



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## Understanding the New Testament The Book of Acts part 2: The Ministry of Paul

*[In the September 18, 2013 Newsletter I wrote The Book of Acts Part 1: Pentecost and Jerusalem. As I was compiling these articles I realized that I had never written Acts part 2 but skipped straight to Romans. So, there is one more article to complete the series. The whole series will be compiled and available on the Web Site.]*

<sup>3</sup> Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.

<sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" <sup>5</sup> He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." <sup>6</sup> But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." Acts 9:3-6

<sup>15</sup> The voice said to [Peter] again, a second time, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." Acts 10:15

The majority of the remainder of the Book of Acts beginning in chapter 9 focuses on the conversion and ministry of the Apostle Paul. The Apostles had met in Jerusalem shortly after the crucifixion and selected a Disciple named Matthias to replace Judas. Matthias is never mentioned in scripture again. As so often happens in scripture, God had a very unlikely candidate in mind to replace Judas: Saul of Tarsus, the fledging Church's greatest persecutor. While others had already begun preaching the Gospel to the gentiles, it is Saul, later named Paul, who becomes the evangelist to the Gentiles. Paul's first mission was with Barnabas to the new Church at Antioch. Acts 11:19-26. There, the Holy Spirit commissioned Paul and Barnabas to preach the Gospel.

One of the principal issues facing the early church was the question of conversion to Judaism. Jesus was, after all, Jewish. His twelve Disciples and most of his followers were also Jewish. It seemed perfectly reasonable then to believe that, if one was to be a follower of Jesus, one must first become a Jew. Acts touches on this subject in several ways. As noted, it describes the first efforts to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. It also describes a vision received by Peter revealing to him that the Jewish laws that restricted social intercourse between Gentiles and Jews should be eased to allow that interaction. Finally, Paul and the leaders in Jerusalem reach an agreement:

<sup>19</sup> Therefore I [James] have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, <sup>20</sup> but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. Acts 15:19-20

Compare Gal 2:1-14. Judaism always welcomed gentiles to worship in the synagogue, even those who did not convert. Many of these persons were probably drawn to Judaism because of the Jewish laws and traditions that encouraged the creation of a supportive community where people helped one another. There were few gentile conversions, however, possibly because of the requirement of circumcision. In Hellenistic society, circumcision was considered mutilation of the body. The decision not to require conversion to Judaism before becoming a Christian allowed Christianity to develop independently of Judaism and probably prevented it from becoming an obscure Jewish sect. Loss of the connection with Judaism also resulted in more persecution for Christians. Judaism was a respected ancient religion within the Roman Empire. Once divorced from Judaism, Christianity was one more upstart mystery religion that engaged in questionable practices (eating flesh and blood for instance.)

Acts goes on to describe the mission and ministry of Paul in a number of different cities around the Mediterranean. It also describes his own experiences of persecution and imprisonment. Acts also refers to some figures who are mentioned in the letters of Paul, including Apollos, Priscilla and Aquila. Acts 18:24-28.

According to Acts, near the end of his ministry Paul was drawn into conflict with some of the Jews in Jerusalem who objected to his preaching to the Gentiles. When it appeared to him that he might be summarily tried, he proclaimed his Roman citizenship which prohibited such summary punishment. He was then transferred to Caesarea and the palace of the Roman governor Felix. According to the text, Paul was held in prison for two years apparently because Felix was hoping that Paul would be able to bribe his way out of custody. Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus and, after a brief trial in which Paul exercised his right as a citizen to appeal directly to the Emperor, Paul was dispatched on a ship to Rome. Following a very eventful trip to Rome which included, among other things, a shipwreck, Paul was imprisoned in Rome for two years. What eventually happened to Paul is not known, although most scholars believe that he was probably executed in Rome.

## **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>1</sup> *You, LORD God, bless everyone  
who cares for the poor,  
and you rescue those people  
in times of trouble.*  
<sup>2</sup> *You protect them  
and keep them alive.  
You make them happy here  
in this land,  
and you don't hand them over  
to their enemies. Ps 41:1-2 CEV*

In recent years, some Christians have asserted that the concept of a Social Gospel, i.e. one that encourages Christians to act on behalf of the poor, is a creation of persons who are rewriting the bible. After many weeks of reading this column you should now see that there is indeed a Social Gospel in scripture. Here, once again, is the affirmation that God desires that righteousness, right living, include efforts to care for those who are in need.

<sup>43</sup> *You have heard people say, "Love your neighbors and hate your enemies."* <sup>44</sup> *But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you.* <sup>45</sup> *Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both good and bad people. And he sends rain for the ones who do right and for the ones who do wrong.* <sup>46</sup> *If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for that? Even tax collectors love their friends.* <sup>47</sup> *If you greet only your friends, what's so great about that? Don't even unbelievers do that?* <sup>48</sup> *But you must always act like your Father in heaven. Matt 5:43-48 CEV*

God's love encompasses the good and the bad. Jesus tells us that our love, i.e. regard for the welfare of others, should also include not just those people we like but also those who call us enemy.

### **Bible Study**

For the last two years I have led a bible study on Thursday mornings. We are currently studying the Book of Psalms. There is room for as many as would like to participate. Please call me if you have questions or simply come and be a part of our study. We meet from 10:00 to 11:30 on Thursday mornings.

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.

### **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**

**February 2<sup>nd</sup>: These Are Blessings?** The Beatitudes are a curious collection of blessings. Jesus describes some very unlikely conditions and proclaims them Blessings. What do you think? My texts are Micah 6:6-8 and Matthew 5:1-12.

**February 9<sup>th</sup>: God and Evolution, Faith and Science:** I never cease to be amazed that this debate continues centuries after Galileo was imprisoned for saying that the Earth was not the center of the Universe. We'll consider the relationship between God, Faith and Science. My texts are Genesis 1 and John 1:1-5.

## **Worship Leaders Schedule**

### **February 2**

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**

Dawn & Richard Stevens, **Greeters**

Sam Richardson & Herb Haynes, **Ushers**

### **February 9**

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers**

## **Announcements**

**Men's Club Meeting is planned for Saturday, February 1 at 8:30 AM at church.** All men are encouraged to attend this meeting.

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCESSING YOUR DIRECTORY PICTURE**

1. Open Browser. Ex: Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, etc.
2. At top of page, type in web address: [www.bluelightphoto.org/tumc2014](http://www.bluelightphoto.org/tumc2014)
3. Page will open and you will see a space requesting a password. The password is: Judy (Capital J, other letters are lower case).
4. A gallery of pictures will come up. Find your picture and click on the picture itself. This will take you to your personal gallery of pictures. The number of photos ranges from 2-10.

5. When you click on a picture in your gallery, the photo will enlarge and you will be able to see the photo in detail.
6. To navigate from picture to picture (in your gallery), use the arrows on the side of the computer screen or use the left/right arrows at the bottom of the keyboard to scroll through them.
7. You will then select the specific picture that you want to have published in the directory by identifying a unique number under each picture.
8. You will then provide that number to Judy Richardson by email at: [Richardson824@msn.com](mailto:Richardson824@msn.com).
9. Please check your name under the picture for correct spelling. This is the name that will appear in the directory with your picture.

Next week, instructions will be given to download your picture so that you can print (or have printed) your photo.

## **January Birthdays**

**Dawn Stevens, Aislinn Crowell, Cherry Klein, Dennis Meaker, Judy Richardson, Jessica Moore**

**Happy Birthday!**