



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Start With Love and Work Your Way Out From There Part One

*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.
1 Corinthians 13:1 NRSV*

In the course of the Disciple Class two weeks ago I said something that I knew to be true, and even practiced, but that I don't think I had ever stated before as a principle of biblical study. After reflection I thought there might be value in sharing it.

We were talking about the letters written by the Apostle Paul. These letters have always caused controversy in the Church and were even used by Paul's enemies to undermine his ministry. Paul probably wrote Romans, in part, to clear up misconceptions about his theology based on skewed readings of his letter to the Galatians. The writer of Second Peter perhaps says it best:

*... So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,¹⁶ speaking of this as he does in all his letters. **There are some things in them [the letters] hard to understand,** which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.¹⁷ You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, **beware** that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability.
2 Peter 3:15b-17 NRSV (Emphasis added.)*

As early as the late First Century Christians were struggling with some of what Paul had written.

In the Disciple class we were talking about how easy it is to become confused by some of Paul's letters. 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.

Paul's principle theological insight regarding the Church and how it is to live comes in 1 Corinthians 12:27:

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Paul was part of the People of Israel, a people with 2000 years of history and tradition binding them together. Paul understood the importance of community to the life of the People of Israel. But how best to convey that sense of community to people from different cultures and traditions? Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit Paul articulated that which binds all Christians together. We have, through the power of the Holy Spirit, been forged into the Body of Christ, the living presence of Christ on Earth.

Paul builds his foundation for this theology from the very beginning of First Corinthians where he uses the name of Christ ten times in the first ten verses. He wants his people to know that, first and foremost, the Church is about Christ. He builds on their understanding of having been baptized in the name of Christ and sharing in Christ through the observance of the Lord's Supper. Some of the words Paul uses in First Corinthians are used every time we celebrate the Lord's Supper:

*²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. **Do** this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. **Do** this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NRSV

¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 NRSV

Paul then explains that one takes the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner" when one fails to discern the presence of the Body of Christ in the Lord's Supper. *1 Corinthians 11:27-31*. Given what has preceded this passage I believe Paul is speaking of both the Spiritual Presence of Christ in the celebration of the Lord's Supper and the Body of Christ, the Church, that the Spirit has created.

Paul finishes building his theology of the Church as the Body of Christ with his discussion of the many "parts," i.e. individuals, making up the Body of Christ. We all have different gifts and talents and each of us has something to contribute. Everyone is needed and no one has the right to exclude another with the proclamation that they are not needed. But, this careful theology that Paul has built will fall apart under the pressures of jealousy, disagreement and discontent unless the people are bound together. Paul tells the Church at Corinth that the mortar that binds them together is Love. Then, in some of the most moving passages of scripture, Paul describes what he means by Love in Chapter 13.

Next week we look closer at the Lens of Love that Paul insists we use when we deal with one another in the Church. It is this Lens of Love that helps us understand scripture and which allows us to see the world as Christ sees it and live in the world as Christ would have us live.

Program and Administrative Council Meeting July 11th, 8:00 AM

The first six months of 2015 have been both exciting and heartbreaking. We've taken in five new members since the last Charge Conference. We had a Valentine's Day Pancake Breakfast. We had a wonderful Lenten Season followed by the celebration of Easter, including an excellent Easter Egg Hunt leading up to a joyful Easter Sunday worship. We celebrated our 150th Anniversary and held a great Fish Fry. All of this in addition to our regular ministries of Sunday School, Choir, 61st Avenue UMC and Sunday worship. We have also mourned the loss of three dear members": Sarah Jordan, Millie Fly and Nanette Noffsinger Crowell.

As we look ahead to this meeting and the rest of the year I would like to repeat the words I spoke on the day we celebrated our anniversary:

As we gather for this anniversary we are very mindful of three people who are not with us. To have lost Sarah Jordan, Millie Fly and Nanette Crowell all within ten days has been the most painful experience of my time as a pastor. Yet, if I step back, I see all those others who have died while I have been your pastor, and I see the shapes of the hundreds who have lived and died over the last 150 years. And, after each death, we have mourned our loss, celebrated the life that was lost, and moved on in the hope offered by the resurrection. For a Christian, death is always followed by resurrection. New life for the departed, and new life for the living.

It is time to move onto our new life without our dear friends. We are about *Living as, and leading others to become, Disciples of Jesus Christ*. Sarah, Millie and Nanette would expect us to begin again.

As we move into the second half of this year there are a number of things to be considered on Saturday:

1. A proposal to build a small playground on our property that could be used by the broader community.
2. Plans/Needs for the up-coming VBS.
3. Setting a date for the Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant (Presently considering December 13th).
4. Setting a date for the Christmas Concert (Lynn has asked for it to held on December 20th to facilitate arranging for musicians.)
5. Reports from Finance and Trustees.
6. Setting a meeting schedule for the rest of the year.

There may be other items that people wish to discuss. I am proposing, however, that come what may, we adjourn at 11:00. I hope to see you all there.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

²¹ Suppose wicked people stop sinning and start obeying my laws and doing right. They won't be put to death. ²² All their sins will be forgiven, and they will live because they did right. ²³ I, the LORD God, don't like to see wicked people die. I enjoy seeing them turn from their sins and live. Ezekiel 18:21-23 CEV

Chapter 18 of Ezekiel begins with a quote of the proverb: "*Sour grapes eaten by parents leave a sour taste in the mouths of their children.*" The theology expressed in the proverb is that God will punish the children for the sins of the parents. Much of Chapter 18 is spent dispelling that theology. The proclamation the Lord gives to Ezekiel is that each person will be judged according to their conduct. Prominent among the type of acts to be judged is refusing to help the poor and cheating the poor. I offer this quote

primarily for verse 23: *I, the LORD God, don't like to see wicked people die. I enjoy seeing them turn from their sins and live.* We are so used to proclamations of God's vengeance that it is good to remind ourselves that the God described in both the Old and New Testaments is a God of Justice AND grace.

⁹ Jesus told a story to some people who thought they were better than others and who looked down on everyone else:

¹⁰ Two men went into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood over by himself and prayed, "God, I thank you that I am not greedy, dishonest, and unfaithful in marriage like other people. And I am really glad that I am not like that tax collector over there.

¹² I go without eating for two days a week, and I give you one tenth of all I earn."

¹³ The tax collector stood off at a distance and did not think he was good enough even to look up toward heaven. He was so sorry for what he had done that he pounded his chest and prayed, "God, have pity on me! I am such a sinner."

¹⁴ Then Jesus said, "When the two men went home, it was the tax collector and not the Pharisee who was pleasing to God. If you put yourself above others, you will be put down. But if you humble yourself, you will be honored." Luke 18:9-14 CEV.

In response to criticism that he shouldn't be consorting with "sinners" Jesus tells the story of the Pharisee and Tax collector. Before condemning the Pharisee, look closely at what he says and ask yourself if his prayer could be yours. Aren't you happy that you are not as he describes? Yet Jesus' point is not that the Pharisee is putting himself above others but rather that, for all his faults, the tax collector acknowledges his sins. By acknowledging his sins he has the potential to repent.

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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

July 12th: Giving God Choices: The Bible was intended, in part, to make us laugh at ourselves. Often, it is only after we laugh at our presumption and foolish behavior that we can clearly see ourselves. The most extreme presumption, the height of our foolishness, is when we come to believe that we know what's best for God. My texts are: Psalms 24 and Acts 1:15-26

July 19th: What Does it Mean to be Lost? Can we be lost and not know it? Can we know exactly where we are and still be lost? My texts are Ephesians 2:11-22 and Mark 6:30-34.

Worship Leader's Schedule

July 12

Rodger Klein, **Liturgist**
 Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**
 Mike & Renee Fetting, **Ushers**

July 19

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**
 Jason & Lindsey Aldred, **Greeters**
 Sam Richardson & Larry Eastwood, **Ushers**

Announcements

VBS "Journey off the Map" will be held July 20-23 (evenings) from 5:30 to 7:30. This Saturday, July 11, we will have a **work session** for decorating. This will be immediately following the Administrative Council meeting. Please join us! We will be working on our "jungle" and "waterfall". Some supplies we need for these scenes: large brown paper grocery sacks, a stack of newspaper. We will be making paper bag "rocks", caterpillars, leaves, paper plate flowers, leaves, trees, leaves. and did I mention leaves?

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 and place them in the labeled receptacle. Thank you so much for your contributions!

The **“Companions in Christ” Sunday School class** has begun a study, “Knowing God.” We have extra books and extra chairs if you would care to join our class. All are welcome at 9:45 each Sunday Morning.

July Birthdays

Mac McAfee, Leslie Eastwood, Linda Robinson, Renita Hartsock

Happy Birthday to each of you!