



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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November 4, 2015

## Who Are You Going To Trust? The Image of Christ Within

*Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness... Genesis 1:26 (NRSV)*

*But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being... Galatians 1:15-16 (NRSV)*

“Who you gonna trust?” That is the question Paul puts to the Churches in Galatia.

Paul has a problem. He has established Churches in Galatia preaching a Gospel that declares that Gentiles have become part of God’s covenant. He proclaimed that Christ died on a cross to redeem the world from sin and that salvation was not just for Jews but Gentiles as well. He went throughout the Mediterranean, and specifically Galatia, preaching in the name of Christ and baptizing in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. He proclaimed salvation through faith in Christ’s sacrifice. And, once he established Churches and got them going, he would move on communicating with the established churches by letter.

Now other Apostles, other Church planters if you will, have arrived on the scene in Galatia. They have brought two messages. The first message is that Paul cannot be trusted. Paul never walked with Jesus while he lived and is therefore not an Apostle. They say he didn’t receive his instruction from the Church in Jerusalem but from Christians outside Jerusalem. Most significantly, they say that Paul was a persecutor of the church. He had even been present at the stoning of Stephen and was commissioned by the Council in Jerusalem to root out Christians and destroy them. Paul, these people tell the Church at Galatia, cannot be trusted.

The second message they bring is very disturbing to many in the church. They say that, if you would be Christian, if you would be part of God’s Covenant, you must convert to Judaism. Imposing this requirement on the Gentile Christians would almost certainly have destroyed the early Christian Church, making it no more than a sect of Judaism.

The Church at Galatia has a problem. Who are they going to trust?

There are good reasons to distrust Paul. To understand those reasons you might envision what an **interview** with Paul would have been like if you were considering accepting him as your pastor. Imagine you are interviewing Paul after his resume comes across your desk.

*“Tell us your work history Paul.”*

*“Well,” says Paul, “I’ve mostly worked here and there over the years. Mostly for myself. Usually as a tent maker. I’m a good tent maker too... but I’ve never stayed in one place long enough to really get established. References? Well there is this fellow who has traveled with me for a few years... But he and I had a fight and he went off on his own. No, there’s no one else who can really vouch for my employment. I could give you some names of the people I’ve worshipped with over the years. Church people I’ve known. Background check? Well, when you do that you will find out that I’ve spent some time in jail... But it wasn’t ever my fault. Honest. Yes I know most criminals say that they are innocent, but in my case it’s true. Really.”*

*“Persecuting the Church?” “Well yeah, I used to do that. But that was years ago when I was a kid and didn’t know any better. I do know a lot of theology... of course I’m mostly self-taught. I never studied religion in school. I never actually talked with Jesus before he was crucified. But I did have an amazing experience once when I was out walking.... There was this bright light that struck me blind, and then a voice speaking in my head. Everything changed after that.”*

You see the problem Paul has? A lot of what these people are saying about him is true. He didn’t learn his theology from the Church at Jerusalem. He was a persecutor of the Church, he hasn’t held a steady job and he has preached that Gentiles don’t have to convert to Judaism. Paul was a victim of the type of character assassination that is all too common today. Instead of dealing with the issues, discussing the issues, attack the person. Make the person look like the problem. And the personal attack on Paul was tearing the Church apart.

Paul strikes back by acknowledging everything that has been said about him. He was a persecutor of the Church and he didn’t receive instruction from Jerusalem. He received the Gospel not from men, but from God. And he goes on to say something that I want you especially to consider. Verse 16, as it appears in most bibles, says that God “revealed Christ to me.” There is also a footnote to an alternative translation in many bibles. Always remember that we are translating scripture and that Greek, like English, can carry multiple meanings. Here I’m more inclined to go with the footnote. If you do that, the passage reads, “God revealed Christ **in me**,” not to me.

We all bear the image of God; the image of Christ. I think Paul here is reaching way back to Genesis where it says that humankind was made in God’s image. Paul believed that, through the power of Christ, we could be made better people than we are today. That the image of God in us can be brought forward for us, and for all to see. Paul is asserting that his Gospel flows from the revelation of that image within him. That because he bears within his body the image of Christ, and because all people bear the image of Christ, there is no need for conversion to Judaism or to perform other rituals. The Gospel is complete in Christ and we are the ones to carry that Gospel to the world.

The issue of converting to Judaism to become a Christian was settled long ago. But the problem faced by Paul is still with us. In many places in the Church faithful people are under attack. Groups in the Church will focus on a lay leader or pastor and start the same type of character assassination that was old in Paul’s day. They will tell you that this person’s teaching is wrong or incomplete; that this person’s character is inadequate for one reason or another. They will even go so far as to proclaim persons to be outside of God’s Grace as if the decision of salvation was a matter for committees rather than by the grace of God.

And, just as it did in Paul's day, such action tears at the fabric of the Church. Turning us against one another. Tearing at the Body of Christ. Denying the image of Christ within us that God would reveal to us and the world. I've heard people proclaim that the Church is in danger of being attacked from outside, either by demons, atheists or other people of religious traditions. But the true danger to the Church has always been our own willingness to pull the Church apart from within.

So, who are you going to trust? Not everyone with Paul's dubious credentials is a sound leader for the Church. How do we know? Who do we trust? How about trusting in God? Trusting in God to guide us to be the people we need to be. Trusting in God to help us live as the Body of Christ.

We should trust our leaders. We should not work behind their backs or seek to tear them down. But we shouldn't offer them unquestioning obedience either. Any leader of the Church, pastor, staff member, committee chair or member is a sinner, prone to temptation and mistakes. Our strength is God. By staying focused on God, and our call to live as the Body of Christ in the world, we always have a benchmark against which to judge all that we do. That benchmark can keep us from venting our anger and frustration on someone and help us judge when something is not happening as it should. Our goal should never be to tear someone else down, but to live more faithfully as the Body of Christ. We should always be seeking to uncover that image of God within.

Be in prayer each day for the Body of Christ on Earth. Be in Prayer that we might display to the world the image of Christ within us. Be in prayer for this congregation, as we prepare to start a new year. Pray that we always turn away from the attacks that pull the Body of Christ apart. Pray that we turn away from false Gospels of hate and anger. Pray that we keep our focus on the Gospel from above and the image of Christ within. The Gospel that proclaims that Christ died for all people, even for the likes of us.

## **Thursday Morning Bible Study**

We have begun our Thursday morning Bible Study on Thursday mornings between 10:00 and 11:30. Everyone is welcome to attend. It has been my practice to allow the group to decide what parts of the bible they wish to study. We have concluded our study of Mark and have begun a study of Matthew.

### **The Poverty and Justice Bible**

*Doomed! You're doomed! At night you lie in bed,  
making evil plans.*

*And when morning comes, you do what you've planned  
because you have the power.*

*<sup>2</sup>You grab any field or house that you want; you cheat families  
out of homes and land. Micah 2:1-2 CEV*

The prophet Micah wrote to the capital cities of Samara and Jerusalem. Samaria was the capital of Israel and Jerusalem was the capital of Judah. Both had fallen away from the practice of Justice and Righteousness. Those in power lent aid to the rich and powerful and the poorest of the community were ignored or oppressed, cheated out of what little they had. Here Micah envisions a society that focuses, day and night, on how to cheat and steal from the poor. He also proclaims God's Judgment. They are doomed.

<sup>38</sup> *As Jesus was teaching, he said:*

*Guard against the teachers of the Law of Moses! They love to walk around in long robes and be greeted in the market. <sup>39</sup> They like the front seats in the meeting places and the best seats at banquets. <sup>40</sup> But they cheat widows out of their homes and pray long prayers just to show off. They will be punished most of all.*

Mark 12:38 CEV

Jesus reinforces the teaching of Micah. His teaching here is directed against the scribes who use their power and position to cheat widows, some of the most vulnerable people of society. But it is a teaching that applies to anyone who seeks to make their fortune off the backs of the poor.

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***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).

## Prayer Ministry

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Mac McAfee	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Erin McKibben	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

**November 8, 2015: Sermon: The Widow's Offering.** What do we value and how do we determine the worth of another? My texts are Hebrews 9:24-28 and Mark 12:38-44.

**November 15, 2015: Sermon: From Disaster, Hope.** The nature of life is change. Sometimes that change is disastrous. But, even in the darkest times, there is the hope of new beginnings. My texts are Hebrews 10:11-14; 19-25 and Mark 13:1-8.

## Worship Leader's Schedule

### November 8

Houston Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**

Rachel & Hal Newman, **Ushers**

### November 15

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**

**Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

## Announcements

The "Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ" Sunday School class is studying, "Jesus, Apprentice." We have extra books and extra chairs if you would care to join our class. **The class begins promptly at 9:45.** All are welcome to this time of learning and fellowship.

There is an opportunity to serve at **61<sup>st</sup> St. United Methodist Church Saturday, November 7.** Volunteers are needed to serve the evening meal and to enjoy worship after dinner. Fellowship takes place before and during dinner. Please make Charles Wilson aware if you are available for this opportunity.

## Birthdays

**Cheryl Wilson, Ensley Mason, Betty Haynes, Ken Strait, Brooks Crowell, Ross Crutcher.**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**