



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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The Prophets: Elijah and Elisha

⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." ¹⁰ He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." ¹¹ As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. ¹² Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces. 2 Kings 2:9-12 NRSV

Two of the most fascinating individuals described in scripture are the prophets Elijah and Elisha. We don't have writings from these individuals such as we have from Amos, Hosea, Micah, Jeremiah and Isaiah. Instead scripture contains stories about their exploits.

Elijah came first and prophesied against King Ahab of Israel. Ahab was the son of King Omri. Omri is described in the archives of surrounding nations as a powerful King and effective ruler. He made Israel a strong nation. In an effort to seal an alliance with the Sidonians he had Ahab marry the royal princess Jezebel. While Omri and Ahab may have been respected by those outside of Israel, the writers of the biblical history condemn them for apostasy and other violations of Torah.

For Christians, Elijah and Elisha are of particular interest because they performed many miracles of the type later performed by Jesus. For instance, one of the first miracles performed by Elijah was a feeding miracle. Instead of feeding thousands in one sitting, however, he instead multiplied a small amount of food to feed himself, a widow and her son over a period of three years during a famine. Elisha performs a similar miracle and also feeds a hundred people with a small amount of food. Both Elijah and Elisha cured the sick and both raise young men from the dead. Sometimes Christians ask why people didn't acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God because of the miracles he performed. The answer is that the miracles he performed did not make him the Son of God but did mark him as a prophet of God.

One of the most entertaining (and bloodiest) accounts in scripture is Elijah's confrontation with the 450 prophets of Baal. I sometimes think of this like the gun fight at the OK Corral. Elijah challenges the prophets of Baal who were brought to Israel by Jezebel, wife of King Ahab. The test is to see whose God will light a large bonfire from stacked wood. First up are the prophets of Baal. They pray to Baal all day long, asking him to show his power to the people. Nothing happens. Elijah starts to mock them suggesting that maybe Baal has

stepped out to use the bathroom or is taking a nap. He then has his wood thoroughly soaked with water before praying to God to set it ablaze. God obliges him. Elijah then does something very troubling. He incites the crowd to kill the prophets of Baal. Scripture is clear that God did not ask Elijah to do this.

In the story of Naboth's Vineyard, Elijah serves in a more typical prophetic role. Ahab and Jezebel conspire to murder Naboth so that Ahab can steal his vineyard. After the deed is done, God sends Elijah to Ahab to confront him with his crime. Ahab violated several of the Commandments to get the vineyard, including the coveting the property of another, arranging for people to give false testimony, using God's name for personal gain, murder and theft. God calls on Elijah to speak the word of God to Ahab, condemning what he has done.

Elisha makes it plain that you shouldn't make fun of the prophets of God. Some boys mock Elisha for being bald. According to scripture, God sent some bears to maul the boys. Clearly, Elisha lacked a sense of humor.

It is the story of Elijah and Elisha that provides the basis for the old spiritual, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*. As the time approaches for Elisha to take over from Elijah, Elisha asks for twice the spirit of Elijah. Elijah says that he will know if God has granted the request if Elisha sees Elijah taken up into heaven. Elisha indeed sees a Chariot swing down from heaven to carry Elijah away. We next see Elijah in the transfiguration when he and Moses are counselling Jesus.

If you have never read the Elijah and Elisha stories, I commend them to you. They provide much to think about.

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 5th and continuing through November 2nd 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 a commitment of your prayers, presence, witness, gifts and service to the church. On November 2nd we will celebrate Commitment Sunday with a return of commitment cards in each of these areas.

Service Commitment

Charge Conference will be held November 5th. We are updating our rosters for work on committees. If you desire to continue to serve on a committee, or to be removed from a committee, please let Rev. Meaker know as soon as possible.

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

Jeanne and I will host an information meeting on October 12th 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. Please let us know if you think you will attend.

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 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.

*⁷ There are two things, Lord,
I want you to do for me
before I die:*

*⁸ Make me absolutely honest
and don't let me be too poor
or too rich.*

Give me just what I need.

*⁹ If I have too much to eat,
I might forget about you;
if I don't have enough,
I might steal
and disgrace your name.*

Proverbs 30:7-9

Some Christian pastors have made quite a name for themselves preaching what has come to be known as the “Prosperity Gospel.” The idea behind the Prosperity Gospel is that God desires us all to be financially wealthy and will grant that if only we pray hard enough and support the ministry of the Prosperity Gospel pastor. In response to that I offer up most of scripture up to this point and then this proverb. Scripture is plain that riches can become the ‘god’ in our lives if we allow it. We all want enough to lead active productive and rewarding lives but, according to scripture, we can be ‘too rich.’

*¹³ Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” ¹⁴ But he said to him, “Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?” ¹⁵ And he said to them, “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.”
Luke 12:13-15*

Jesus is not laying down a new rule for the crowd. He is quoting the Torah, the prophets and the writings. If our wealth has become the focus for our lives, we have allowed our possessions to supplant God.

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 12th: 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.

October 19th: Commitment of Presence: Sometimes a commitment of presence is the only ministry we can offer. My texts are 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 and Psalm 139:1-18.

Worship Leaders Schedule

October 12

Houston Hartsock, **Liturgist**
 Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**
 Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers**

October 19

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**
 Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**
 Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **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!