



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Why a Christian Flag?

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Ex 20:4

As I was preparing for worship earlier this summer, I got to thinking about the Christian flag in the Sanctuary. The Kingdom of Heaven parables in Matthew 13 are often given an interpretation of describing the “Church Triumphant,” the Church “conquering” the world. Some see the Christian flag as representing the hopefully peaceful “armies” of Christianity conquering the world. Yet, it is difficult to reconcile the idea of conquest with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Indeed, the idea of the church conquering the world has led to some of the most monstrous acts in Christian history.

Flags, as used throughout the world, have historically represented nations and ideologies. The Nazi flag not only represented Germany of the 1930s and 40s, but also came to represent the concept of Nazism; the superiority of the so called Aryan race. Many groups continue to display the Nazi flag today for that reason. The American flag, for us, represents not only our nation, but is a symbol of liberty and freedom. Some in the world, however, view it as a symbol of imperialism. Christians might see the Christian flag as a powerful and positive symbol, while people of other faiths see it as a symbol threatening dominance.

The Christian flag is a curious creation. According to sources with the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship and elsewhere, the Christian Flag was conceived a little over 100 years ago. As it happens, a Methodist was involved in its creation. The Christian flag was soon adopted by many other denominations and is displayed in many churches and schools to this day.

In addition to being involved in creating the Christian flag, a Methodist pastor even wrote a “pledge of allegiance” to the Christian flag. That pledge went:

*“I pledge allegiance to my flag and the
Saviour for whose kingdom it stands; one brotherhood
uniting all mankind in service and love.”*

Other Christians have adopted a pledge that more closely resembles the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States:

I pledge allegiance to the Christian

flag, and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands; one Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again with life and liberty to all who believe.”

Neither effort seems to me to offer anything superior to the affirmations of our faith as contained in the historic creeds of the Church such as the Apostles Creed or the Nicene Creed. It is also troublesome to be offering “allegiance” to a flag and Christ instead of Christ alone.

Despite its widespread use, the Christian Flag is a symbol that remains troublesome for many. The symbol of our faith is the Cross. The Cross reminds us of God’s love that reached into our world and of the sacrifice of Christ. Yet, we do not worship the Cross and we do not pledge allegiance to the Cross. We worship God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, and not the Cross itself. For some, the Christian flag looks suspiciously like an idol that has no place in our worship. Many are also bothered by the flag’s connotations of imperialism and dominance that still haunt the history of the Church.

From a pastoral perspective I’m indifferent to the display of the Christian flag in the sanctuary. I would never suggest that we include the Christian Pledge of Allegiance as part of a worship service but I do not promote the removal of the flag either. I acknowledge that many people find it a familiar part of the worship setting and would not wish to see it removed. But I also believe that we should always be willing to examine and question how we practice our faith. What we say and do in worship is meant to express our deepest beliefs about the nature of God and the salvation of the world.

Memorial Service for Linda Allison

**Linda G. Allison, MD, MPH
Memorial Service
&
Celebration of Life**

**Saturday, 6 September 2014
1:00 PM**

The family of Linda G. Allison invites you to a memorial service at the church. Immediately following, in the Fellowship Hall will be a Celebration of Life where you can meet the family, view some of her favorite artwork, and other meaningful items from her life. Please join us for a taste of her favorite food; light, vegetarian Indian appetizers will be served.

In lieu of flowers, Linda requested that you please consider a memorial contribution to one of the following:

Hospice (any hospice program of your choice)

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR.org)
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1520
New York, NY 10115
Toll-free 1-800-554-8583

American Red Cross (redcross.org)
2025 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006
1-800-RED CROSS
(1-800-733-2767)

UNICEF (unicef.org)
U.S. Fund for UNICEF
125 Maiden Lane
New York, NY 10038

Nature Conservancy (nature.org)
4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100
Arlington, VA 22203-1606
Office Phone: +1 (703) 841-5300

Wounded Warrior Project (woundedwarriorproject.org)
P.O. Box 758517
Topeka, Kansas 66675

Habitat for Humanity (habitat.org)
Habitat for Humanity International
121 Habitat Street
Americus, GA 31709-3498

Breast Cancer Organization (breastcancer.org)
7 E. Lancaster Avenue, 3rd Floor
Ardmore, PA 19003

Linda G. Allison, MD, MPH Scholarship for the Medical Humanities at Southern Illinois University School of
Medicine
c/o Southern Illinois University Foundation (SIUF.org)
1235 Douglas Drive
Mail Code 6805
Carbondale, IL 62901-4308

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.

*²³ The poor must beg for help,
but the rich can give
a harsh reply.
Proverbs 18:23 CEV*

Hebrew poetry sometimes connects ideas in unexpected ways. This proverb is an example. That the poor must beg for help is, in part, an admonition against the community. The need of the poor is often readily apparent and the failure of others to come to their aid without requiring the poor to beg reflects poorly on the community. Yet the proverbs often shine a light on brutal realities. An equally harsh light is shown on the rich. They need not beg for help, but neither do they have to worry what others will think of their actions. They can 'afford' to give a harsh reply to someone begging for help.

*⁴¹ Jesus was sitting in the temple near the offering box and watching people put in their gifts. He noticed that many rich people were giving a lot of money. ⁴² Finally, a poor widow came up and put in two coins that were worth only a few pennies. ⁴³ Jesus told his disciples to gather around him. Then he said:
I tell you that this poor widow has put in more than all the others. ⁴⁴ Everyone else gave what they didn't need. But she is very poor and gave everything she had. Now she doesn't have a cent to live on.
Mark 12:41-44 CEV*

Jesus also plays with concepts of appearances and perception. In the story of the widow's offering, it appears that the rich are being very generous. But, as the CEV points out, they are basically giving what they do not need whereas the widow, who gives away her pennies is sacrificing all she has.

Disciple Bible Study Opportunity
Thursday Evenings 7:00- 9:00 Beginning September 18th

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.

We have enough people to begin a Disciple Bible Study. We will begin on September 18th. There is room for additional people. If you have considered undertaking a study of the bible before, this is a wonderful opportunity. If you have taken the study before but would like to repeat it you are also welcome. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please contact Rev. Meaker.

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 31st: What Are Your Credentials? What right does God have to make claims on our lives? And who determines if we are qualified for those tasks? My texts are Matthew 16:21–28 and Exodus 3:1–15.

September 7th: Remember: For over three thousand years Jews have remembered their deliverance from Egypt. The memory is preserved in the liturgy and prayers of Passover. For almost 2000 years, Christians have remembered the sacrifice of Christ through the liturgy and prayers of the Lord's Supper. Today we speak of remembrance. My texts are Exodus 12:1–14 and Romans 13:8–14.

Worship Leaders Schedule

August 31

Nancy Conway, **Liturgist**
Sam & Judy Richardson, **Greeters**
Richard & Dawn Stevens, **Ushers**

September 7

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**
Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**
Donnie & Renita Hartsock, **Ushers**

Announcements

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!