray and give the God time to speak to me today?

When did I last speak to someone else about my faith?

Do I disobey God in anything?

Do I insist upon doing something about which my conscience is uneasy?

Am I jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy, or distrustful?

Is there anyone whom I fear, dislike, disown, criticize, hold a resentment toward or disregard? If so, what am I doing about it?

Do I grumble or complain constantly?

***The examination of conscience should be carried out at least once a year as sort of personal inventory of one's character.***

A spiritual life is the life of a disciple. A spiritual life is one in which our outer actions effect our inner fire or passion, and our inner fire empowers our actions. So our charity, our patience and kindness, and service towards others, our reading of the Bible and our attendance at worship are all external activities that open us up to and invite in the Holy Spirit. The more we have the Holy Spirit inside us the more fired up we are about our faith and the more hungry we are to do external activities that will then fill us with more of the Holy Spirit. This is a positive upward reinforcing cycle that leads us continually closer to Christ throughout our lifetime.



In His Grace, Pastor Tim

# AUGUST CALENDAR

## August 1 (WEDNESDAY)

5:00pm Tai Chi  
6:30pm Sea Band Practice  
7:00pm Ladies Bible Study  
8:00pm AA, Alanon

## August 2 (THURSDAY)

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast

## August 3 (FRIDAY)

8:00pm AA Meeting

## August 4 (SATURDAY)

8:00pm AA Meeting

## August 5 (SUNDAY)

### COMMUNION

8:30am Awake Coffee  
8:45am Awake Service  
10:00am Adult Sunday School  
10:00am Children's Sunday School  
10:00am Traditional Service  
11:00am Coffee Fellowship  
11:30am Adult Sunday School

## August 6 (MONDAY)

9:30am Craft group  
1:00pm Prayer Meeting  
7:15pm Boy Scouts

## August 7 (TUESDAY)

9:00am LIFT School Starts  
6:30pm AA Big Book Study  
7:00pm Civil Air Patrol

## August 8 (WEDNESDAY)

10:00am Ditty Bag Sewing  
5:00pm Tai Chi  
6:30pm Sea Band Practice  
7:00pm Ladies Bible Study  
8:00pm AA, Alanon Meeting

## August 9 (THURSDAY)

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast  
6:00pm Street Ministry

## August 10 (FRIDAY)

## August 11 (SATURDAY)

10:00am Back to School Bash  
8:00pm AA Meeting

## August 12 (SUNDAY)

8:30am Awake Coffee  
8:45am Awake Service  
10:00am Children's Sunday School  
10:00am Adult Sunday School  
10:00am Traditional Service  
11:00am Coffee Fellowship  
11:30am Adult Sunday School  
5:30pm High Spirit Youth

## August 13 (MONDAY)

9:30am Craft group  
1:00pm Prayer Meeting  
7:00pm Trustees Meeting  
7:15pm Boy Scouts

## August 14 (TUESDAY)

6:30pm AA Big Book Study  
7:00pm Civil Air Patrol  
7:00pm Missions Meeting

## August 15 (WEDNESDAY)

5:00pm Tai Chi  
6:00pm Brownies/Daisies???  
6:30pm Sea Band Practice  
8:00pm AA, Alanon Meeting

## August 16 (THURSDAY)

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast  
5:00pm Pinellas County Mtg.  
7:00pm Choir Practice

## August 17 (FRIDAY)

## August 18 (SATURDAY)

5:30pm Pot Luck Dinner  
6:30pm Praise Band Concert  
8:00pm AA Meeting

## August 19 (SUNDAY)

8:30am Awake Coffee  
8:45am Awake Service  
10:00am Adult Sunday School  
10:00am Children's Sunday School  
10:00am Traditional Service  
11:00am Coffee Fellowship  
11:30am Adult Sunday School  
5:30pm High Spirit Youth

## August 20 (MONDAY)

9:30am Craft Group  
1:00pm Prayer Meeting  
7:15pm Boy Scouts

## August 21 (TUESDAY)

6:30pm AA Big Book Study  
7:00pm Civil Air Patrol

## August 22 (WEDNESDAY)

10:00am Bell Practice  
5:00pm Tai Chi  
6:00pm Street Ministry  
6:30pm Sea Band Practice  
8:00pm AA, Alanon Meeting

## August 23 (THURSDAY)

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast  
5:00pm LIFT Open House  
7:00pm Choir Practice

## August 24 (FRIDAY)

7:00PM Girl Scouts

## August 25 (SATURDAY)

12:00pm UMW District Meeting  
8:00pm AA Meeting

## August 26 (SUNDAY)

8:30am Awake Coffee  
8:45am Awake Service  
10:00am Children's Sunday School  
10:00am Adult Sunday School  
10:00am Traditional Service  
11:00am Coffee Fellowship  
11:30am Adult Sunday School  
5:30pm High Spirit Youth

## August 27 (MONDAY)

9:30am Craft Group  
1:00pm Prayer Meeting  
7:15pm Boy Scouts

## August 28 (TUESDAY)

### PRIMARY ELECTION

6:00pm Street Ministry  
6:30pm AA Big Book Study  
7:00pm Church Council Meeting  
7:00pm Civil Air Patrol

## August 29 (WEDNESDAY)

10:00am Bell Practice  
5:00pm Tai Chi  
6:30pm Sea Band Practice  
8:00pm AA, Alanon Meeting

## August 30 (THURSDAY)

8:00am Men's Prayer Breakfast  
7:00pm Choir Practice

## **PAC A SACK - COLLECTING DURING SUMMER**

**Feed the Children** - Oakhurst feeds 50+ needy children each week during the school year.

Please give food or money. Donations may be left in the marked box by fellowship hall.

Thank you for your generosity.

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SMALL BOXES OF CEREAL

FRUIT SNACKS

FRUIT JUICE BOXES

VIENNA SAUSAGES

TUNA/CHICKEN/HAM SALAD WITH CRACKERS

## Evangelism Opportunities

I recently had this conversation with someone in a setting of faith. “Why do so many of your recommendations for evangelism and your evangelism suggestions just look like having fun with other people?” It caught me off guard. I know we have been planning the Back to School Bash again this year, and from the outside it looks like a lot of having fun with each other and with our community. In truth it is. However, this is extremely important for us to understand why that is.

Let me ask you this question, when you think of your best friends in the entire world, how did you become friends with them and what sorts of things cemented that relationship? Was it sitting through a lecture on the history of pottery (maybe it was, but my question, if so, was did you both enjoy that)? Usually we become friends with those with whom we have fun. Real relationships are cemented by positive experiences with others, through sharing laughter, joy, life, and fun!

I’ve commented many times in this space that evangelism is about relationships. How else are we to build relationships with our community if when they think about us they don’t first think about those “fun” people! Following Jesus is always an adventure, not always necessarily fun and sometimes very serious, but if sharing the love of God does not come about through natural joy, relationship building, and fun, then we have very little opportunity to relate to the world with love and compassion. We need a good dose of fun in our lives as well. So yes, many of my suggestions might sound like a good time, but that’s meant to exhibit for others and to engage them in the joy that comes through living life with a community of people who have sold out to the love of God.

So I invite you to participate in the Back to School Bash this year as a servant or a spectator (we need lots of both!) and to have fun with the neighbors in our community. Contact Stephanie or I if you have a burning desire to have fun and help reach others with the love and joy of God that exists in your heart and life.

Your Servant in Christ,

Pastor Nathan, Assistant Pastor



## Happenings

What a week we had at Doe River Gorge this year! All of our youth stepped outside (sometimes far outside) of their comfort zone. We had a remarkable week of worship and devotions as we contemplated the “Call” God placed on our lives through exploring the questions of “Who is God to Us and what do we call God?”, “What does God call us?”, and “What call has God placed on our lives?” A truly remarkable time of exploring the special relationship God has with us through this time. I encourage you to look for images on our screens and in the weekly youth and children’s email newsletter we release each week (past and future editions) to see some really great photos of our time up there. Of course, none of this would be possible without the love, support, and prayers of our church family. I have so much great news that I wish I could share with you about this week and the powerful way in which God was moving among our group up there, but out of respect for our youth, I can really only give you generalities. So here they are:

- Our youth really felt God moving in their lives and speaking to them personally up there.

- Personal questions and issues were addressed and each of them heard about God’s love surpassing all of our trials.

- Most of our youth attempted all of the activities designed to increase their trust and faith in God and others.

- Relationships were formed and deepened with one another, with our counselors, and with our chaperones.

- We had only two very minor injuries which seems pretty good for an Extreme Adventure Camp.

I hope you are like me and look forward to seeing the way in which our youth will transform the congregation and the community in the name of Jesus Christ in the years to come. I encourage you to continue supporting them and walking alongside them as they do so. I would also encourage you to find a way to join us in this new year through sharing a meal with our youth group or participating in some new roles we have in mind. We are always looking for adults in our congregation who want to invest spiritually and relationally in our youth to ensure they understand the intergenerationality of the family of faith. Will you hear the call this year?

In Christ,

Pastor Nathan, Youth Pastor and Associate Pastor



- The book of the Month is: *Born on Third Base* by Chuck Collins. At Mission u, we all talked about this book which helped us to understand Economic Inequality in America; and, the book provided solutions to close the widening gap. *Born on Third Base* is part of our 2018 Reading Program, and a great read for any one interested in our American economy and ways to be with all the people. The book will be discussed at the upcoming Gulf Central District Mission u on September 22nd in Tampa.
- Make time next month, September 5th to join us for Unit Fellowship. Del Larsen, who works in this field, will provide a workshop on Dementia. We meet from 10:30 a.m. to noon and will have our famous chef salad. Please join us in Fellowship Hall.

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New Owners - great rates. ....give Greg a call!!!

Thank you to our bulletin sponsors. Our sponsors make it possible for Oakhurst to have the full color 11x17 bulletin each week for our services. Your service to our church is greatly appreciated. We ask you, as a member of Oakhurst, to please take your bulletin home and use the services provided by our sponsors. Tell them thank you for their sponsorship when visiting their stores or when you see them at church.

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# Congregational Care Ministries

In this space, I have been hoping to provide practical tools for a prayer life that addresses the real concerns of members of our congregation. Sometimes we don't know where to begin or how to pray, or even how to begin to confront the issues existing in our spiritual lives. I want to let you know that the congregational care team has received, and will continue receiving resources to help all of the members of our congregations deal with these issues (and more). I encourage you to reach out if you are in need of one on one care or a person to speak with to help get you through a difficult situation in your life. I encourage you to read the following article that will encourage you in your walk with faith as you or others you know might wrestle with the question of doubt.

In Christ,

Pastor Nathan, Associate Pastor

## **DOUBT AND UNCERTAINTY ABOUT FAITH**

***Dr. Tucker Ferda, Visiting Assistant Professor of New Testament***

Trying to pray as, for, or with someone in the grips of uncertainty or lack of faith is a little like a modern poet's trying to compose a new piece in the "genteel lyricism" of the 19th-century masters. Jewish poet Joy Ladin has written about how much of modern poetic expression is a skeptical reaction to the tendency of earlier poets to speak in universalizing terms about our world with a perspective "from above," as it were.

The counter-reaction has produced what Allen Ginsburg called "the aesthetics of relative truth," whereby poets express "from below" individual perspectives, voices, and biographical anecdotes, while leaving unanswered—or even ridiculing—the larger question of truth. Entering the genre of prayer, especially as enshrined in our liturgies and collective Christian praxis, can ask skeptics to speak suddenly with a feigned surety, or at least with a voice that to their minds ignores deep doubts and uncertainties. How do

we pray to God when it is in fact God, God's character, or God's involvement in the world that is the very thing in question?

We need to recognize at the outset that that question can stem from different places in the mind and heart. For some people, fleeting waves or prolonged states of doubt and uncertainty are primarily intellectual in nature and stem from encountering challenging perspectives in the classroom, in various forms of media, or in other persons. Such is common on college campuses today, as religious students increasingly find themselves ill equipped to respond to new viewpoints they perceive as contrary to their faith. At the other end of the spectrum, uncertainty and doubt may arise as one responds to difficult life experiences—especially suffering, tragedy, and disappointment—that force a person to rethink his or her cherished theological convictions.

Our presence and our prayers should embody the truth that there is space in our tent to name difficulties honestly, and there is a language of lament to voice them. Jesus himself embodied this truth in his last moments on the cross, and it may be particularly helpful to reflect on this episode and allow it to permeate our prayers. At the very climax of Jesus' earthly ministry, when he is doing precisely what he had set out to do, we observe in the cry of dereliction ("My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?") a profound encounter with doubt, uncertainty, and a sense of failure. Yet the cry of dereliction also shows that Jesus dealt with those realities at this harrowing moment by naming them and voicing them—with utter honesty—to God.

Indeed, there is a paradox here that should also characterize our prayers. Prayer at this moment is hardly a setting aside of intellectual and existential struggles to assume a confident and assertive voice "from above" that is alien to us. It is, rather, expressing that very struggle to God, just as Jesus does on the cross. Importantly, however, the expression of that struggle is directed toward God in words of desperation, as Jesus cites an opening line of a Psalm of David: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?" (Ps 22:1).

Continued on next page

There is, therefore, both here and in the Psalms of Lament (also a helpful resource) in general, a whole genre of speech that invites us to ask, to question, to challenge, and to give ourselves to God in the process.

#### Book of Psalms

Psalms of Individual Lament: 3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, (27), 28, 31, (36), 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, (52), 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, (89), 120, 139, 141, 142

Psalms of Community Lament: 12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, (89), 90, 94, 123, 126, 129

It can also be helpful to remind those struggling particularly with intellectual doubts and uncertainties that the modern understanding of “faith” has been essentially to reduce it to “belief.” The upshot is that, especially in a Protestant context, temporary or prolonged doubt can create tremendous anxiety. In the Bible, however—both Old and New Testaments—“faith” is much better understood as a disposition of trust in God that manifests in how we live. It may be helpful here to recall in our prayers biblical scenes that define “faith” better than our contemporary culture is wont to do. One such scene appears at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry when he calls four brothers to follow him. He does not give them a theology lesson at the first and ask them to sign on; he rather utters a call and invites them to take the risk of launching out to follow him. This following is what Jesus asks of us, too: he utters a call and invites us to respond in “faith”—trust manifested in life. “Faith” is not having utter certainty about the things of God, nor is it knowing all the answers to life’s difficult questions.

Faith does not begin with understanding; rather, it “seeks understanding,” as St. Anselm so wisely put it. Our prayers can be acts of seeking understanding.

One final confession: I am sometimes tempted to frame my prayers as little apologetics lessons or theodicies. But then I recall the example of Christ in Dostoevsky’s *Grand Inquisitor*. How does he respond to the questioning of the priest who asserts—and sometimes with brilliant argumentation—that Christ was wrong to refuse the devil’s three temptations in the desert? We assume that Jesus has his superior reasons. But offering them is

not what he does here. His response is far more mysterious and frankly more profound: he merely kisses the priest. The gesture points to a disarming love beyond words. It is an embodied prayer. Here the fruits of the Spirit—particularly peace and patience—are near to hand. Can we strive to make our prayers with and for others, especially those struggling with uncertainty and doubts about their faith, a kiss of that nature?

Those who would like to probe further here may benefit from reading: Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*; Mother Teresa, *Everything Starts from Prayer*; and Eugene Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer*. In the meantime, consider sharing this prayer with someone who is struggling with doubt and uncertainty about faith: Lord, we do not know what to pray, and we do not know what to make of you. We are like Jacob on the banks of the Jabbok, on the border of the promised land, looking in from the outside. But like Jacob in that pivotal moment, we will never stop wrestling with you. We cry out to you now from the place of our estrangement. Bring us home, we pray.

Amen.





# MISSIONS

**UNDIE SUNDAY AND CLOTHES TO KIDS** - A great BIG **thank you** for all the donations that came in through the church and VBS!!! We have been able to deliver several loads of clothing, new socks (298 pair) and underwear (275 pair) to the Clothes to Kids program. \$1,500 in Payless gift cards will buy new shoes. The overwhelming support will help needy kids be able to return to school this fall with confidence and be able to focus on school, rather than be self-conscious about what they are wearing. WOW!!! THANKS Oakhurst.

**BACK TO SCHOOL BACKPACKS** - It will soon be back to school time again. Missions has ordered 125 backpacks with school supplies to distribute to our local elementary, middle and high schools. If you would like to help a child, each backpack filled with supplies costs \$9.50. We will give packs to children who are identified through guidance counselors and teachers as needy. Mark your contributions "backpacks" and place them in the offering plate.

**STREET MINISTRY** - The street ministry is going strong. Oakhurst teams continue to cook nutritious meals and serve the needy of St. Petersburg through the feeding program at St. Vincent DePaul. Teams cook one night per month or deliver and serve the food. Oakhurst serves 3-4 times each month. If you would like to be involved, or be on the list of alternate helpers, contact Ray Cook - [Ray@raycook.net](mailto:Ray@raycook.net)

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**PRAISE BAND CONCERT - MARK YOUR CALENDAR** - On Saturday, August 18th, our praise band invites you to attend a concert at 6:30 p.m. in support of our missionaries and their ministry to Sierra Leone. There will be a covered dish supper first at 5:30 p.m. and all are invited!! Come down to the Foundry for an evening of fun, food and music.

**GREETERS** - You are needed! Please sign up to be a Greeter for Sunday mornings! This is an essential and important part to our Welcoming Ministry. Sign up at [signupgenius.com](http://signupgenius.com) Click on the magnifying glass and search for this email address: [christiandir@oakhurstumc.com](mailto:christiandir@oakhurstumc.com) Sometimes there is more than one signup going on at a time, so make sure you click on the one for Greeters. Currently, the calendar extends until the end of 2018, so please check your calendar and fill one of the available slots.

**BACK TO SCHOOL BASH** - August 11th – we will be holding our annual Back to School Bash. We are looking for volunteers to help staff game booths, prize tables, greeter stations and food lines as well as make the delicious food we will serve. Think about how you can help welcome our community to our church and kick off the school year right on August 11th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. You will definitely want to be a part of this!

**Thank You** **A BIG THANK YOU !!!** - I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone that helped make my retirement lunch special to me. Thank you to all of the folks who provided the food for the luncheon and for taking the time out of their day to spend it at my luncheon. I appreciate all of you! So....."see you on the flip side!"



LeAlta (Lee) Brummett

**You Made My Day**

# Gulf Central District Summer Fellowship

Presents

## Heavenly Healthy

*“I honor God with how I care for my body because it is the temple of the holy spirit.”*

1 Corinthians 6:19

YMCA Fitness Programs

Healthy Snacks

Instruction on a  
Relaxing Therapeutic

Hand Massage

Cooking with an Air Fryer

Spirituality of Healthy Living



*Today will be my day.  
I am the best me there is.  
I know that I am a winner.  
God will always be  
with me.*

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Church Foundry  
13400 Park Boulevard  
Seminole, FL 33776

727) 391-4769  
[www.oakhurstumc.com](http://www.oakhurstumc.com)

August 25, 2018  
1 p.m.—3 p.m.



# ***Apportionment Categories and Current 2018 Status***

Oakhurst UMC has a commitment to pay our *fair share* of UMC connectional apportionments in certain categories of funds as listed below.

The Total 2018 OUMC Apportionment amount due at the end of December = \$54,919.

The current actual dollar amount of apportionments paid through June = \$28,429.

Current % of apportionments paid through June, 2018 = 51.77%

The Categories of apportionment funds and our current paid status through June are:

## ***General Church Apportionments***

World Service Fund	\$9,380.00	Paid 100%
General Administration Fund	\$1,114.00	0%
Episcopal Fund	\$2,778.00	Paid 100%
Interdenominational Cooperation Fund	\$248.00	Paid 100%
Ministerial Education Fund	\$3,168.00	0%
Black College Fund	\$1,264.00	0%
Africa University Fund	\$283.00	0%
Jurisdictional Administration Fund	\$187.00	0%

## ***Florida Conference Apportionments***

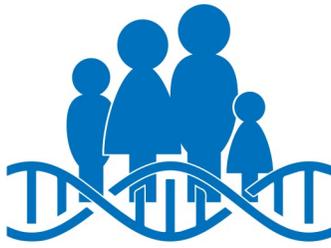
Clergy Support	\$6,063.00	Paid 100%
Conference Benevolences	\$16,556.00	0%
Conf. Services and Administration Fund	\$4,914.00	Paid 100%
Equitable Comp/Mission Support	\$3,443.00	0%

## ***Gulf Coast District Apportionment***

District Work Fund	\$5,521.00	Paid 91.4%
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We have been blessed with generous benevolent donations this year and we also Praise God for all of the individual financial gifts toward apportionment payments!

“To God be the glory, great things he hath done! So loved he the world that he gave us His Son, who yielded his life an atonement for sin, and opened the life-gate that all may go in!”



## Direct-to-Consumer Gene Tests – The Good, Bad and Ugly\*

***Submitted by Annette Clairy, MSN, RN-BC***

Nearly every human disease has a genetic component. Discovering the role of genetics in health and disease has been a fascinating but elusive pursuit from the time of Gregor Mendel who first explained hereditary traits through pea experiments in the 1800's, to the completion of the Human Genome Project in 2003 which identified and mapped the 20,000 to 25,000 genes of humans. Genomics shapes every aspect of healthcare including disease prevention, testing and screening; treatments and therapies; ethical issues; and public policy. Genetic testing has been used by health professionals in prenatal testing, newborn screening, carrier testing and diagnostics. Genetic testing can be diagnostic (confirming a disease like cystic fibrosis) or predictive (being at a higher risk to develop a particular breast cancer).

Sounds complicated? It is. Now enter Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) genetic testing. DNA testing direct to consumers has been around since 2003. Now over 40 companies offer it. For a price (\$100 to \$2,000) you can send your genetic material to a company who will send you back results. Is this a good thing? This is where the good, bad and ugly comes in.

Much of the DTC testing is done by analyzing single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs). These SNPs may be associated with a protective effect against some diseases. Certain SNP combos are thought to predispose people to common chronic illnesses. However, most genetic professionals agree that not enough is known about how these variants interact with the environment and life style habits to make accurate or useful predictions. DTC testing gives the consumer an idea of "relative risk" – the person's risk of getting a disease compared to the average population. That sounds pretty GOOD, right?

But wait, lifestyle factors (e.g. diet and exercise) may account for as much as 70% of our susceptibility to chronic conditions. So the "relative risk" now becomes rather confusing. To further the confusion, most DTC sites do not provide professional counseling or follow-up of the results. AND, DTC testing sites are largely unregulated by the government unlike the sites used by clinicians. Attempts to regulate DTC testing sites by the FDA, Federal Trade Commission and Congress have not been successful to date. So how accurate are the results? That's the BAD.

At its best the DTC testing might motivate someone to seek screening for breast cancer or colon cancer earlier. Or, you may discover you are at average risk for something like Alzheimer's and thus worry less. The UGLY is the DTC testing (which has questionable accuracy) might send someone into a depression about thinking of the illness they might get. One more UGLY thing to think of is that not all DTC genetic testing companies have explicit privacy and confidentiality policies. Confusion may exist about who owns the test results and the results or samples could be shared with other labs for future research without your knowledge.

So, if you are curious about your genetics, just keep these things in mind if you send out for your test. It will help you look at your results in an objective manner and help you determine how useful the information is to your situation.

*\*Adapted from "Direct-to-Consumer Gene Tests... High Risk or Helpful?" by Joanna Kentes Spahis a genetic clinical nurse specialist at Children's Health/Children's Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. (2017).*