



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## **Feet of Clay: The Rev. John Wesley and the Fair Sophia Hopkey**

*The head of that statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup> its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. <sup>34</sup> As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Daniel 2:32-34 NRSV*

*Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman."  
1 Corinthians 7:1 NRSV*

There has always been a tendency in the church to overlook the failings of some of our most influential leaders. The Apostle Paul is credited with keeping Christianity from becoming an insignificant sect of Judaism. His Thirteenth Chapter of First Corinthians is a model for the love that should exist within the Body of Christ. But, his letters also make it plain that he was a man of extreme temper and most likely very difficult. Martin Luther was unquestionably one of the most influential leaders of the Church in the last 2000 years and his contributions were largely positive. Yet, he was also a rabid anti-Semite who advocated confiscating the property of the Jews and imprisoning or exiling them. Modern examples of Church leaders who have harmed the Church or who have made terrible decisions are too numerous to list.

Although there were many leaders of the Methodist Movement, John Wesley was certainly the most influential. In the face of government opposition and mobs that almost killed him on several occasions, he advocated a faith that was lived out in the world and that sought to help those least able to help themselves. The Methodist societies through schools, clinics, pantries, soup kitchens and small business loans helped provide a social safety net in England that many historians credit with saving it from the type of popular uprising that swept through France and other European nations. Yet, Wesley was also very human. As John Wesley probably would have readily admitted, he was just one more sinner. He was also hopelessly inept in dealing with women, as shown in the case of the beautiful Sophia Hopkey.

Sophia Hopkey was the niece and ward of Thomas Causton, the general storekeeper and Chief Magistrate of Savannah in the colony of Georgia. Wesley had come to Georgia in 1735 as a missionary to the Indians and to serve as a pastor to the Colony of Georgia. His mission to the Indians was a total failure as they were not much impressed with the English colonists and saw no reason to share their religion. Wesley was also overcome by the sheer size of the parish. Based upon his journals he met "Miss Sophy" on Saturday, March 13<sup>th</sup> 1736. Thereafter he notes that she was often at the services he preached. At times early on the only persons at his services were Miss Sophy and her friend, Miss Fosset, although over time his Sunday services grew greatly.

Sophy was trying to disassociate herself from a relationship with an individual named Mellichamp who appears to have been of less than stellar character. There are references to his writing to Sophy from prison and to his threats to kill Sophy and anyone who tried to marry Sophy. Over the next fifteen months Wesley seems to have spent much time with Sophy, even accompanying her on a sea voyage from Fredrica Georgia back to Savannah. It seems clear from his journals that Causton and his wife were encouraging Wesley to spend time with Sophy. For his part Wesley was seriously conflicted. He much enjoyed his time with Sophy and had thoughts of marrying her. However, he also feared that marrying her would distract him from his perceived call to minister in the name of God. At some point Sophy assured Wesley that she had no intention of ever marrying, having given up on the very idea. Despite his attraction to her that statement seemed to bring Wesley some comfort. At one point Mrs. Causton and Sophy nursed Wesley though a bout with what may have been food poisoning or some other malady.

Sophy, sometimes accompanied by a friend, began to visit with Wesley in his parsonage after services. According to his journals they would read literature and engage in devotions. Wesley also began instructing Sophy in French. Over time, with the consent of the Caustons, Sophy spent much time in Wesley's company. She would arrive, with others, for 5:00 AM morning prayers and then stay and breakfast with Wesley and his housemate, a Mr. Delamotte. A note in Wesley's Journal from February 3<sup>rd</sup> 1737 indicates that Wesley and Sophy were at least dancing around the idea of marriage, but that Sophy did not want to seem too forward:

*Thur. 3.—I was now in a great strait. I still thought it best for me to live single. And this was still my design; but I felt the foundations of it shaken more and more every day. Insomuch that I again hinted at a desire of marriage, though I made no direct proposal. For indeed it was only a sudden thought, which had not the consent of my own mind. Yet I firmly believe, had she (Miss Sophy) closed with me at that time, my judgement would have made but a faint resistance. But she said 'she thought it was best for clergymen not to be encumbered with worldly cares, and that it was best for her, too, to live single, and she was accordingly resolved never to marry.' I used no argument to induce her to alter her resolution.*

*Upon reflection, I thought this a very narrow escape;...*

However, his journals also make it clear that his feelings were anything but Platonic:

*Tues. 8.—The next morning I was obliged to go down to Savannah. There I stayed about an hour; and there again I felt, and groaned under the weight of, an unholy desire. My heart was with Miss Sophy all the time. I longed to see her, were it but for a moment. And when I was called to take boat, it was as the sentence of death; but believing it was the call of God, I obeyed. I walked awhile to and fro on the edge of the water, heavy laden and pierced through with many sorrows...*

He goes on discussing the need to seek the 'will of God' for his life and his possible marriage to Sophy. He comes to no real conclusion.

Shortly thereafter, in mid-February 1737, Sophy announced that she would no longer stay and have breakfast with Wesley and Delamotte. Wesley records snippets of the conversation that apparently ran over three consecutive days:

*she told me, 'People wonder what I can do so long at your house; I am resolved not to breakfast with you any more. And I won't come to you any more alone.'*

*She said, 'I don't think it signifies for me to learn French any longer.' But she added, 'My uncle and aunt, as well as I, will be glad of your coming to our house as often as you please.' I answered, 'You know, Miss Sophy, I don't love a crowd, and there is always one there.' She said, 'But we needn't be in it.'*

Sophy continued to attend devotionals and prayer meetings but seemed to have become much more careful about being alone with Wesley. It would seem that the towns-people were beginning to talk.

Later in the month Wesley spoke of returning to England. Sophy told him that, if he did, there was nothing to hold her anymore in America. He then recounts this conversation as they walked together:

*Walking home with her from my house in the evening, I asked her, 'Miss Sophy, what did you mean this afternoon by saying if I went to England, you had no tie to America left? She answered with tears, 'You are the best friend I ever had in the world. You showed yourself a friend indeed at a time when no one else would have afforded me any more than common pity.' ...*

Again it seems quite clear that Sophy (and her guardians) wanted a proposal but she did not want to make the proposal herself. Wesley, who history suggests was a hopeless “Momma’s boy”, apparently could not figure out how to act on his obvious love for Sophy. In one of the most tragically humorous accounts in Wesley’s history he resolved a way to determine “God’s will” for his relationship. Getting together with his friend Delamotte he decided to cast lots, the classical Old Testament manner for determining the will of God (See, e.g. 1 Samuel 10:20-24):

*At length we agreed to appeal to the Searcher of hearts. I accordingly made three lots. In one was writ 'Marry'; in the second, 'Think not of it this year.' After we had prayed to God to 'give a perfect lot,' Mr. Delamotte drew the third, in which were these words, 'Think of it no more.' Instead of the agony I had reason to expect, I was enabled to say cheerfully, 'Thy will be done.' We cast lots once again to know whether I ought to converse with her any more; and the direction I received from God was, 'Only in presence of Mr. Delamotte.'*

A few days later, the Caustons asked Wesley to their home and requested him to post the banns announcing the marriage of Sophy to a Mr. Williamson, “unless Wesley saw any reason to object.” Mrs. Causton also encouraged Wesley to seek Sophy out and talk with her. However, Wesley was totally adrift at how to deal with the situation which he thought God had settled a few days ago:

*I said, 'No, madam; if Miss Sophy is engaged, I have nothing to say. It will not signify for me to see her any more.' I then offered to (leave); but she pressed me to stay, at least till the rain was over. The burden of her conversation was still, 'Why are you uneasy?' and 'Go and talk with her yourself.'*

*I doubted whether all this were not artifice, merely designed to quicken me. But though I was uneasy at the very thought of her marrying one who, I believed, would make her very unhappy, yet I could not resolve to save her from him by marrying her myself. Besides, I reasoned thus, 'Either she is engaged or not; if she is, I would not have her if I might: if not, there is nothing in this show which ought to alter my preceding resolution.'*

Things went downhill from there. Over time Wesley became convinced that Sophy had somehow mislead him and had acted in a duplicitous manner. The concept that he had been driving the poor woman insane for months never seemed to occur to him. Believing himself wronged, he determined that he would not serve her communion until she publically repented the wrong inflicted. When she came to receive communion he turned her away from the table in front of the congregation. This resulted in Sophy’s husband filing a suit for defamation and seeking one thousand pounds in damages and Causton, the Chief Magistrate, convening a grand jury to bring criminal charges against Wesley. To understand this, recall that Wesley was an Anglican Priest and that the Anglican Church was the Church of England. Wrongfully withholding the sacraments was a crime. According to Wesley’s Journals, Williamson and Causton wanted Wesley to post bail or submit to incarceration but the magistrate hearing the case released him on his own recognizance. Over the next few months Wesley appeared in court several times to answer these charges but was put off by Causton each time.

On the advice of friends, he made plans to return to England even though the charges had not been heard. Upon hearing that, Causton instructed everyone in the Colony to act to prevent Wesley from leaving. Nevertheless Wesley, in the company of several other persons who desired to leave Savannah, set out on foot for Port Royal. In effect, Wesley jumped bail.

Thus ended the affair of Sophy Hopkey and what could have been a very happy marriage. Later in life Wesley did marry. It was a very unhappy marriage with his wife conspiring with Wesley's enemies to undermine his work. The principal effect of that marriage seems to have been to keep Wesley away from home and working in ministry.

The moral of the story is simply to remind ourselves that each of us comes to ministry with all of our skills, talents, faults, strengths and weaknesses. Our decisions are sometimes very confused and sometimes wrong. Even our correct decisions can be hurtful to others. We would do well to always keep in mind the admonitions of 1 Corinthians 13 in our dealings with one another, and always be prepared to forgive. As Paul reminds us, "All have sinned. All have fallen short." Romans 3:23.

## **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](http://www.Justicebible.org).

*<sup>17</sup> Caring for the poor  
is lending to the LORD,  
and you will be well repaid.  
Proverbs 19:17 CEV*

Proverbs has a drum beat about poverty. Dealing with the poverty around us is our responsibility.

...<sup>40</sup> The king will answer, "Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me."...  
*Matthew 25:21-46 CEV*

The proverb places Jesus' parable about the Judgment of the Nations in context. Jesus is not declaring a new rule, but affirming the teachings of the Law and the Prophets.

## **Disciple Bible Study Opportunity** *Thursday Evenings 7:00- 9:00 Beginning September 18<sup>th</sup>*

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 18<sup>th</sup>. 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

**September 7<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: 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.

**September 14<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: Don't Forgive, Get Even.** Not the best advice, but it seems to me that it is the way the world works. Perhaps we need to be more intentional about challenging that? My texts are Romans 14:1-12 and Matthew 18:21-35.

## Worship Leaders Schedule

### **September 7**

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**

Donnie & Renita Hartsock, **Ushers**

### **September 14**

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **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.

Please remember to return your rocket banks, spare change or any monetary donation this coming Sunday (September 7) for the 'Imagine No Malaria' campaign. We will be sending all of these funds through UMCOR to fight this treatable disease. Special boxes will be at the front of the church and in fellowship hall to accept both your donations and your rocket bank.

A brand new sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board so that you can sign up to help with Sunday School. This activity is so important to the children of our church and is so very rewarding.

No one has signed up to host the first Sunday lunch which will take place this Sunday, September 7. Please consider volunteering for this event. Thank you.

## **September Birthdays**

**Millie Fly, Elva Beard, Joann Harper, Jessica Bauguess, Wanda Folds, GL Jones, Bill LeCates**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**