



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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New Year's resolution: Let's Agree Not to Place Limits on God.

⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage... Matthew 2:9-11 NRSV

We think we know all there is to know about God. And, in thinking that, we limit God.

Take the Wisemen for instance. Three Wisemen came seaching. We don't know how long they looked, but we are left with the impression in Matthew that it was some time. They saw the star in a far land and came looking.

They came looking for a King. As they traveled, they undoubtedly imagined an ending quite different than the one they found. I suspect that they were looking for God in a palace. After all, one of the first places they went seeking Christ was the palace of Herod. But, according to scripture, they found Christ in a house, apparently some days or even months after the birth. It was likely a very modest house. This was certainly not a palace. This wasn't the home of a king. God didn't fit the box they had built in their minds.

It wouldn't be right for us to criticize the Wisemen for thinking that God would come as an earthly King, complete with palace and armies. After all, when we go seeking God we tend to put God in a box as well. We come looking for God in our lives. Searching high and low and imagining what it will be like when we "find him." Like the Wisemen we build boxes for God in our minds. We want to keep God contained; Christ safely limited. But God breaks out.

Limiting God to Sacred Places

Sometimes we try to limit God to sacred places. The sanctuary of our church is a sacred, holy place. Generations of Christians have worshipped there, been baptized, celebrated communion, married and been eulogized there. We expect to hear God's voice there, to sense God's presence. Our opening prayer asks for God's help in feeling God's presence. So we look for God there. And often we do sense God's presence in that sanctuary.

But do we look for God at home? Do we expect to meet God in the woods? At work, in school, wherever we are? The purpose of the church building is to provide a place to gather for worship. Even more than that - it is a constant reminder to us each time we see it that **every place** is a place for worship. The bible

reminds us that God does not dwell in a "house made with hands..." "Heaven is God's throne, and the earth God's footstool..." says Isaiah 66:1. Our God is an awesome God who cannot be confined in any way.

We often hear the phrase "The Holy Land," referring of course to Israel. And it is a holy, special place. But it is no more holy than this land on which we rest right now or upon which we walk each day, for this is God's land. God is with us here just as much as any place on earth. So everywhere we are, not just in this place, we should be looking and expecting to encounter God. We shouldn't try to close God into the sacred places.

Limiting God to Sacred Days & Seasons

We also limit God when we try to confine God to sacred days and seasons. Sunday, is a sacred time. It's an hour we set aside to gather and worship God. We turn from our work and everything else in order to concentrate our thoughts on God; to clear our minds and be still and know our God. We sing to God, pray to God, and listen for God's word at that time and place.

But is that hour the only time we should do this? Where are our thoughts, our hearts, on Monday, Tuesday, the rest of our hours and days? Is God like an appointment on our calendar - Sunday 11 a.m. - "Meet with God" - only to be pretty much forgotten the rest of the time?

Sunday worship is important. It reminds us that every day, every hour is sacred. We do not have to wait until Sunday to worship the Lord! Each day is a Sunday! Each moment is an opportunity to praise our Creator. And I tell you this - our worship time on Sunday would be ever so much more enriching and meaningful if we all came to it after a week of daily worshiping and honoring God! I'm talking about an attitude - a "God centered" attitude that includes God in every part of our lives every day - not just on Sunday. It's the kind of attitude the Psalmist has when he sings, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!" Psalm 118:24. Don't box God into the sacred days.

Limiting God to "Sacred Callings"

How else do we try to limit God? We do it through thinking that God's call is confined just to certain "sacred" ministries, to certain vocations. "The call of God" isn't limited to ordained ministers or to missionaries. God has called every one of us. You have a calling from God that is every bit as sacred as a call to ordained ministry. Perhaps your call is even more sacred.

Your calling is to use your God given talents and gifts, wherever you are, to serve God and love your neighbor - to make this world a better place. You are the body of Christ. You are the living presence of Christ on Earth. Filled with the Holy Spirit and called to be a part of the priesthood of all believers. God's call is for you to give your very best in all you do - whether as a police officer, a secretary, a farmer, a teacher, a husband or wife, a parent, a child, whatever your life situation to make it a sacrifice of love you offer up to the One who created you; and a means of blessing for those around you.

It is as important for the Kingdom of God that each of you fulfill your calling as it for me to fulfill mine. You are the presence of Christ; A light to the world. By living and working in the world where people see you, where you have numerous opportunities every day to touch and make a difference in the lives of so many people. That's a sacred calling. Denying God's call is a way of putting God into a box.

Limiting God to the Sacred (and safe) Past

We also try to limit God by living in the past. We try to confine God when all we look at is the past or even just the present. When we spend all our time talking about the way things were rather than how things are today and what God can help them to be tomorrow. The God found in scripture is active. The God found in the world is active. God is a God who is always active, always creating and doing new things. One of the most haunting lines of scripture is Isaiah 43:19

*I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*

God is always doing something new, but we too often try to limit God to the past. We should treasure the past, build on it, learn from it, but our eyes cannot be turned constantly to what was. We must fix our eyes on what can be.

God is calling us to a wondrous future, to a new adventure this year. It is a little scary. Like those Wisemen so long ago, we may find God in unexpected places. Places that make us feel uncomfortable. But like them we can choose to open ourselves up to God's presence, regardless of how or where we find God. God has been with us in the past, is blessing us in the present, and will be there leading us to greater things in the days, months, and years to come.

Conclusion

New Years is a time of resolutions. As we begin a new year, consider these resolutions:

Let us resolve that this New Year we will...

Not limit God to any certain places...but look for and expect to find God everywhere.

We will...

Not confine God to sacred days and seasons but expect to find God as much on Monday morning, or Friday afternoon, as Sunday.

We will...

Not limit God to certain sacred callings, but expect to hear God calling each of us to ministry, to service every day, calling us to be the presence of Christ in the world.

And we will...

Constantly remind ourselves that this call of God may be to strike out in new and bold directions. God may call us to serve in ways we have never served before. As Brooks reminds us every week, God is Good Every Day.

SOS from Bishop Unda Yemba Gabriel *Bishop William McAlilly*

Occasionally when I lead the Apostles Creed I remind people that speaking the words, "I believe in God and Jesus Christ" can lead to imprisonment or death in parts of the world. As we affirm our faith with those words we are also affirming the faith of our brothers and sisters in these troubled lands. This is a message from Bishop's McAlilly's Blog. DJM



*Today I received the below communication (originally dated Dec. 28 from Africa) from Bishop Unda Yemba Gabriel, resident bishop of the East Congo Episcopal Area. To remind you, Bishop Unda preached at our 2014 Memphis and Tennessee Annual Conferences in June 2014. He thanked our Nashville Episcopal Area for raising money in 2013 to construct an Episcopal office and residence in the Congo, which I helped dedicate during my August 2014 trip to Africa. **If you wish to offer any financial assistance for the current crisis he describes below, please send to your conference treasurer for "Bishop Unda SOS."** ~ Bishop Bill McAlilly*

To brothers and sisters in Christ:

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As I write these few lines, my heart is too heavy because of the situation going on in Beni territory, northeast of the Democratic Republic of Congo, which is part of my Episcopal Area. The efforts of our army (are) insufficient to protect people.

People there are killed every day in the neighboring villages and we run the risk of losing all our believers. Two weeks ago, a group of Uganda rebels killed people in the villages (of) Kamango, Oicha and Mbawu. A Methodist family (a father, his wife and their two children) were killed with machetes. Many people are fleeing to Beni. Our local congregations there are crowded with displaced people who flee from villages for their lives. We need your prayers. But, as you know, food and basic needs must be met. Our evangelization should reach people in need.

I am sending this SOS message to all those who may want to help.

May God be with us all during Christmas, but let's keep in mind that our brothers and sisters are dying somewhere because of selfish interests.

Bishop Unda Yemba Gabriel
Resident Bishop, East Congo Episcopal Area

Unhanging of the Greens: Thank-You

I sometimes fail to express what a blessing this Church is in my life. I was reminded of that this last Saturday when we gathered for the ‘unhanging’ of the Greens. It was a tedious task yet many of you chose to give up your Saturday morning to come and make the Church ready for the first worship service and Sunday meal of the year. A task that would have taken a few people a few hours to do was accomplished in an hour. Thanks to all who were able to help.

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.

*¹³This is a message for Arabs
who live in the barren desert
in the region of Dedan:
You must order your caravans
¹⁴to bring water for those
who are thirsty.
You people of Tema
must bring food
for the hungry refugees.
¹⁵They are worn out and weary
from being chased by enemies
with swords and arrows. Isaiah 21:13-15 CEV*

This curious text from Isaiah puzzles many scholars. Isaiah is expressing concern for refugees from a war apparently between two Arab groups. Yet his instructions are rooted firmly in the Torah. When there is great need, we must help one another.

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. Matthew 26:27 CEV

¹³ Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, John 4:13

One meaning of the Eucharist, the Lord’s Supper, is that we are to share in the grace of God with the world just as one gives water to someone who is thirsty. But, how can we share the living water with someone

who is dying of thirst and starving? Our ministry must always be one that seeks to make this world a better place.

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

January 11th: Remember Your Baptism and Be Thankful. My texts are Acts 19:1-7 and Mark 1:4-11.

January 18th: Come and See: Seeing is believing. My texts are 1 Samuel 3:1-20 and John 1:43-51.

Worship Leader's Schedule

January 11

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**

Tom & Julia Moore, **Greeters**

Herb Haynes & Linda Robinson, **Ushers**

January 18

Nancy Conway, **Liturgist**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**

Sam Richardson & Tommy Cotton, **Ushers**

Announcements

Companions in Christ New Series on **John Wesley, "Revival,"** began Sunday, January 4. If you are looking to deepen your faith in 2015, join us for a six-week video journey following the life of John Wesley and exploring his defining characteristics of a Wesleyan Christian. Wesley's story is our story. It defines our faith and it challenges us to rediscover our spiritual passion.

The DVD features pastor Adam Hamilton guiding us through a Bible study tracing Wesley throughout England. It intends to deepen people's faith by calling them to a devout and holy life while defining what the Christian life looks like through his eyes.

January Birthdays

Cherry Klein, Dawn Stevens, Dennis Meaker, Ensley Mason, Rene Fetting, Judy Richardson, Linda

McGill, Jessica Moore

Happy Birthday to each of you!