



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## Victims? Really?

*<sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:27*

Although some would probably disagree, I do my best to keep politics out of this newsletter. I have shared my political views with people in this congregation from time to time and they have shared theirs with me. Not surprisingly we find that we agree on some things and disagree on others. That has not affected my love for this Church and all of its members. I can be your pastor even if you disagree with my political views. When it comes to religious matters, as I've often noted, I have no problems discussing anything I say from the pulpit, in a Sunday School Class or in private conversation with which you happen to disagree. If I stray from scripture you are right to call me out on it. If we disagree over the interpretation of scripture, that is also not a problem. It is likely that we still agree on much.

That said, I feel it is appropriate to discuss something that has become a theme among Republican candidates for President. A number of potential presidential candidates have proclaimed that there is a war on Christianity taking place in the United States, one they mean to fight.

There are places in the world where Christianity is under attack. Places where Christians are rounded up and imprisoned and murdered. We should be urging our Government to take any steps possible to help these people and stop the persecution. We should certainly be praying for our brothers and sisters in Christ. However, the Church in the United States is neither being attacked or persecuted. In this nation that tolerates the existence of many opposing views, there are changes taking place. We have seen this throughout our history and our grandchildren can expect to see it happen as well. At least I hope they can.

However, there is something disturbing taking place with regard to Christianity in this country. Christians are being told to be afraid, be very afraid. They are being told this by politicians seeking to garner their support. The politicians tell Christians to be afraid and then to support the politician who will fight the supposed threat to Christians. From my perspective that is contrary to the Gospel. The Gospels make very clear that Christ told his followers again and again to not be afraid:

*<sup>26</sup> And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, you of little faith?" Matthew 8:26 NRSV*

*<sup>31</sup> So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. Matthew 10:31 NRSV*

*<sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Matthew 14:27 NRSV*

<sup>7</sup> *But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Get up and do not be afraid." Matthew 17:7 NRSV*  
<sup>10</sup> *Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."  
Matthew 28:10 NRSV*  
*...And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." Matthew 28:19 NRSV (which I interpret as a  
command not to be afraid)*  
<sup>40</sup> *He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" Mark 4:40 NRSV*

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And over twenty additional citations, including the one at the head of this article. The Gospel message is very clear. "Do not be afraid." Christ has not abandoned us. Christ is always with us. *...If God is for us, who is against us? Romans 8:31 NRSV.* Christians are to face the world in the knowledge that God loves the world and its people and that God is always working to bring redemption and salvation. God wants us to live in the world and to proclaim the Gospel by what we say and how we live, not to be afraid of the world.

The nation does seem to be going through some turbulent times. This has happened before. It happened over slavery, it happened over women's suffrage, it happened over economic regulation of business, it happened over civil rights for people of color, it happened over the war in Viet Nam and following 9/11. We are still experiencing the echoes and effects of many of these old disputes as new ones arise. But no one is trying to outlaw Christianity nor is anyone persecuting Christians in this nation. Non-Christians are disagreeing with Christians and Christians are disagreeing with non-Christians. Thus it has always been.

Do not allow yourselves to be manipulated by fear. The Gospel remains and the Body of Christ lives on. Christ is always with us. Do not let your hearts be troubled, do not let them be afraid.

## **One Hundred and Fifty Years Living As The Body of Christ**

As many of you already know, we will be celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Trinity UMC on June 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>. People are already beginning to work on the celebration but we need your help. Please talk to Cheryl Wilson, Nancy Conway or Jeanne Rybolt about ways that you would like to help and to see if they have tasks that you hadn't considered. ***In particular, we need someone who would be willing to help produce and edit a media presentation of peoples' recollections and experiences at Trinity in recent years and in years past.*** If you would like to be a part of that effort, please contact Rev. Meaker.

## **72+U The Mission and Ministry of the Tennessee Conference and Trinity UMC**

*After this the Lord appointed [seventy-two] others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Luke 10:1-2*

The mission of the Memphis and Tennessee Conferences of the United Methodist Church is to Discover, Equip, Connect and Send lay and clergy leaders who shape congregations that offer Jesus Christ to a hurting world, one neighborhood at a time. The values underlying this mission are:

Unrelenting love for all people  
Integrity  
Excellence  
Faithfulness and Fruitfulness  
Innovation

Luke 10:1-2 describes the beginning of the first missionary effort of the Disciples of Jesus Christ. Some translations state that Jesus sent forth 70 disciples, others say that he sent forth 72. The Tennessee and Memphis Conferences, under the leadership of Bishop William McAlilly have adopted that scripture as a map for our own mission in our communities. The Bishop has invited us to view our communities as our mission fields, seeking to bring the Gospel to everyone in our communities.

In the coming months I will bring you more information about this mission initiative and how we might be a part of it.

## **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>13</sup>Everyone is greedy and dishonest,  
whether poor or rich.  
Even the prophets and priests  
cannot be trusted.  
<sup>14</sup>All they ever offer  
to my deeply wounded people  
are empty hopes for peace.  
Jeremiah 6:13-14 CEV*

Jeremiah is speaking to a people who believe that God is on their side. But, God has told Jeremiah that God can no longer find justice in the society built by his people. Even the poor are greedy and dishonest. People want “peace” but it seems to be a peace based upon a life that denies God’s desire for justice.

*<sup>6</sup> I am shocked that you have so quickly turned from God, who chose you because of his wonderful kindness. You have believed another message, <sup>7</sup> when there is really only one true message. But some people are causing you trouble and want to make you turn away from the good news about Christ. <sup>8</sup> I pray that God will punish anyone who preaches anything different from our message to you! It doesn't matter if that person is one of us or an angel from heaven. <sup>9</sup> I have said it before, and I will say it again. I hope God will punish anyone who preaches anything different from what you have already believed.*

*<sup>10</sup> I am not trying to please people. I want to please God. Do you think I am trying to please people? If I were doing that, I would not be a servant of Christ. Galatians 1:6-10*

Paul is upset with the Galatians because they are turning to a different Gospel. That Gospel was one that would have required the Church to turn back to enforcing the practices of Judaism, including circumcision. Paul affirms that there is only one Gospel and that is the Gospel of Christ. Yet we too are tempted to turn to alternate Gospels. We are tempted to turn to “Gospels” that ignore the poor, that reward greed, that encourage discrimination against non-Christians and that seek to make us focus on our individual salvation rather than God’s salvation for all creation. Yet Christ is always calling us back around the Table with all of God’s people.

## **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

**May 3<sup>rd</sup>: Sermon: You Don't Have to Believe That 'Bad people' Will be 'Left Behind' by God.** Beginning just before the Civil War a new theology swept the land. It was called Dispensationalism. It proclaimed that all the world was corrupt and that God would Rapture some select Christians away from the world as God punished everyone else for seven years. But, if the world is corrupt, why did God so love the world that God gave us Christ? My texts are John 3:16-17 and Matt: 24:30-36.

**May 10<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: You Don't Have to Believe That Everything in the Bible Should Be Taken Literally.** The Bible can become something we worship. That should not happen. The bible is a means of hearing the Word of God for our lives. My texts are Luke 1:1-4 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

## Worship Leader's Schedule

### May 3

Jason Aldred, **Liturgist**  
Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**  
Richard & Dawn Stevens, **Ushers**

### May 10

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**  
Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**  
Larry Eastwood & Sam Richardson, **Ushers**

## Announcements

**The Fish Fry Committee** will Meet on Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 in the Fellowship Hall.

The **Women of the church** will be meeting **Tuesday, May 5** to discuss how the women will participate in the Sesquicentennial Celebration in June. There are many aspects of the celebration to be managed and there will be roles for each of us to play. There will also be a preview of the Celebration Quilt.

Please plan to come for dinner, fellowship and business. We need all ladies to participate.

**"Companions in Christ"** Sunday school class is beginning a new study. Adam Hamilton is a pastor and Christian author who has written a number of books, some of which we have studied previously. Our current study is an effort to make sense of God's will. Some of the questions we are discussing are, "Why do the innocent suffer," "Why do my prayers go unanswered," "Why can't I see God's will for my life?" and "Why God's love prevails."

We meet at 9:45 AM in the adult Sunday school room. Everyone is welcome to join us as we enjoy fellowship and study together.

## April Birthdays

**Betty Whitefield, Mary Coleman, Jo Oliphant, Jason Aldred, Houston Hartsock**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**