



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## The God Vote II: How Our Faith Affects Our Vote

- <sup>6</sup> *Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?*
- <sup>7</sup> *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*
- <sup>8</sup> *Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,*
- <sup>10</sup> *if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. Isaiah 58:6-10 NRSV*

<sup>40</sup> *And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' Matthew 25:40 NRSV*

We're talking about the so-called Christian Vote: the God Vote as it were. In the last 18 or 20 years there has been great interest in what is perceived by the media as a bloc of Christian Voters. In this series we're examining how faith affects our vote.

Last week we put to rest any question about whether we were required to separate out our faith from our politics. We found the command in scripture to "be in the world, but not of the world." John 17:11-18. We live not according to society's standards, but to the standards of life that we discern are from God. The doctrine of Separation of Church and State limits the State's religious activity, not ours.

So, how does our faith affect our vote? Are Christians all republicans, all democrats or are they something else altogether?

I.

In listening to the media, I get the impression that the Christian vote (usually referred to as the Evangelical Vote or the Born Again Christian Vote) is primarily viewed as a Republican voting bloc. To begin with, let's clarify some definitions.

1. There is not a classification of Christians who have been Born Again: sort of Super Christians. If you have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior, as each and everyone of you did at your baptism or

confirmation, you have been born again in Christ. That goes back to the stuff from last week. Christians are a new people, born into the world but not of the world.

2. All Christians are “Evangelical.” **evan•gel•i•cal** \,ē-,van-'je-li-kəl, ,e-vən-\ *also* **evan•gel•ic** \-ik\  
*adjective*

**1** : of, relating to, or being in agreement with the Christian gospel especially as it is presented in the four Gospels

...

**3** : emphasizing salvation by faith in the atoning death of Jesus Christ through personal conversion, the authority of Scripture, and the importance of preaching as contrasted with ritual

Merriam-Webster, I. (2003). *Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary*. Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc.

Despite what some would have you believe, there is not a category of Christians who are evangelical and some who are not.

## II.

So, are Christians primarily from the Republican Party or the Democratic Party? The answer, of course, is neither. Christians do not come from either the Republican Party or the Democratic Party or any other political party.

Christians come from Vulcan.

Way back in the 1960s, Gene Roddenberry described a philosophy held by the people from the fictional planet Vulcan that is very Christian in sentiment. Its abbreviation is IDIC. Infinite Diversity joined in Infinite Combinations. The Vulcans, and the Christians, celebrate this idea of the power of diversity.

In his first letter to the Corinthians Paul is addressing the very diverse Church at Corinth. These folks didn't get along very well, in no small part because of the differences in the make-up of the Church. The church at Corinth was having problems with diversity. As was true of many of the early Christian Churches they had the rich and the poor, the free and the slave, the Jew and the gentile, the educated and the uneducated. Corinth was also a seaport city that hosted people from many different countries and cultures. Paul looked at this diverse group of people and said:

<sup>27</sup> Now **you are the body of Christ** and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way. 1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Note a couple of things about this passage. First, Paul says the Church IS the Body of Christ. He does not say that the Church is like a body or that the members of the Church have to work to be the Body of Christ. Paul proclaims to the Church at Corinth, and to us, that we are the Body of Christ.

He then builds on a point he made earlier in the letter. Just as any body is made up of many different parts, so is the Body of Christ made up of many different individuals with diverse gifts. Difference, diversity is a good thing, says Paul. It is good because all our differences come together and create something new: Infinite Diversity in Infinite combinations. We're all from the planet Vulcan. Who knew?

How does this appreciation of diversity work into our political outlook? We are not as one dimensional as the media would make us out. We have Republicans in our ranks. We have Democrats in our ranks. We have Tea Party, Libertarians, Socialists and many other flavors in our ranks. And, if we are paying attention to the scripture, we are supposed to be okay with that.

I'll take it one step further. To all you so-called liberals out there, I'm going to tell you that the Christian perspective is that you need the conservatives. You need that balancing view. To all you conservatives out there, I'm going to tell you that, from a Christian Perspective, you need the liberals. You need the balancing view. I am not saying that Christians are fence sitters, middle of the roaders or anything of the kind. I am saying that, if you are Christian, you not only are not frightened by diversity, you recognize it as part of God's plan. God's creation is wonderfully diverse and from that diversity comes strength.

Christians, politically speaking, ought not to be frightened by diversity. And they ought to be suspicious of anyone who tells them that they all have to think the same way.

III.

The second important way our faith influences our politics is that Christians are **angry!** In Ephesians 4:25-26, Paul says:

*<sup>25</sup> So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. <sup>26</sup> **Be angry** but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger...*

Paul is speaking here of how to live the new life in Christ. Let us dare to speak truth to one another and to our neighbors. If appropriate, be angry.

Folks, if you look at the world from a Christian perspective, from a perspective grounded in scripture, you should be angry. In both scripture texts listed above the Bible tells us that we are supposed to care about what happens to one another. I especially like the Isaiah text. God says that the true worship of God doesn't happen in the religious services, but in our lives as we reach out and help one another.

From a Christian perspective, we should be angry about the state of the world; about the state of this nation. There is a great deal of injustice in the world. There is a great deal of suffering that need not take place. For instance, despite their differences about how to deal with it, both Republicans and Democrats acknowledge that there are severe problems with the healthcare system. Serious problems, when people are going without healthcare or are having to sacrifice all they own to receive healthcare. That is a reason to be angry.

Children in this community are going to bed hungry every day because their parents, sometimes holding down three jobs between them, can't earn enough to feed and clothe their kids. It's estimated that more than a quarter million kids go to bed hungry several days a week in Middle Tennessee alone. That's a reason to be angry.

There are likely many things that you see going on in the world that should make you angry. That's okay. Being a Christian does not mean you are all sweetness and light. You get to have feelings, including anger.

But, use that anger in a constructive way. Don't let it consume you. Don't sin, says Paul; that is do not hurt someone because of your anger. Don't let the sun set on your anger. Don't let it fester and turn you inward. Use your anger. When you bring your faith to the political process, you bring your anger. Anger over injustice, anger over suffering, anger for any number of things that you would like to see change. Your anger might lead you to favor one candidate over another. You might hear in the words of one candidate or another remedies for something that angers you. Just be mindful of how you are using your anger. Use it to motivate yourself to seek answers to your questions; use it to motivate yourself to understand the causes for the thing that angers you. Use it to speak out for change. Do not use it to vilify someone who thinks differently than you think. Don't use it to promote separation, to promote division. Do not hate.

In short, use your mind. God gave you a mind to think with, eyes to see with and ears to hear with. Look at what the candidates stand for and listen to what they say. And then think about it.

III.

And, one more thing. Pray about your decision. Some folks think that is a trite or meaningless instruction. I couldn't disagree more. Pray About Your Vote! Listen to what the Spirit is saying to you. Ask for help discerning the questions that bother you. Christians believe in prayer. Not as a sort of cosmic vending machine that dispenses everything from parking spaces to monetary gifts, but as a means of hearing God's voice in our lives.

Pray about it. In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Paul says

*<sup>16</sup> Rejoice always, <sup>17</sup> pray without ceasing, <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

Through prayer we test what we have discerned. Dare to pray about your decisions, and you might find yourself thinking more clearly about issues that bother you. You might even change your mind. Christians bring prayer to the political process.

Conclusion

Keep these ideas in mind as you go forward into this election season. Christians are supposed to bring their faith to the political process. When we bring our faith to the political process, Christians:

1. Are not threatened by diversity. We see diversity as evidence of God's hand.
2. Bring their anger to the political process. There are reasons to be angry if we are paying attention. We seek to use that anger constructively.
3. Bring Prayer to the political process to test our discernment.

Our faith is a good thing to bring to the political process. Christians have a lot to contribute to the political process. Don't let yourself be guided by the media into thinking that Christians only see things one way. Let your faith guide you, don't let it label you.

## **Trinity UMC Needs Your Financial Support**

**By Rodger Klein, Chair of Finance**

As the Chairman of the Finance Committee I want to thank all of our members for the regular and very generous financial support of our Church and its mission. We should also regularly thank God for his gracious support of TUMC and our congregation. With that being said, I want to bring all of our members up-to-date on the financial status of our church.

The church is very sound financially and has adequate reserves for the foreseeable future. However, through the week ending on 08/08/14, we are approximately \$14,000 behind our budget for the 2014 calendar year. Our budget issue is primarily one of collections falling short of the budget and not a problem with regard to spending.

We have been able to control our operating expenses and we prepared a budget this year that was essentially the same as last year; i.e. there were very few projected increases in our budgeted expenses. Likewise, we did not project an increase in our revenue (collections) for the year, and those were projected to be essentially the same as the two (2) prior years. We have not, however, been able to achieve that level of collections thus far this year.

I would like to ask you to think and pray about your giving to TUMC and if possible increase the amount you give weekly (or monthly). Cherry and I have a "pledged" amount in mind at the beginning of each year and we do everything possible to make sure that we live up to that pledge, even though it is a private commitment known only to ourselves and God. We like to put something in the collection plate each week and so we divide our "pledged" amount by 52 weeks and put that amount into the collection plate each week. If we miss a week, we double our gift the next week so that we stay on our personal budget for giving to TUMC. I would like to encourage each of you to develop a personal budget or pledge for giving to the Church and then make a conscious effort to keep that personal promise. Cherry and I will be taking a look at our personal budget and we will be increasing our giving throughout the remainder of this year and into next year. I would like to ask each of you to do the same so that we can see if we can close the current budget shortfall of \$14,000 before the end of the year. Please think and pray about this important issue, and may God richly bless us all.

## **Pilgrimage to the Holy Land**

Jeanne and I would like you to join us this February on a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We will leave on February 16 for nine days of Biblical discovery, returning on February 25th. We will be part of a larger group of primarily United Methodists from all over Middle and West Tennessee. This is a special tour organized by Bishop William McAlilly, the Bishop for the Tennessee and Memphis Conferences.

I first visited the Holy Land in 2000. Jeanne and I went back in 2005 and again in 2012. Before I went the first time I was somewhat cynical about the upcoming experience. I didn't think that it would have much of an effect on me. But, when you stand on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, or travel to the Synagogue at Capernaum, you suddenly realize that you are likely walking ground that Christ walked. When you pray among the Olive trees in Gethsemane, stand in the prison cell contained in the House of Caiaphas, or see the name of

Pilate inscribed on a monument in Caesarea, the events surrounding the imprisonment, trial and passion of Christ take on new meaning; a new reality.

Brochures for the trip, including exact costs and travel itineraries, are available in my office. I'll also schedule a time this summer to share photographs taken on my previous trips to Israel and answer questions about the trip. I hope you will prayerfully consider participating in this faith building experience.

## **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](http://www.Justicebible.org).

*<sup>15</sup> The poor have a hard life,  
but being content is as good  
as an endless feast.*

*<sup>16</sup> It's better to obey the LORD  
and have only a little,  
than to be very rich  
and terribly confused.  
Pr 15:15-16 CEV*

It is not a blessing to be poor or a curse to be rich. But scripture often challenges us to question how riches, i.e. material wealth, affects our theology. Our wealth can confuse us with regard to our relationship with God and the world.

*<sup>15</sup> Then he said to the crowd, "Don't be greedy! Owning a lot of things won't make your life safe."*

*<sup>16</sup> So Jesus told them this story:*

*A rich man's farm produced a big crop, <sup>17</sup> and he said to himself, "What can I do? I don't have a place large enough to store everything."*

*<sup>18</sup> Later, he said, "Now I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones, where I can store all my grain and other goods. <sup>19</sup> Then I'll say to myself, 'You have stored up enough good things to last for years to come. Live it up! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.' "*

*<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, "You fool! Tonight you will die. Then who will get what you have stored up?"*

*<sup>21</sup> "This is what happens to people who store up everything for themselves, but are poor in the sight of God." Luke 12:15-21 CEV*

Jesus often used humor to make his point. That is certainly the case of the 'Rich Fool' who tore perfectly serviceable barns to build bigger and better barns. Doubtless there were people in the crowd who could identify someone they knew who had much the same mindset. But on a more basic level Jesus reminds the crowd that what we leave behind us when we die is the good we have done, the relationships we built and the love that we shared.

## **Bible Study**

Our Thursday morning Bible study will take a break for the month of July and the first two weeks in August. We will continue with the study of 1 Samuel on August 21<sup>st</sup> at 10:30 AM.

I believe that the study of scriptures with other Christians is an essential part of our journey as Disciples. If you would like to be a part of a bible study at another time, during the day or evening, please contact me. If we can interest four or five people in gathering at a particular time I would be glad to lead another study.

## **Still Seeking People Interested in Disciple Bible Study**

Disciple Bible Study is a 32 week study of the bible from Genesis to Revelation. It has guided many people to a deeper understanding of scripture and their faith over the years. Many in the Church have completed this study.

I have been approached by two people who would be interested in a Disciple Bible Study to meet from 7:00 to 9:00 on Thursday evenings. If needed, we will seek to provide child care for this study. I would like to get at least five or more people to participate in this study. If you have considered undertaking a study of the bible before, this is a wonderful opportunity. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please contact me.

## **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

**August 17<sup>th</sup>: People of Faith:** Are Christians the only people of faith? How are Christians to relate to people of other faith traditions? My texts are Romans 11:1–2a, 29–32 and Matthew 15:21–28.

**August 24<sup>th</sup>: Who Do You Say Jesus Is?** Jesus asked that question of his Disciples. It may be one of the most important questions for us to answer for our own lives. My texts are Romans 12:1–8 and Matthew 16:13–20.

## Worship Leaders Schedule

### August 17

Tom Moore, **Liturgist**  
Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**  
Mike & Rene Fetting, **Ushers**

### August 24

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**  
Sam & Judy Richardson, **Greeters**  
Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

## Announcements

We will be providing food and enjoying fellowship this **Saturday, August 16 at 61<sup>st</sup> Street Methodist Church**. We will be serving and worshipping with the people there. We will need volunteers to help. We will be there from 3:30 PM until after worship. Please make **Charles Wilson** or **Sam Richardson** aware of your plan to participate in this wonderful ministry.

The **Columbia District Superintendency Committee** is hosting a worship service to consecrate the new District Superintendent and the new pastors to the Columbia District on **Sunday, August 17<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 P.M.** at Columbia First UMC. Following the service, refreshments and a time of greeting will be held in the Fellowship Hall. Members of our congregation are encouraged to attend.

The “Companions in Christ” Sunday school class has begun a new study. The study is, “**Dare to Dream**” which will help us discern God's dream for us and how we live it out prayerfully and spiritually. We will be creating a “God-Sized” mission for ourselves. Please join us. You will be enriched spiritually and you will enjoy the fellowship and commitment of others.

Everyone is doing a great job in signing up to assist with Sunday School, hosting first Sunday meal and preparing communion. Keep up the great work!

## August Birthdays

**Mike Rohrig, Sara Jordan, Charles Wilson, Dana Bauguess**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**