



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## It's An Abomination

<sup>32</sup> *They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.*  
*Genesis 43:32 NRSV*

About once a week I have breakfast at a local restaurant. I've been doing this for years, even when I served in West Nashville. Being a creature of habit I always sit in the same place since that table is next to a window and is almost always open when I arrive. Around a year ago a small men's group from a local church started holding a bible study nearby. Every now and then the volume at that table will rise to a level where I catch snatches of their conversation.

A couple of weeks ago I was eating breakfast when I heard their leader, presumably a pastor, discussing same sex marriage. He stated that it was a real problem for him theologically. Then one of the other participants said words to the effect that "same sex relations must be especially evil because it is one of the few things that 'God says' are abominations." Which started me thinking about the word "abomination" in the bible.

The first thing to remember whenever you are seeking the meaning of a "word in the bible" is that what you are really doing is seeking to understand an English word that has been used to translate a word or words originally rendered in Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic. For example, a search in the King James Version, or New King James Version (KJV and NKJV) shows that the word abomination and its variants is used 175 times. In contrast, the word abomination and its variants appears one time in the Common English Bible (CEB), 9 times in the New International Version (NIV), 128 times in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), and 141 times in the English Standard Version (ESV). The man mentioned in the previous paragraph was drawing theological conclusions about the things that God most abhors based upon the translation choices of the writers of the version of the bible he was reading.

I generally use the NRSV in my bible study because the majority of scholars believe that its translations are closer to the literal meaning of the original text than others. *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* notes that three terms are translated in the NRSV using an English variant of 'abomination'. The word most frequently translated that way is *to'avah* which means "to abhor, loathe, or detest"; "to commit abominable

*deeds*”; “to be loathed, detestable”; or “to be abhorred.”<sup>1</sup> The others are *sheqets* and *bdelygma* which relate to certain foods and to evil doers respectively. Related to *sheqets* is *pigul* which refers to food from a sacrifice to God that must be eaten within a proscribed time or be *pigul*, an ‘abomination’. (See e.g. Leviticus 7:16-18).

As used in the NRSV the word abomination does not always refer to what the God of Israel finds abhorrent. For example, in the scripture at the beginning of this article the brothers of Joseph are in his home in Egypt in a time before Joseph has revealed himself to them. You will recall that the brothers of Joseph were jealous of him and sold him into slavery. While a slave in Egypt Joseph rose to become a man of power and influence. The text notes that Joseph, acting in accordance with Egyptian custom, as well as the other Egyptians in the home, do not eat with the brothers who are shepherds. Egyptians considered that an abomination.

According to the NRSV the things described in scripture that God considers an abomination are fairly diverse as well. Sexual sins, especially incest, are considered an abomination. Eating certain foods is an abomination. And all types of lying and deceitful acts are an abomination to God. For instance, consider Proverbs 6:16-19:

<sup>16</sup> *There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: <sup>17</sup> haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, <sup>18</sup> a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil, <sup>19</sup> a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family.*

Worship of God without repentance is an abomination (Proverbs 15:8) as is the use of deceitful business practices like false balances (Proverbs 11:1).

As I stated in an article a few weeks ago, the bible consistently lists sexual relations between two people of the same sex as contrary to God’s law. However, it says the same thing about eating shell fish and pork. As we struggle with what is and isn’t sinful I encourage you to consider the effect of the conduct being examined. The questions we must always be asking is whether the conduct in question harms another and whether it involves expressions of true love; love that is concerned about the welfare and happiness of another and love that affirms God’s gift of life.

Am I advocating a position that succumbs to the prevailing morality? I might be accused of that but I do not see it that way. The conduct that is consistently condemned throughout scripture is conduct that harms another person physically, emotionally or economically. Also universally condemned is injustice in all the forms that present themselves including false witness, unfair judges, courts influenced by bribery and an absence of mercy and compassion toward others. If you are trying to identify what God finds an abomination you are more likely to find it in an inner city neighborhood where a homeless person is arrested for trying to sleep in a park or a child is going to bed hungry across the street from a store dumpster filled with discarded groceries.

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<sup>1</sup> Harrington, H. K. (2006–2009). Abomination. In K. D. Sakenfeld (Ed.), *The New Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 16). Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press.

## Thursday Morning Bible Study

A group within the Church has expressed an interest in a Bible Study on Thursday mornings between 10:00 and 11:30. We will begin that study on August 20<sup>th</sup>. 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 will begin with 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

*The LORD said:*

*<sup>10</sup>You people hate judges and honest witnesses; <sup>11</sup>you abuse the poor and demand heavy taxes from them. You have built expensive homes, but you won't enjoy them; you have planted vineyards, but you will get no wine. <sup>12</sup>I am the LORD, and I know your terrible sins. You cheat honest people and take bribes; you rob the poor of justice.*

*<sup>13</sup>Times are so evil that anyone with good sense will keep quiet.*

*Amos 5:10-13 CEV*

Amos preached to a society that had come to worship wealth above all. He preached to a people who would do anything to obtain wealth. The line that most strikes me in this passage is verse 13. Our society is very focused on the media. And people who call for concern and compassion for the poor as a priority are often ridiculed and shouted down. If they had more sense they would probably keep quiet.

*<sup>26</sup>Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and do not make room for the devil.*  
*Ephesians 4:26 NRSV*

I've always liked this translation. Christians get to be angry. If we look at injustice, indifference to suffering and intentional evil we have a reason to be angry. But, we do not get to indulge our anger except to use it to motivate us to bring about change.

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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

**August 9<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: "Such Big Shoes to Fill"**. I will be on vacation. The guest pastor is Dustin Miller, a Brentwood Police Officer and Chaplin for the Brentwood Police Department. His texts are Deuteronomy 8: 11-18 and Luke 8: 36-39.

**August 16<sup>th</sup>:** A good hymn is a sermon. Come to the service today prepared to lift your voices in song.

## Worship Leader's Schedule

### August 9

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**  
Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**  
Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers**

## **August 16**

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**

Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **Ushers**

## **Announcements**

**There will be no Newsletter on August 12<sup>th</sup>.**

The “**Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ**” Sunday School class has begun the sequel to “Knowing God.” **This study is, “Loving God.”** We have extra books and extra chairs if you would care to join our class. **The class will be meeting promptly at 9:45 rather than 10:00.** All are welcome to this time of learning, refreshment and fellowship.

We will be serving food and worshipping with the members at **61<sup>st</sup> street UMC this Saturday, August 8.**

Volunteers are needed to participate in this mission of our church. Please contact Charles Wilson if you are able to participate. Volunteers will need to arrive at the church by 4:00 PM Saturday.

## **August Birthdays**

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

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**