



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Are You Afraid Yet?

...Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14:27 NRSV

In the weeks since the Supreme Court's ruling on Gay marriage, fanned by presidential politics, there have been a number of inflammatory statements from candidates for president designed to convince Christians that they are under attack by forces in society, including the Federal Government. One candidate has gone so far as to suggest that the solution to this "problem" would be to establish a Christian Theocracy as our government. While I do not believe I should use this newsletter to respond to every statement a politician makes based upon my own political persuasion, when they wander into the area of religion and seek to instill fear in Christians for political benefit I believe that it is appropriate to respond.

The current specter being raised is a Federal Government that is forcing good Christian government employees to abandon their religion in order to keep their jobs. The principal example of this 'abuse' is the Court Clerk in Kentucky who refuses to issue marriage licenses to Gay couples.

As I noted in my sermon last Sunday, everyone must decide for themselves if the demands of the State impinge upon their beliefs as Christians. This tactic was tried on Jesus as described in Matthew:

¹⁵ Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. ¹⁶ So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. ¹⁷ Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?" ¹⁸ But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, "Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for the tax." And they brought him a denarius. ²⁰ Then he said to them, "Whose head is this, and whose title?" ²¹ They answered, "The emperor's." Then he said to them, "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." ²² When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.
Matthew 22:15-22

In this text Jesus does not declare that paying taxes to Rome is either right or wrong. He instead traps the Pharisees into demonstrating that they are already participating in the Roman system by having a Roman coin with an idolatrous image within the Temple. The key part of the response is the second admonition: "Give God the things that are God's." Each person must decide for themselves if their actions comport with their understanding of their obligation to God.

Such conflicts have existed for centuries. The classic example is conscripted service in the military for a Christian pacifist. Some Christian pacifists chose to serve in non-combatant capacities within the armed forces while others believed that any support of military force was contrary to God's law. They made their decisions and they faced the consequences of their actions. They rendered the service that they believed was due God, denying the right of the Government to force them to act against their Christian consciences. Many over the centuries have been imprisoned, or worse, for their actions. Many have served and died as civilians seeking to establish peace in war torn areas. They could not serve both God and Country and knew it.

In contrast to this example, we have the clerk in Kentucky. When she took office she swore an oath to uphold the laws of the State of Kentucky and the laws of the United States. Every government employee makes that commitment. She has been ordered by the Governor of Kentucky and a Federal Judge to issue marriage licenses in conformance to the law. She has refused on religious grounds but, rather than resign her position on religious grounds since she can no longer do the job, she insists that the government has no right to compel her to do the job she agreed to undertake and no right to terminate her employment for failure to do that job.

If this position is supported, where does it end? Can a Customs Officer refuse to turn someone away from the border because the Gospel instructs us to welcome stranger? Can a sworn law officer refuse to draw her weapon in defense of others because she believes that the use of force is contrary to God's will? Can an IRS agent stay on the job but decide to stop working to collect taxes because they disagree with the use of such funds to support the military, to provide healthcare, to assist farmers or for a hundred other reasons which may be sincerely held? I take claims of Christian conscience seriously. But I also take the law seriously. The law protects the right of Gay persons to marry and the right of the clerk to hold her beliefs. But it does not protect the Clerk's right to refuse to perform a job that she has agreed to undertake. That 'right' does not exist in law or according to Christian theology. If anything, it is contrary to Christian theology since it amounts to deceit; agreeing to do a job and then accepting money for refusing to do the job. And, most importantly, terminating her employment is not an attack on the Church.

I urge you in the days and months ahead to be very wary of claims from politicians that Christianity is imperiled unless they are elected. The Church does not need protection from politicians. Such 'protection' has always been unreliable over the centuries and sometimes damaging. God looks after the Church and doesn't need their help. Jesus told his disciples time and time again not to be afraid. Ultimately God is in charge of everything. Our faith is in God and our mission is proclaiming a message meant to bring Good News to the World, not a message of fear.

News from Nanette Crowell's Companions in Christ

By Rodger Klein

Our Sunday School Class has some things that we want to share with the congregation. First, we have changed the name of our class from Companions in Christ to *Nanette Crowell's Companions in Christ*. This name change was done so that we would always keep Nanette in the front of our minds and honor her memory as the founder and leader of our class. We will miss her leadership and contribution to our class and we believe that naming our class in her memory is an appropriate way for us to honor her. All adults are welcome to participate in our class. We meet at 9:45 am every Sunday morning.

Second, Pastor Meaker recently asked us to watch a video about poverty in our country and to consider how poverty affects our community. The video was very informative and after watching, we discussed ways for our class to help with this serious local and national problem. Because we are local, we were looking for

ways that we can help in our local community. After some discussion, we agreed that we will help in two ways now, but continue to look for additional ways in which we can help. Our first commitment is to sponsor one of the four meals that Trinity does each year at the 61st Avenue United Methodist Church. We will sponsor that event financially, and we will be there to participate in the serving of the meal and the worship service with that congregation. Our second commitment is that we will lead the effort at Trinity to collect food for the Graceworks food pantry. We will be setting up a collection station in the church where all members can bring non-perishable food items that will be given to Graceworks for use within our local community to help those in need. Food items can be brought in every week, but we will concentrate this effort on First Sundays. Please help us collect these food items to help those in need within our own local community.

Charge Conference

It's that time of the year again. For those of you new to the United Methodist Church, a 'Charge' is a Church or group of Churches under the leadership of an appointed pastor. All members of a Charge are responsible for its governance. To appreciate how deeply the concept touches Methodist polity and practice, turn to UMH 413, *A Charge to Keep I Have*. This hymn was written by Charles Wesley in 1762. The Charge Conference, made up of the pastor, lay leadership and members, is to meet at least once a year in a meeting chaired by the District Superintendent. It is at this meeting that the Pastor's compensation is set and the leadership for the coming year is approved.

In years past the District Superintendent has come to each Charge to hold this conference. This year the Columbia District will be meeting in clusters. Our cluster is made up of ten Charges. There will be separate sessions for each Church and a joint worship service for all the churches in the cluster. The cluster that includes Trinity will meet at Epworth UMC on October 4th. Our business meeting is scheduled from 5:15 to 5:30. There will be a joint worship service from 4:00 to 5:00. I encourage everyone who is available to attend the worship service and the separate business meeting.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

We have begun our Thursday morning Bible Study on Thursday mornings between 10:00 and 11:30. Anyone is welcome to attend. It has been my practice to allow the group to decide what parts of the bible they wish to study. Based upon the requests I have received we have begun a study of the Gospel of Mark.

New Disciple Bible Study

Disciple Bible Study is a powerful experience that can open the bible up for the participants. I would be willing to begin a new class this fall if at least seven people desired to undertake the 34 week study. I could do this study on Monday or Tuesday nights between 7 and 9. If participants would prefer to meet on a week day that could also be arranged. If you are interested please contact me at the Church. If you desire additional information for yourself or to give to a friend I have some explanatory booklets available.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

¹⁴ *If you really want to live, you must stop doing wrong and start doing right. I, the Lord God All-Powerful, will then be on your side, just as you claim I am.* ¹⁵ *Choose good instead of evil! See that justice is done...*

¹⁸ *You look forward to the day when the Lord comes to judge. But you are in for trouble! It won't be a time of sunshine; all will be darkness.* ¹⁹ *You will run from a lion, only to meet a bear. You will escape to your house, rest your hand on the wall, and be bitten by a snake.* ²⁰ *The day when the Lord judges will be dark, very dark, without a ray of light. Amos 5:14-15; 18-20*

The people of Samaria has assured themselves that they were living according to God's law, that God was "on their side" and that they would receive salvation on the 'Day of the Lord' at the end of time. Amos first emphasizes that God desires righteous living and is not on the side of those who live as the people of Samaria live. He then tells them that their dreams of the Day of the Lord are wrong because God will not reward the unrighteous lives they are leading.

²¹ *Peter came up to the Lord and asked, "How many times should I forgive someone who does something wrong to me? Is seven times enough?"*

²² *Jesus answered:*

Not just seven times, but seventy-seven times! ²³ *This story will show you what the kingdom of heaven is like:*

One day a king decided to call in his officials and ask them to give an account of what they owed him. ²⁴ *As he was doing this, one official was brought in who owed him fifty million silver coins.* ²⁵ *But he didn't have any money to pay what he owed. The king ordered him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all he owned, in order to pay the debt.*

²⁶ *The official got down on his knees and began begging, "Have pity on me, and I will pay you every cent I owe!"* ²⁷ *The king felt sorry for him and let him go free. He even told the official that he did not have to pay back the money.*

²⁸ *As the official was leaving, he happened to meet another official, who owed him a hundred silver coins. So he grabbed the man by the throat. He started choking him and said, "Pay me what you owe!"*

²⁹ *The man got down on his knees and began begging, "Have pity on me, and I will pay you back."* ³⁰ *But the first official refused to have pity. Instead, he went and had the other official put in jail until he could pay what he owed.*

³¹ *When some other officials found out what had happened, they felt sorry for the man who had been put in jail. Then they told the king what had happened.* ³² *The king called the first official back in and said, "You're an evil man! When you begged for mercy, I said you did not have to pay back a cent.* ³³ *Don't you think you should show pity to someone else, as I did to you?"* ³⁴ *The king was so angry that he ordered the official to be tortured until he could pay back everything he owed.* ³⁵ *That is how my Father in heaven will treat you, if you don't forgive each of my followers with all your heart. Matthew 18:21-35*

A similar message is found at the heart of Jesus' parable about forgiveness. The official had been forgiven a debt so enormous that he could not have paid it off in a hundred lifetimes. Yet he refused to forgive a relative pittance owed to him. Amos, and Jesus, would remind us of the debt that has been forgiven by God and urge us to act with justice, compassion and forgiveness in our dealings with others.

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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.

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

August 30th: Doers of What: The reformer Martin Luther did not think much of the Book of James. It only uses Jesus’ name twice and, from Luther’s perspective, places undue emphasis on deeds as opposed to faith. He called it an “Epistle of Straw.” However, the writer of James touches on a reality that John Wesley believed and upon which the Methodist Movement was based. If our faith does not affect how we live in the world it is empty. My texts are Mark 7:1–8, 14–15, 21–23 and James 1:17–27.

September 6th: Whom does God Love? “God Hates ____.” It is not uncommon to see protest signs outside of the Supreme Court and other places proclaiming who God hates. However, our preconceived notions about the nature of God are brought into doubt by the curious story of the Syrophenician woman. My texts are James 2:1-10 and Mark 7:24-30.

Worship Leader’s Schedule

August 30

Stacy Bell, **Liturgist**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Greeters**

Tommy Cotton & Larry Eastwood, **Ushers**

September 6

Rodger Klein, **Liturgist**

Charles & Cheryl Wilson, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

Announcements

The “**Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ**” Sunday School class is studying, “**Loving God.**” 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.

As you read earlier, the **Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School** class is collecting non-perishable food items for Grace Works. The following is a listing of the items that they are most in need of. This collection is a ministry of our church that each person can participate in and is a meaningful way to serve God as we serve others in our community. Thank you for your contributions.

Pantry Items

Canned Ham or Chicken

Crackers, Spaghetti Sauce (in plastic jars or cans)

Canned Beef Stew

Jelly

Boxed Meals (like Hamburger Helper)

Boxed Mashed Potatoes

Rice

Canned Fruit

Pasta

Fuel Bags

All individual sizes please.

Juice Boxes

Shelf stable liquid milk boxes

Canned/Package Meat with crackers

Cereal

Microwaveable Meat Meals

Easy Mack

Pudding Cups

Cheese or Peanut Butter Crackers

August Birthdays

Mike Rohrig, Chuck McKibben, Stacy Bell, Jan Bell, Charles Wilson, Dana Bauguess

Happy Birthday to each of you!