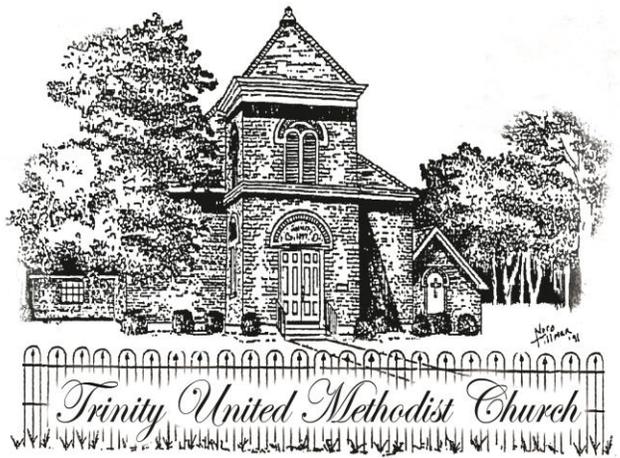




# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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## The Prophets: Amos (Part II)

*6 The Lord proclaims: For three crimes of Israel, and for four, I won't hold back the punishment,  
because they have sold the innocent for silver, and those in need for a pair of sandals.  
7 They crush the head of the poor into the dust of the earth, and push the afflicted out of the way.  
Amos 2:6-7 CEB*

One reason so many people become confused when reading the Old Testament is that they miss the fact that the Kingdom established under Saul, David and Solomon was divided into two Kingdoms after the death of Solomon. To add to the confusion, the Northern and greater Kingdom was named Israel. The Southern Kingdom, comprised only of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, was named Judah. Thus people first read about the King of Israel and then read about the King of Judah and become lost trying to figure out what happened. Samaria was the capital of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and Jerusalem was the capital of Judah.

'Israel' was the name given to Jacob after he wrestled with God by the river Jordan. Gen 32:28. 'Israel' means "to strive with God" and was both an appropriate name for Jacob as well as the people descended from Jacob. The people of Judah would no doubt have also considered themselves the People of Israel as well since they too were descended from Jacob.

This use of names to describe whole peoples is another source of confusion for people trying to understand the Old Testament. Many parts of the Old Testament are written as verse or poetry. In those passages the people that are being addressed may be referred to by a single name. Consider, for instance, this passage from Hosea 11:3:

*Yet it was I who taught Ephraim to walk,  
I took them up in my arms;  
but they did not know that I healed them.*

Ephraim (*ee'free-uhm*) was a tribe formed when the tribe of Joseph was split into two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh. When it appears in scripture it is almost always a reference to the whole Northern Kingdom of Israel. See also Amos 7:2 where "Jacob" refers to the Kingdom of Israel.

The Kings of Israel were fearful of the continuing influence of Jerusalem which held Solomon's temple. Its people still made periodic pilgrimages to the Temple to sacrifice and attend religious festivals. They no

doubt spent time listening to the priests and scribes of the Temple. In order to curb the influence of Jerusalem and the Temple, the Kings of Israel established places of worship and sacrifice at Bethel and Shiloh.

Israel was a prosperous Kingdom, but it also had a very stratified society. The rich were getting richer and the poor were getting poorer. People observed the religious festivals but the society became more and more oppressive. There was also a great deal of apostasy, the age old problem of the People of Israel. Apostasy is the worship of foreign Gods. North and South they continued to worship the Canaanite Gods, especially Baal and Astarte. These gods were sometimes worshipped through ritual prostitution that the Law proclaimed to be adultery and fornication. The references to “poles” or “high places” in the Old Testament are references to those places where the Canaanite Gods were worshiped. It was these troubled societies that the Prophets Amos, Hosea and Micah addressed.

As noted last week Prophets are not, except in the broadest sense, fortune tellers or seers. Biblical Prophets do not predict the future. Prophet (Hebrew *nabi* ) means “one who speaks for another.” As used in the Old Testament it always refers to one who speaks for God. The prophet is one who says, “Thus sayeth the Lord.” Consider Amos for instance. Amos was a shepherd and farm worker who came out of Judah with the call to preach to Israel. His message was straightforward. The people were following the religious forms but were ignoring the core of the law which is focused on how we treat one another, especially those less able to defend themselves. For instance, consider this passage from Amos 5:21-24:

<sup>21</sup> *I hate, I despise your festivals,  
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.*  
<sup>22</sup> *Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,  
I will not accept them;  
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals  
I will not look upon.*  
<sup>23</sup> *Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.*  
<sup>24</sup> ***But let justice roll down like waters,  
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.***

Amos 5:21-24. The people were going to Church, but it was not possible for a poor person to receive a fair trial (justice) and no one was living in righteousness, i.e. right relationship with God. (You might recognize this as a passage quoted by Martin Luther King in his “I Have a Dream” speech.)

<sup>12</sup> *For I know how many are your transgressions,  
and how great are your sins—  
**you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,  
and push aside the needy in the gate.***  
<sup>13</sup> *Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;  
for it is an evil time.*

Amos 5:12-13. The law was filled with commands to treat the poor with respect, to administer justice without regard to wealth or status or citizenship and to help those who were poor. The people of Israel were neglecting those commands.

<sup>6</sup> *Thus says the LORD:  
For three transgressions of Israel,*

*and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;<sup>c</sup>  
because they sell the righteous for silver,  
and the needy for a pair of sandals—  
7 they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,  
and push the afflicted out of the way;<sup>1</sup>*

Here, Amos is condemning practices that leech away what little money the poor have, coupled with practices that oppress the poor and keep them in servitude. In his next stanza he condemns the ritual prostitution that is part of Canaanite worship, apparently funded in part by oppressing the poor.

*father and son go in to the same girl,  
so that my holy name is profaned;  
8 they lay themselves down beside every altar  
on garments taken in pledge;  
and in the house of their God they drink  
wine bought with fines they imposed.<sup>2</sup>*

Amos includes in his condemnation the wives of the rich who benefit from the oppression even if they do not engage in it directly. He pictures them in their homes commanding their husbands to wait on the (“bring me something to drink.”) God’s punishment will be an invading army that will destroy the walls of the city and they will be led into slavery.

*Hear this word, you cows of Bashan  
who are on Mount Samaria,  
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,  
who say to their husbands, “Bring something to drink!”  
2 The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness:  
The time is surely coming upon you,  
when they shall take you away with hooks,  
even the last of you with fishhooks.  
3 Through breaches in the wall you shall leave,  
each one straight ahead;  
and you shall be flung out into Harmon,<sup>a</sup>  
says the LORD.<sup>3</sup>*

The ‘Gate’ Amos refers to is the Gate of the City which also served as a Courthouse. People would bring their grievances to the Gate, they and their witnesses would be heard and judgment would be rendered. The Law proclaimed that neither the rich nor the poor should receive preferential treatment. One who “reproves” in the Gate would be one who issues fair judgment based upon truth. Such fair judges are not

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<sup>c</sup> Heb *cause it to return*

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Am 2:6–7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Am 2:7–8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>a</sup> Meaning of Heb uncertain

<sup>3</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Am 4:1–3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

desired in Samaria. But, because of Israel's conduct, their ill-gotten gains will not benefit them. They will build houses they won't live in and plant fields they will never harvest.

- <sup>10</sup> *They hate the one who reproves in the gate,  
and they abhor the one who speaks the truth.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Therefore because you trample on the poor  
and take from them levies of grain,  
you have built houses of hewn stone,  
but you shall not live in them;  
you have planted pleasant vineyards,  
but you shall not drink their wine.*
- <sup>12</sup> *For I know how many are your transgressions,  
and how great are your sins—  
you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe,  
and push aside the needy in the gate.*
- <sup>13</sup> *Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time;  
for it is an evil time. <sup>4</sup>*
- <sup>14</sup> *Seek good and not evil,  
that you may live;  
and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you,  
just as you have said.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Hate evil and love good,  
and establish justice in the gate;  
it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts,  
will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph. <sup>5</sup>*

Amos also condemns extravagant living in the face of all the oppression and poverty. Drinking wine from 'bowls' would be drinking wine from huge cups. 'Beds of ivory' would be elaborately decorated beds and couches, a sign of profligate living. 'Joseph', like 'Jacob' or 'Ephraim' is a way of describing the Kingdom of Israel.

- <sup>4</sup> *Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,  
and lounge on their couches,  
and eat lambs from the flock,  
and calves from the stall;*
- <sup>5</sup> *who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,  
and like David improvise on instruments of music;*
- <sup>6</sup> *who drink wine from bowls,  
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,  
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!*

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<sup>4</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version.* (1989). (Am 5:10–13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>5</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version.* (1989). (Am 5:14–15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> *Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,  
and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.*<sup>6</sup>

The King of Israel doesn't want to hear Amos' preaching and tells him to go back to Judah. Amos makes it clear that he goes where God tells him to go:

<sup>12</sup> *And Amaziah [King Jeroboam's Chief Priest] said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; <sup>13</sup> but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."*

<sup>14</sup> *Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am<sup>b</sup> no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am<sup>c</sup> a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, <sup>15</sup> and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'"<sup>7</sup>*

In the broadest sense, Amos was predicting the future of Israel because it was conquered by an invading army. But most of Amos' 'prophesying' was in the form of condemnation for not following the Law. In particular Amos condemned the oppression of the poor of that society.

## **Commitment Campaign**

When we join the church we commit to support the church with our *prayers, our presence, our witness, our gifts and our service*. The Administrative Council has approved a Commitment Campaign for the Church. Beginning on October 5<sup>th</sup> and continuing through November 2<sup>nd</sup> we will, as a church, contemplate those commitments and how they are a part of our lives as Disciples. You will soon receive a study guide of devotional passages for the whole month as well as a card listing the ways that you can make commitment of your prayers, presence, witness, gifts and service to the church. On November 2<sup>nd</sup> we will celebrate Commitment Sunday with a return of commitment cards in each of these areas.

## **Pilgrimage to the Holy Land**

***Jeanne and I will host an information meeting on October 12<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 in Fellowship Hall for anyone interested in going on this trip or simply interested in the Holy land. We'll show pictures of past trips and answer questions about Israel and the tour. Light refreshments will also be available.***

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 25<sup>th</sup>. 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

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<sup>6</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Am 6:4-7). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>b</sup> Or was

<sup>c</sup> Or was

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. (1989). (Am 7:12-15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

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 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>26</sup> Many try to make friends  
with a ruler,  
but justice comes  
from the LORD.*

*<sup>27</sup> Good people and criminals  
can't stand each other. Proverbs 29:26-27*

“It’s not who you are but who you know.” Even three thousand years ago that was not an uncommon belief. If you know the right people in high places you can sometimes get something done that shouldn’t be done. But the Proverb reminds us that we won’t escape the Lord’s justice even if we manage to manipulate our own governments. The second part of the stanza might be interpreted to mean that righteous people wouldn’t even try to manipulate the government because, as well as being wrong, that would include associating with people who aren’t righteous.

*<sup>15</sup> The Pharisees got together and planned how they could trick Jesus into saying something wrong. <sup>16</sup> They sent some of their followers and some of Herod’s followers to say to him, “Teacher, we know that you are honest. You teach the truth about what God wants people to do. And you treat everyone with the same respect, no matter who they are. <sup>17</sup> Tell us what you think! Should we pay taxes to the Emperor or not?”*

*<sup>18</sup> Jesus knew their evil thoughts and said, “Why are you trying to test me? You show-offs! <sup>19</sup> Let me see one of the coins used for paying taxes.” They brought him a silver coin, <sup>20</sup> and he asked, “Whose picture and name are on it?”*

*<sup>21</sup> “The Emperor’s,” they answered.*

*Then Jesus told them, “Give the Emperor what belongs to him and give God what belongs to God.” <sup>22</sup> His answer surprised them so much that they walked away. Matthew 22:15-22*

The same ideas are in play in Jesus’ encounter with the Pharisees who sought to trap him into either urging the non-payment of taxes (which would be a crime against Rome) or to encourage the payment of taxes which would

anger the people. Jesus' response is to separate life in the Kingdom of God from the desires of earthly rulers. Paying Roman taxes might be a necessary evil to be endured but it did not relieve people from their obligation to serve God in the world.

## **Disciple Bible Study Opportunity**

*Thursday Evenings 7:00- 9:00*

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 begun our study. However, there is room for additional people. If you have been postponing a serious study of scripture now is a great opportunity to jump in. We can accept new students for the next couple of weeks.

## **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

**October 2<sup>nd</sup>: Commitment.** The decision to follow God is never treated in scripture as an intellectual exercise. It always involves commitment, even if that commitment is reluctant. My texts are Gen 12:1-4a and Jonah 1-4.

**October 12<sup>th</sup>: Commitment to Pray.** Arguably, the most important work of a Christian is prayer. How many of us show up for work? My texts are Philippians 4:4-9 and Matthew 6:5-13.

## Worship Leaders Schedule

### October 5

Linda Robinson, **Liturgist**

Dawn & Richard Stevens, **Greeters**

Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **Ushers**

### October 12

Houston Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers.**

## Announcements

The ladies of the church are excited about "**That's My Pan**" fundraiser. The link describing the products has been set up for us: <http://www.thatsmypan.biz/frtn10177/>. This is a new technology since we last did this fundraiser in 2005, almost 10 years ago. A variety of products will be available, some of which are located in Fellowship Hall. You will notice several new products and lots of new pan lids. As you're able, please take a look at the website. Ordering as well as payment opportunity is available on line. Dana will have answers to any questions you may have in this regard.

## October Birthdays

**Elaine Rohrig, Kieran McKernan, Caitlyn McKernan, Julia Moore, Reba Collier**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**