



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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July 15, 2015

## Start With Love and Work Your Way Out From There Part Two

<sup>13</sup> *And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.  
1 Corinthians 13:1 NRSV*

*To recap from last week:* In the Disciple Class three weeks ago I told the class that, “When you feel you have lost your way in any of Paul’s letters, go back and reread First Corinthians 13 and work your way out from there, seeking to see the confusing text through the Lens of Love that Paul describes.” Paul’s letters were written to the very first Christians. Very few had been baptized by the time Paul started preaching and many had questions about how Christian faith should affect their lives. Paul was seeking to explain to those early Christians what it meant to live as a Christian.

Last week I reviewed the core of Pauline theology that is built around the concept of Christian community as the Body of Christ. I now will look closely at Paul’s understanding of Christian love.

Paul’s understanding of Christian love was developed in Judaism. The model of love in Judaism is based upon *Hesed*, the Hebrew word for the steadfast undeserved love that God bears for humanity. *Hesed* does not depend upon the behavior of the other person. It is an unreserved concern for the wellbeing and welfare of another. The Greek word associated with this type of love is *Agape*.

Paul begins chapter 13 by describing *Hesed*, *Agape*, steadfast love as the mortar that binds Christianity together and the thing that gives meaning to everything we do:

*If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.  
13:1*

Some people in Paul’s Churches prided themselves on their skills in rhetoric, a highly valued skill in Hellenistic society. Others prided themselves on their ability to speak in tongues, the “language of the angels,” which was thought to be a gift of the Holy Spirit. But, says Paul, words in any language are meaningless unless they are motivated by steadfast love.

<sup>2</sup> *And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 13:2.*

Prophecy in this context can be thought of as inspiration by God to speak for God. Such people were the preachers in the Church. Likewise, people who were educated in the sciences of the day, the philosophy of the day, were held in high esteem. Greek culture conferred honor on those who were educated. People of notable faith would also have been respected. But, says Paul, if they do not have steadfast love for others, all their inspired words, all they know and all the faith they have is worthless.

<sup>3</sup> *If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast,<sup>a</sup> but do not have love, I gain nothing. 13.3*

Charity, being generous with God's Blessings toward those in need, is central to Jewish and Christian Theology. Sacrificing your own life so that another might live was also viewed as the ultimate act of altruism. But, while these acts might well help others, there is no benefit for the actor if they are undertaken without steadfast love.

<sup>4</sup> *Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant<sup>5</sup> or rude. 13.4*

Paul then proceeds to describe the nature of *Hesed, Agape*, of steadfast love. These should all be viewed within the context of human interaction within the Church and then interaction with those outside the Church. Paul begins with *patience*. It is easy to want to push things in the direction we want them to go; to push people in the direction we want them to go. Yet, our lack of patience can keep us from considering all aspects of a problem. Our impatience can blind us to other needs going unmet or to damage being caused by what we are pressing be done. Patience does not mean never hurrying. It does not mean refusing to act. But it speaks to deliberate action with due regard to the effects our actions will have on others.

*Kindness.* We have a choice in the way we accomplish a task. We can do so without regard to how we affect others or we can act in ways that cause as little harm as possible.

*Envy, boastfulness, arrogance and rude conduct.* It is easy to want to act in a way that brings down someone we envy. Envy is recognized as a major motivator of wrongful conduct in the Ten Commandments where it is spoken of as covetousness. Likewise, being boastful or arrogant in our actions is mere self-aggrandizement. Rude conduct is done to deliberately humiliate another or with complete disregard for the feelings of another. In each case you might be accomplishing something that needs to be done but, because of your lack of love, you are damaging the Body of Christ.

*It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. 13:5-6*

*Insisting on your own way.* Often we believe that we know the best way to accomplish something and any other result must be wrong. But, if we are honest with ourselves, we know that there are often multiple ways to accomplish the same task. Sometimes it is even better that another be allowed to do something in a way that might not be the most efficient so that person can learn and grow. Insisting on our own way can also be a form of arrogance.

*Irritation and resentment.* Irritation and resentment often derive from our failure to get our own way or from our envy of another's achievement. Both emotions cloud our thinking and sour our relationships with those around us. In a real sense, they poison our soul and damage the Body of Christ.

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<sup>a</sup> Other ancient authorities read *body to be burned*

*Rejoicing in wrongdoing and deceit.* This is aimed at those who believe that the ends justifies the means and that the truth should be suppressed. For instance, I believe that it is long past time for governmental entities to stop using the Confederate Battle Flag. It became the standard of the segregationist movement in the 1950s and the government, that represents all people, should not be supporting its use. But, I cannot applaud unlawful efforts to stop individuals or stores from using, displaying or selling that symbol. In our nation we acknowledge other's right of free expression. Likewise, I would never burn a United States flag and I believe it wrong to do so. But, I cannot deny that it is a form of protest speech. Nor can I deny the truth that this nation has done things that are deserving of protest. In the Church, moving abusing clergy persons away from their current victims without addressing the conduct or confronting the truth of what happened caused irreparable damage to the Church. Steadfast love demands that I care about the means that are used to accomplish a "good" and that I look unflinchingly at what has happened. Failure to acknowledge the truth of our sin means it can never be dealt with or forgiven. We cannot repent of something which we will not acknowledge is a sin.

*<sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

Each of these clauses has an unstated object that reads, "*for the love of others.*" Each day we must decide what burdens we will bear, what we will believe, what we hope for and what we are willing to endure. Paul insists that we look beyond ourselves when we make those decisions. In our lives as the Body of Christ we are called to look always to the welfare of the whole. Stating these ideas in the affirmative they could read: *I will bear the burden of these things for the love of others. I will believe these things for the love of others and act on those beliefs. I will hope for these things for the love of others and nurture these hopes. I will endure these things for the love of others.*

Whenever I open a meeting, or a bible study, I always pray that "*the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts will be pleasing in God's sight.*" My prayer is that we will always conduct ourselves in the church in ways that reflect our steadfast love for one another.

## **Congratulations To The Disciple I Class**

On July 9<sup>th</sup> the Disciple I class completed its study of the Bible. Over 34 weeks, beginning last September, these people have read and studied the Bible from Genesis to Revelation:

Jason Aldred  
Lindsey Aldred  
Jan Bell  
Stacy Bell  
Houston Hartsock  
Dawn Stevens  
Richard Stevens

For almost 30 years Disciple Bible Study has helped tens of thousands of United Methodists, as well as people of other traditions, to develop a deep understanding of scripture and its meaning in our daily lives. Disciple Bible Study challenges us to hear the Living Word of God for our lives and then to live that Word. Please congratulate these bible on their faithful study of the scriptures and also ask them how the experience has affected their lives.

## The Poverty and Justice Bible

<sup>9</sup> *The LORD God said: You leaders of Israel have robbed and cheated my people long enough! I want you to stop sinning and start doing what is right and fair. You must never again force my people off their own land. I, the LORD, have spoken.* <sup>10</sup> *So from now on, you must use honest weights and measures.*

*Ezekiel 45:9-10 CEV*

Here Ezekiel comes back to a theme that we've seen before and one that will be repeated by later prophets. The "Biblical Standard" or "Biblical Definition" of how we are to live together is founded in fair dealing in all aspects of life. It is wrong for the government to act in ways that deprive others of their property and it is wrong for business people to engage in practices that cheat the people.

<sup>31</sup> *After Judas had gone, Jesus said:*

*Now the Son of Man will be given glory, and he will bring glory to God.* <sup>32</sup> *Then, after God is given glory because of him, God will bring glory to him, and God will do it very soon.*

<sup>33</sup> *My children, I will be with you for a little while longer. Then you will look for me, but you won't find me. I tell you just as I told the people, "You cannot go where I am going."* <sup>34</sup> *But I am giving you a new command. You must love each other, just as I have loved you.* <sup>35</sup> *If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples.* *John 13:31-35*

The Love for one another that Jesus is calling for is the type of love being spoken of by Ezekiel when he demands justice from the government or business people, or the Apostle Paul when he insists that we act in love. Steadfast Love for one another, concern for the well being of others, is at the heart of the Gospel found throughout the bible.

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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**

**July 19<sup>th</sup>: Where is the Healing?** Miracle healings. They are a staple of the Bible. Where are they when we need them? My texts are Ephesians 2:11–22 and Mark 6:30–34; 53-56.

**July 26<sup>th</sup>: You Feed Them.** But that would require a miracle, wouldn't it? My texts are Ephesians 3:14-21 and John 6:1-21

### **Worship Leader's Schedule**

#### **July 19**

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **Greeters**

Sam Richardson & Larry Eastwood, **Ushers**

#### **July 26**

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

### **Announcements**

**VBS "Journey off the Map" will be held July 20-23 (Monday through Thursday) evenings from 5:30 to 7:30.** Please make your friends, neighbors and families aware of this enriching and fun event!

**Here is the list of items that church members can donate for our VBS mission Project Backpack.**

1 and 2 inch 3 ring binders

Composition notebooks (any color)

Crayola colored pencils

3x5 index cards

Please bring your contributions to fellowship hall and place them in the labeled receptacle. Thank you so much for your contributions!

The **“Companions in Christ”** Sunday School class will be starting 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.

The **Men’s group** will meet **Saturday, July 25 at 8:30 AM.** All men are encouraged to attend.

### **July Birthdays**

**Mac McAfee, Leslie Eastwood, Linda Robinson, Renita Hartsock**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**