



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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The Advent Wreath

² For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. ³ Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Isaiah 60:2-3 NRSV

Who is Christ to you? Why is Christ important to you and to the world? The liturgical meanings behind the Advent Wreath seek to provide answers to those questions.

Many Christians want to separate their “religious life” and their “secular life.” We have often been raised to think of our faith as something personal and something that can be separated from our day to day activities. Yet the Old Testament Prophets, Jesus, the Apostles and other writers of the New Testament rejected the idea that we can separate our religious lives from our secular lives. They taught that there is only life and a choice to live that life in relation to God. The Advent Wreath is a liturgical symbol of Christ as the center of our existence.

Christ our Hope: The first week of Advent we acknowledge that Christ is our hope for salvation of the world. The lectionary readings focus on those passages of scripture that speak of God ending time. One of the most powerful images comes from Isaiah 25:

*⁶ On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.*

*⁷ And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;*

⁸ he will swallow up death forever.

*Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the LORD has spoken.*

*⁹ It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Isaiah 25:6-9 NRSV.*

Isaiah envisions a great feast where God is not only the host but a loving parent. God will remove the “shroud” from the world; the constant fear of sin and death that clouds our existence. God will wipe away all tears and bring salvation. Christ as hope for the world reminds us that regardless of what happens, this is God’s world and that ultimately God will bring salvation to the world.

Christ the Way: The emphasis of the Second Sunday in Advent is Christ as the Way we are to live our lives. Typical of the lectionary readings for this day is Romans 15:4-6:

⁴ For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵ May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, ⁶ so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. NRSV

When we are baptized or confirmed, we are not pledging our allegiance to God and Christ. We instead profess to adopt a new way of living in the world that is focused on God and patterned on the life and teachings of Christ. We cannot separate this religious commitment from our daily lives because we acknowledge that the lives we live will reflect our faith and beliefs.

Christ our Joy: The color purple is most often associated with penitence. Three candles of the Advent Wreath are traditionally purple recognizing that we have turned our lives away from God and are in need of repentance; that is turning back to God. Traditionally, the third Sunday in Advent the candle is pink which is a color associated with Joy. We celebrate that Joy is another name for Christ. We believe that our Joy is founded on God’s act in Jesus Christ. My favorite advent reading for the Third Sunday in Advent is this one:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phillipians 4:4-7 NRSV

Christ the Prince of Peace: On the fourth Sunday in Advent we celebrate Christ as a living presence in this world. We celebrate Christ as the one always with us and who constantly calls us to peace. One of the advent readings commonly used on the fourth Sunday in Advent is from Matthew:

“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹ She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” ²² All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ²³ “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” Matthew 1:20-23 NRSV.

The promise of Emmanuel is God with us. Ours is a living faith, and we acknowledge that there is not a moment of the day that Christ is not with us. As stated in Matthew 28:20, “I am with you always, to the end of the Age.”

The Christ Candle: Finally there is the Christ Candle, the large white candle in the center of the Wreath that is lit on Christmas Eve. White is the color of new life and, in our tradition, it is also the color of death and resurrection. The white candle in the Advent Wreath symbolizes all three of those ideas. We remember the night of the incarnation, the night Christ was born. We acknowledge that, with his birth as a

human child, God accepted the inevitability of a human death. And we are reminded of Easter Sunday and the defeat of sin and death through the resurrection of Christ. Lighting of the Christ Candle also symbolizes God's promise to bring light into the world:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being ⁴ in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:1

The next time you look at the Advent Wreath, take a moment to reflect on who Christ is and God's act of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Blue Christmas

The Fourth Sunday in Advent we will celebrate with a Service of Lessons and Carols. Through music and the scriptures we will recall God's act of salvation through bringing Jesus Christ into the world. But we will also recognize what some characterize as a Blue Christmas observance.

The Christmas Season is not a time of joy for all people, especially those who have lost a loved one. For many such people the coming of the holidays only emphasizes the loss in their lives and the grief that they feel. Also, for the many people dealing with sickness and chronic disease and for those suffering depression, the coming of the holidays and the unfulfilled desire to feel Joy can be quite painful. Along with communion on the fourth Sunday in Advent we will also offer an anointing for healing. The anointing is merely making the sign of the cross on your forehead with olive oil, coupled with a prayer for healing in body and spirit. Anointing is one of the oldest liturgies in the Church and one recommended by scripture. James 5:13-15. Consider making this simple act of devotion a part of your observance of Advent.

The Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant

Every Church Christmas pageant shares these characteristics: there is a rush of preparation over three to four weeks, high levels of anxiety to get the performance organized, the effort to get young children to learn a few lines of dialogue and deliver them on cue and the effort to put the performance on with a minimum of mistakes. There is one more characteristic of Church Christmas Pageants. Despite the best efforts of the organizers the result is a somewhat chaotic presentation of the Christmas Story. However, no one really minds that because their children are part of that chaotic presentation.

The Unrehearsed Christmas pageant also produces a somewhat chaotic presentation of the Christmas story but it substitutes a lot of fun for the anxiety and stress usually accompanying a pageant. Instead of weeks of preparation, everyone arrives the night of the performance. They select a costume as a shepherd or sheep, a star or an angel, a wise person, a cow, a donkey, or an innkeeper and spouse. A narrator reads the Christmas story while the costumed participants act out this old and wonderful story. Christmas songs are sung and the story is retold to a new generation. 'Kids' of all ages are invited to get dressed and participate. Refreshments are then shared in the fellowship hall.

The **Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant** will be held on Sunday, December 14th at 4:30 PM at Trinity United Methodist Church. Please come and be a part of this joyful event and bring a friend or two to join in the fun.

!!!! Ideally we should have a ‘Holy Family’ (Mary and Joseph) and ‘Baby Jesus.’ This is a couple with a baby no more than one year old. The Holy Family has no lines and need not bring costumes. We provide those. They need only arrive at the manger and watch the rest of the show. ‘Baby Jesus’ can be a boy or a girl. The swaddling cloth is white, not pink or blue. If you know a couple with a baby who might be interested in coming to participate as the Holy Family, please let us know. We can go forward with a doll, but a live baby is best. !!!!

Request for Volunteers from Sixty First Ave UMC Last Minute Toy Store December 18-21

(Received from 61st Avenue UMC)

Could you give a few hours of your time to make this Christmas a more joyful one for Davidson County children from low-income families? Sixty-First Avenue UMC in West Nashville is in need of help with its annual “Last Minute” Christmas Toy Store.

Volunteers are needed for a variety of tasks Thursday the 18th through Saturday the 20th from 11:30 – 5:30 and Sunday the 21st from 12:30 to 6:30. We are urging people to arrange their schedules so they can stay for a complete shift if possible. We have a special need for bi-lingual (English-Spanish) volunteers.

Also, we have a special need for gifts or gift cards for teenagers since most of our donations are for younger children. Last year 4,973 children from close to 1600 families received toys, books, candy canes and oranges through this program.

If you can help out with this ministry, please contact Sixty-First Avenue UMC at 292-7184 or e-mail 61avenueumc@bellsouth.net. Information is also available at www.lastminutetoystore.com.

[Trinity UMC will provide lunch for volunteers at the Toy Store on December 19th. If you would like to help with that please contact Charles Wilson or Rev. Meaker.]

Commitment of Service

We had a great response to our Commitment Campaign. If you have not yet returned your commitment cards there is still time. You can drop them into the collection plate on Sunday morning or simply turn them in to the church office.

The nominations committee is reviewing the commitment to service pledges from everyone who returned a card and you should hear from a nominations committee member soon giving you information about the areas in which you are interested. If you do not hear from someone by December 14th please speak to a member of the nominating committee. They are: Rev. Dennis Meaker, Nancy Conway, Cheryl Wilson, Jo Cotton, G.L. Jones, Houston Hartsock, Bill LeCates, Rachel Newman, Nanette Crowell and Wanda Folds.

Many of you expressed a desire to commit to the daily reading of scripture. You may already have a book for devotional reading but I wanted to make sure that you were aware of some other resources. One of the best resources for daily devotional reading is the *Upper Room* devotional guide published by the Upper Room

and available directly from the church. These come in regular and large print editions. The Upper room also provides its devotional online at www.upperroom.org.

The Upper Room also publishes *The Upper Room Disciplines*. This is a lectionary based guide that provides daily readings based upon that week's lectionary readings. My preaching often follows the lectionary so this particular guide would provide a basis for contemplating that week's scripture readings before coming to worship. The *Upper Room Disciplines for 2015* is available through www.Cokesbury.com and through Amazon.

Another approach to daily scripture reading is *lectio divina* (literally, divine reading). In this practice you read a section of scripture in a prayerful attitude until a particular passage catches your attention. You then spend a period of time contemplating and praying about that passage and what the Spirit may be saying to you through that passage. If there is interest, I would be glad to lead a short course on the practice of *lectio divina*.

Some people wish to use their devotional time to read through the bible in a year. There are a number of guides to help with such a plan. Several can be found at <http://www.ewordtoday.com/year/>. I will also provide a reading plan for those who wish to begin on January 1, 2015. It will be available at the Church and on the website.

One of the most important practices for a Christian is the prayerful daily reading of scripture. I am pleased that so many of you expressed a desire to follow that discipline.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

The Poverty & Justice Bible is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to www.Justicebible.org.

⁸ *You are in for trouble! You take over house after house and field after field, until there is no room left for anyone else in all the land. Isaiah 5:8 CEV*

A couple of months ago as I shared in worship at 61st Avenue UMC on a Saturday evening a special prayer request was offered for a family who had just been evicted from their home of over 20 years. It wasn't eviction for failure to pay rent. It was eviction because they were in the way of the home's new owner who desired to either tear the house down to build a new one or to renovate it so that it could be sold to a family with more money. This process is sometimes referred to as the 'gentrification' of a neighborhood and it is pushing the poor of West Nashville from their homes. It is difficult to argue with the right of anyone to do what they wish with their property. That concept is firmly embedded in our society. But, is there a way to provide affordable alternatives for those who cannot afford \$800 or \$1000 a month in rent or who cannot afford to purchase an expensive home? Shouldn't we, the Church, be concerned about what is happening to the poor in these places? Isaiah tells us we should.

¹⁵ I know everything you have done, and you are not cold or hot. I wish you were either one or the other.
¹⁶ But since you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷ You claim to be rich and successful and to have everything you need. But you don't know how bad off you are. You are pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

¹⁸ Buy your gold from me. It has been refined in a fire, and it will make you rich. Buy white clothes from me. Wear them and you can cover up your shameful nakedness. Buy medicine for your eyes, so that you will be able to see. Rev 3:15-18 CEV

I sometimes think we are much like the people of Laodicea who John chides. We seek to be “pretty good” in all that we do, while avoiding taking actions that might be labeled as extreme by our neighbors or that might threaten our comfort. However, as difficult as I find it to admit, scripture tells me that God isn't that concerned about my individual comfort. God is concerned about the ‘comfort,’ the salvation, of everyone. God is constantly inviting us to step out of the center of our concern and allow God to take over that position.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

December 14th: Sermon: “When God Tore Open the Heavens: Who Are We?” Our faith is often viewed from a personal perspective; i.e. what it means to us. But Paul points out that the significance of the Church is who we are in the eyes of the World. My texts are John 1:6–8, 19–28 and 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24.

December 21st: A Service of Lessons and Carols: Through Scripture and song the story of Christmas is told. As well as communion, anointing for healing will also be offered.

Worship Leaders Schedule

December 14

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**
Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**
Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **Ushers**

December 21

Jason Aldred, **Liturgist**
Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**
Julia & Tom Moore, **Ushers**

Announcements

Members of our church will be serving lunch to the workers at the “Last Minute Toy Store” at 61st Ave. UMC on **Friday, December 19.**

We will be serving lunch from **11:00 AM** until all workers are served. We would appreciate volunteers who might be available for this opportunity. Please call Charles Wilson for more information.

The **UMW Christmas gathering and ornament exchange** will take place **Thursday, December 18 at 6:00 PM.** This festive event will take place at Elaine Rohrig’s home at 1552 Timber Ridge Drive, Brentwood. Please call her at **615-810-9923** or send her an email at: eannchat@aol.com if you plan to attend. All ladies of the church are welcome.

The **Christmas Choir Concert** will take place **Sunday, December 21 at 4:00 PM** at the church. We will enjoy a chili supper after the concert. Please plan to attend this special event. You will be blessed by the music as well as the fellowship.

Please plan to attend our **Christmas Eve service December 24 at 4:30 PM.** Friends and family members are most welcome.

November Birthdays

Cheryl Wilson, Ensley Mason, Betty Haynes, Brooks Crowell, Ross Crutcher

Happy Birthday to each of you!