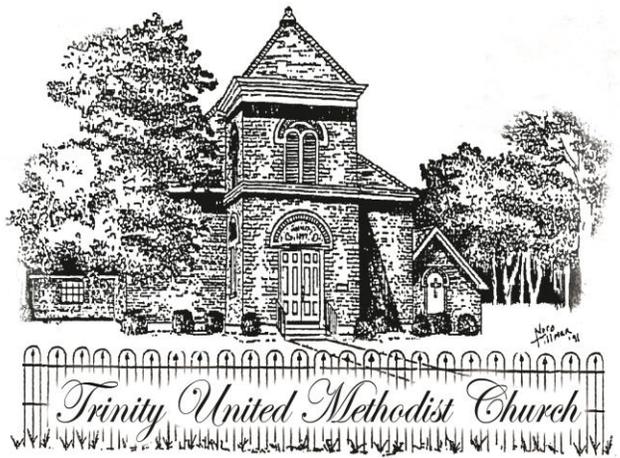




Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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February 11, 2015

Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations

[In the coming weeks I will be discussing the Tennessee Conference's initiative called 72+U that emphasizes the importance of the local Church reaching into the community to spread the Gospel. As an introduction to that material I am reprinting some articles that I first published over two years ago.]

The call to Discipleship is not to grow in numbers but to be fruitful. Some years ago Bishop Robert Schnase wrote a book titled *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. Regardless of the shape that ministry takes at Trinity UMC, there are practices that are followed by healthy, fruitful congregations that Trinity should seek to emulate. These Churches practice:

1. Radical Hospitality
2. Passionate Worship
3. Intentional Faith Development
4. Risk-taking Mission and Service and
5. Extravagant Generosity

Copies of this book will be available for those members who wish to read it. Over the coming weeks I will discuss each of these practices. If there is interest, I would be happy to lead a study group looking at this book.

Intentional Faith Development

Discipleship is a journey, not a destination. Methodists in particular emphasize the importance of daily growing in our faith through worship, ministry, the sacraments and the study of the bible as a community. By coming together with other Christians and studying the bible, we each help the others in the group to be faithful in their discipleship. Bishop Schnase compares group devotional study with groups dedicated to running. It is hard for one person to discipline themselves to get up and run each day. However, if they know that others are waiting for them to arrive, and others will share in the experience, it becomes easier to discipline themselves to the practice. The same is true of devotional study. The presence of other persons not only provides a measure of accountability and discipline, but also valuable insight and sharing.

Intentional Faith Development can take many forms. Sunday school is one, as is choir and men's and women's groups. Faith development groups can meet in the Church, at a restaurant, in the homes of parishioners and can even take place online. Moreover, faith development groups offer an opportunity to invite others into fellowship. They are an instrument of the prevenient grace of God that is always seeking to reach out. New Disciples are formed in such groups.

Consider ways that you could participate in such a group. Are you struggling with issues that others share? Would a spiritually focused support group help you deal with those issues? Do you simply want to explore your faith and know others of like mind? The group does not have to large. It does not have to have a specific make-up. All that is required is a group of disciples seeking to share the journey.

Your Forehead is Dirty

[A]ll have sinned— ...¹⁵ I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Romans 5:12; 7:15 NRSV

I remember reading once that Billy Graham always made it a point to preach on Romans 5 whenever he held one of his crusades. At some point he would look at the crowd and pronounce, "All have sinned." He believed, quite correctly, that no one could realize the need for God in their life unless they acknowledged that they too were sinners; that they **needed** God. It's not the "unsaved" who need God. It's all of us.

In our society, Romans 5 is not a very popular passage. People don't like to think of themselves as sinners. Sin separates us from God and no one likes to think that they might be doing something that separates them from God. People prefer verses like John 3:16 (For God so loved the world...) or some other passage that isn't quite as honest and personal as Romans 5. But, Romans 5, and the follow on in Romans 7, points up both the depth of God's love and the reason we need God in our lives. God loves the world, us and everyone else, in spite of our sin. God wants something better for us and is prepared to help us. Christianity is not about our independence or self-sufficiency. Christianity is based on the belief that we are dependent upon the sustaining power of God to live our lives. Christianity assumes that we need God and one another to live full and productive lives. And our belief is that God reached out to us through Christ because of the sin that harms us and those around us. We profess that Christ provides the connection with God that bridges the separation caused by our sin. We don't need Christ as a good friend; we need Christ like we need the air we breathe.

The season of Lent begins on February 18, Ash Wednesday. The Ash Wednesday service is a liturgy that Protestants have reclaimed in recent decades, recognizing that we need the symbol of the ashes to remind ourselves of our sin and our need for God. Ideally, an Ash Wednesday service should take place first thing in the morning so that the mark of the ashes is worn all day. I've never been very successful in getting people out for a service early on a Wednesday morning. However, we will have a service at 7:00 PM on Ash Wednesday for all who wish to come.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Season of Lent; the forty day period preceding Easter. Prayerfully consider beginning the Lenten Season by receiving the mark of ashes. Accepting the mark of the ashes is a way of reminding ourselves that we need God in our lives. You see, even if we decline to receive the ashes, our foreheads are dirty.

Human Trafficking

The Shocking Truth Hits Close To Home

It's the fastest growing crime in the state. The average age of its victims is 13. And most of us aren't even aware it exists. It's human trafficking. And besides Atlanta and New Orleans, Nashville and Middle Tennessee hold the distinction of being one of the South's three top hubs for trafficking and sexual slavery.

On February 17th you can learn more about this hidden crime. The Franklin chapter of Soroptimist International, along with End Slavery Tennessee, is once again sponsoring a free public forum to raise awareness of human trafficking and sexual slavery in Middle Tennessee and Williamson County. Held Tuesday, February 17th at 7PM at the Franklin Campus of Fellowship Bible Church, the program "Human Trafficking: Closer Than Ever To Home" will feature Derri Smith, Executive Director and Karen Karpinski, Director of Education from End Slavery Tennessee speaking on the widespread sexual slavery trade and its deep impact on the victims and our local communities.

"It's easy to think that this problem goes on in other countries half way around the world, but what is shocking is the degree to which it is happening in our own back yards," said Cindy Sargent, President, Soroptimist of Franklin. "Doing something to stop and prevent this horrific crime here begins first with awareness and understanding of what we can do to make a difference."

It is far more profitable for a trafficker to prostitute a child than to commit other crimes, such as drug dealing because the child (unlike drugs) is reusable, and the internet allows them to reach more buyers quickly. Though they involve more legal risks for pimps, juvenile girls fetch higher prices and are far more valuable and easier to manipulate than adult women, according to the nonprofit group Freeing American Children from Exploitation and Sexual Slavery.

Close to one hundred children a month are sexually trafficked in Tennessee alone, occurring in both rural and urban counties across all socioeconomic levels.

Potential trafficking victims are often initially approached on social networking websites, such as Facebook, where pimps and traffickers gain the trust of the child by expressing sentiments of love, or the willingness to make the individual a model, singer or actor. And in a city where dreams of making it big in the entertainment industry run deep, promises of stardom are a real and effective lure.

Fellowship Franklin Campus is located at 1725 Columbia Avenue in Franklin. Doors open at 6:30PM. Donations of gas cards, fast food gift certificates, and Walmart, Target or Kmart gift cards are appreciated, and will be given to victims being helped through End Slavery Tennessee. For more information, visit SIFranklin.org.

Contact: Cindy Sargent
615-775-7364
or
Jen Cherry
615-663-6241

WHAT: “Human Trafficking: Closer Than Ever To Home”
Public Awareness Forum

WHEN: Tuesday, February 17, 2015 7PM

WHERE: Fellowship Bible Church, Franklin Campus
1725 Columbia Avenue, Franklin, TN

COST: Free

WHO: Presented by Soroptimist Franklin and End Slavery Tennessee
SIFranklin.org
endslaverytn.org

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.

*Here is my servant!
I have made him strong.
He is my chosen one;
I am pleased with him.
I have given him my Spirit,
and he will bring justice
to the nations.
²He won't shout or yell
or call out in the streets.
³He won't break off a bent reed
or put out a dying flame,
but he will make sure
that justice is done.
⁴He won't quit or give up
until he brings justice
everywhere on earth,
and people in foreign nations
long for his teaching...
⁶I chose you to bring justice,*

*and I am here at your side.
I selected and sent you
to bring light
and my promise of hope
to the nations.
7You will give sight
to the blind;
you will set prisoners free
from dark dungeons. Isaiah 42:3-4; 6-7 CEV*

Christians often speak of personal salvation and having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Yet scripture makes clear that God is not solely focused upon personal salvation. God is focused on a plan of salvation for “nations”; indeed for the world. The servant of God will bring the light that is God’s justice to all the world.

16 Jesus went back to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and as usual he went to the meeting place on the Sabbath. When he stood up to read from the Scriptures, 17 he was given the book of Isaiah the prophet.

*He opened it and read,
18 “The Lord’s Spirit
has come to me,
because he has chosen me
to tell the good news
to the poor.
The Lord has sent me
to announce freedom
for prisoners,
to give sight to the blind,
to free everyone
who suffers,
19 and to say, ‘This is the year
the Lord has chosen.’ ”*

20 Jesus closed the book, then handed it back to the man in charge and sat down. Everyone in the meeting place looked straight at Jesus.

21 Then Jesus said to them, “What you have just heard me read has come true today.” Luke 4:16-21 CEV

Jesus read these same words from Isaiah when he proclaimed the Gospel for the first time In Nazareth. God has sent us a light into the world to proclaim that God cares about Justice. He also warned his followers, and us, not to hide that light under a basket.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard
Larry Eastwood
Leslie Eastwood

Sarah Jordan
Mac McAfee
Rachel Newman

Kenneth Stevens
Patricia Stevens
Sam Richardson

Judy Richardson
Charles Wilson

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

February 15th Sermon: Images. Scripture shares the Gospel in words, in feelings and in images. The story of the Transfiguration provides many images related to the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. My texts are 2 Kings 2:1-12 and Mark 9:2-9.

February 21st: Sermon: **God and Evolution. Science and Faith.** Note the use of the Conjunction "And." One idea does not exclude the other. My texts are John 1:1-5 and Genesis 1.

Worship Leader's Schedule

February 15

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**
Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**
Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **Ushers**

February 22

Linda Robinson, **Liturgist**
Cherry Klein & Pat Moran, **Greeters**
Herb Haynes & Sam Richardson, **Ushers**

Announcements

The **Men's** group is planning a pancake breakfast on **Valentine's Day this Saturday, February 14.**

Breakfast will be served between the hours of **8:00 AM and 10:00 AM.** Please add this event to your "Must Attend" calendar.

February Birthdays

Donnie Hartsock, Joyce Edwards, Bert Winton, Maurice Edwards, Jeanne Rybolt, Patricia Stevens, Rodger Klein, Eric Crowell

Happy Birthday to each of you!