



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Wesleyan (United Methodist) Theology The Trinity (Part 2)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ² the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Genesis 1:1

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 1:1-5

Of all the doctrines of Christianity there are few that have generated as much controversy, and as much literature, as the doctrine of the Trinity. It is also one of the principal sources of the split between the Roman Catholic (Western) tradition and the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Let's begin with the doctrine as understood from a Wesleyan perspective. This is the first Article of Religion of the United Methodist Church, based upon articles of religion first written down by John Wesley and derived from the Articles of Religion of the Church of England (Anglican Church).

Article I—Of Faith in the Holy Trinity

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The underlined portion of the text emphasizes the principle belief about the Trinity shared by all Christians. We do not worship three Gods. We worship God as Father, God as Son and God as Holy Spirit. This seeming paradox is affirmed, in part, in the text from John: “the Word (the Son) was with God and was God.” In the Genesis text, the “wind of God” that sweeps over the chaos of the void can also be expressed as the “Spirit of God.” In some sense there is both separateness and unity. A holy mystery. Something that can be expressed and experienced but never fully understood.

One of the early Christian schisms arose over the proclamation of the Trinity. One portion of the Church insisted that, since Jesus was the son, Jesus was not equal to the Father but separate and subservient to the Father. Likewise, since the Holy Spirit came upon the church after the death of Jesus, it too was separate and subservient to both the Father and the Son. The issue came to a head in 325 C.E. when Emperor

Constantine called the Council of Nicaea to resolve the issue. The Nicene Creed adopted, in part, this formulation:

*We believe in one God,
The Father, the Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth,
Of all that is, seen and unseen.
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
The only Son of God,
Eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
True God from true God,
Begotten, not made,
Of one Being with the Father;
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation...*

...

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
Who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
Who with the Father and the Son
Is worshiped and glorified,
Who has spoken through the prophets...*

The underlined portions emphasize the concept that these three “beings” are all God and also highlight the next area of controversy that led to the split of the Eastern and Western church. The Western Church adopted a formulation that the Holy Spirit **proceeded** from both Father and Son. However, the Western Church also emphasized that the Holy Spirit is worshipped with the Father and the Son. The Eastern Church insisted that a better formulation was

And (we believe) in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, from the Father proceeding.

The Eastern Church insisted that the Western formulation inappropriately subordinated the Holy Spirit. The United Methodist tradition preserves the Western concept of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and Son but also emphasizes the unity of the three.

As you can see, it is easy for a discussion of the Trinity to devolve into arguments that can never be resolved and even result in splitting the Church. Rather than review all the various formulations of Trinitarian Theology that have been offered over the centuries, I will offer a practical theological formulation that I believe can be useful in understanding this Holy Mystery.

First, acknowledge that the Trinity is a Holy Mystery. We are talking about the nature of God and the nature of God will never be fully understood by any human mind. We can, within the limits of our senses, experience and describe the presence of God and the working of God but we cannot fully describe God.

Second, keep the unity of the Trinity first in your mind. When we talk about Christ, we are talking about God. When we talk about Jesus, who was fully human and fully divine, we are talking about God. When we talk about the Holy Spirit we are talking about God. Some Christians, and even some Christian traditions,

seem to lose track of the unity of the Trinity and begin speaking of them as separate. Our faith is monotheistic. We worship one God, known to us in the work of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Third, think of the Trinity in terms of how we experience the work and presence of God. We believe in a God who stands outside of time and who created the universe. We can experience the presence of God the Father through God's works. God made Gods-self known to us in the Son, the living Word of God that brought all things into being. In order for us to experience the living presence of God, God had to pick a point in history to appear and chose to enter our reality as a human being that nonetheless contained the divine spirit of God. We experienced the living presence of God in the living presence of Jesus Christ among us. Finally, as testified to in many scriptures of the old and new testaments, God made humankind able to experience the presence of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit of God that does the work of God in our lives and in the world.

Belief in the Trinity is not a minor theological matter. It is the Trinity that makes possible the atoning sacrifice of Christ and that makes possible our incorporation into the Body of Christ. But always keep in mind that the doctrine of the Trinity is, at best, an incomplete human description of the nature of God. And the full nature of God will always remain a Holy Mystery.

Interested in Working in Vacation Bible School?

We are reviewing the feasibility of doing a **VBS** program this summer. One of the critical factors in that determination is having enough committed volunteers to staff such an endeavor. We can foresee that it will take a lot of folks. If you would be willing to assist, please let Julia Moore or Jeanne Rybolt know. Alternatively you can contact Pastor Meaker. We will need people to lead crafts, music, games, and skits to name a few. **To assist in your deliberations, please keep in mind that the programs we are considering would likely take place in late July over a weekend (rather than a full week) - Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday.**

Scholarships to Cedar Crest Camp

Bishop William McAlilly has issued a call to United Methodists throughout the TN Annual Conference to contribute to the 99+1 Fund for scholarships for children to participate in our camping ministry at the Cedar Crest Camp. Remembering Jesus's parable about the shepherd seeking after the lost sheep, our goal this year is to find 100 (99+1) scholarships given to allow TNUMC kids to experience the love of Christ through camping. There are two ways that Bishop McAlilly and the Camping and Retreat Ministries team are asking for participation:

1. To recruit at least one child from your church to participate in a faith forming camp experience at Cedar Crest Camp this summer.
2. To raise funds to provide one \$300 scholarship for a child who could otherwise not attend camp.

Please send all scholarship funds to:
The Bishop's Cedar Crest Scholarship Fund
C/O The Rev. Dickie Hinton

P.O. Box 414
Monterey, TN 38574

More information on this important program can be found at <http://cedarcrestcamp.org/> or by emailing camp director Russell Casteel at russell.casteel@tnumc.com.

This past Sunday, the Women of the church (UMW) voted to provide two scholarships so that two children will be able to go to camp.

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.

*¹⁵ I will bless Zion with food,
and even the poor will eat
until they are full.
Ps 132:15 CEV*

One of the curious things about society is that people go hungry. Millions of adults and children go hungry (not starving, just hungry) every day. Millions of adults and children are under nourished and poorly nourished. And, in the midst of this need, millions of pounds of nourishing food are thrown away each year. As the Psalm says, God has blessed us with abundant food. Yet, people go hungry. The poor do not eat their fill. And, in recent years, great outcries have arisen from many people and politicians over any effort by the government to get nourishing food to those who need it. There are many problems of poverty that are very difficult to solve. But the means of meeting this immediate need, and buying time to work on the root causes of poverty, is easily within our grasp. But we continue to waste this food rather than use it. We continue to condemn and shame the poor for being hungry.

⁹ We had the right not to work, but we wanted to set an example for you. ¹⁰ We also gave you the rule that if you don't work, you don't eat. ¹¹ Now we learn that some of you just loaf around and won't do any work, except the work of a busybody. ¹² So, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, we ask and beg these people to settle down and start working for a living. ¹³ Dear friends, you must never become tired of doing right. 2 Thessalonians 3:9-13

In the past year, several politicians have latched onto this passage from 2 Thessalonians to “prove” that it is wrong for someone who is out of work, or unable to find work, to receive food assistance from the government. One such politician made this claim even though he owned farms that received substantial subsidies from the government coffers. This passage does not write out of the bible all of the many passages that demand charity for the poor and the feeding of the poor. Paul is speaking to a Church community that apparently supports itself through the work of the members. Some members, maybe believing that the coming of Christ is imminent, have ceased working. Paul is addressing that issue as a matter of Church discipline. Most of Paul's letters demand that the Christian communities do all in their power to support each other through

times of need. Indeed, 1 Corinthians 13 is a call to be loving and supportive in all that we do. Second Corinthians contains a plea for a sharing of the wealth of the Christian community such that no one has too much and no one has too little. 2 Corinthians 8:8-16.

Bible Study

For the last two years I have led a bible study on Thursday mornings. We are currently studying the Book of Judges. 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.

Disciple Bible Study Opportunity

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. I would like to get at least five 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

June 1st *Life Eternal*: Life Eternal is not something that begins after death. It is the reality in which we live as Christians. Join us this day as two of our youth confirm their faith and take their place as members of this congregation of the United Methodist Church. My texts are Deuteronomy 11:8-21 and Acts 8:26-39.

June 8th *There Was No Spirit*: Was there ever a time when the Spirit of God was absent from the world? My texts are Acts 2:1-21 and John 7:37-39.

Worship Leaders Schedule

June 1

Donnie Hartsock, **Liturgist**
 Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**
 Rodger and Cherry Klein, **Ushers**

June 8

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**
 Sam Richardson & Marty Bauguess, **Greeters**
 Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

Announcements

Please consider being a volunteer in the nursery. There is an opportunity each Sunday for you to be blessed by spending time with the youngest among us. Both men and women are welcome to be a part of this ministry.

There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board for volunteers to sign up to assist in the nursery or Sunday School. Please sign up for one or more Sunday's.

Thank you for being a part of this vital ministry of our church.

Sunday, June 15 - "Enough-Discovering Joy Through Simplicity and Generosity," a five part Sunday School series, will begin. **Please join us in the middle Sunday School classroom, gathering at 9:45 am and class at 10:00 am.**

"Enough" is an invitation to rediscover the Bible's wisdom on prudent financial practices. Find the keys to experience contentment, overcoming fear, and discovering joy through simplicity and generosity.

Please join the Companions in Christ class for this series!

There are sign-up lists on the Bulletin Board for volunteers who will prepare communion as well as hosting the First Sunday meal. Please sign up!

June Birthdays

Lynn McGill, Jo Cotton, Richard Stevens, Larry Eastwood, June Pollard

Happy Birthday to each of you!