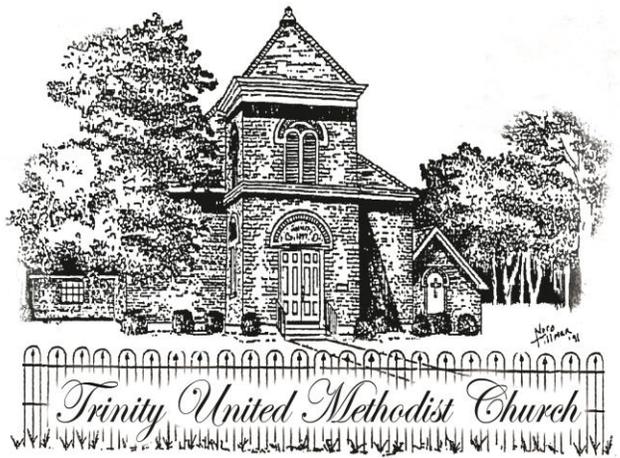




# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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## Lord, Send Us Those People Who Need Christ in Their Lives A Story of conviction

*<sup>2</sup> I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Col 2:2-3 NRSV*

At least since the time of John Wesley, people in the church have used the term “conviction” to describe a personal revelation, an epiphany, that someone needs God in their life. Paul speaks of this concept when he speaks of the “assured understanding” of the Gospel. Most of us have had a number of such experiences. One of mine came during my ministry at West Nashville UMC.

When I was appointed to West Nashville UMC in 2001, I found a church placed on the border line between relative affluence and deep poverty. West Nashville is located on Charlotte Pike. To the South is a library, a pleasant park, and neighborhood with many upwardly mobile people; young professionals with families and above average income. To the North is a neighborhood called “the Nations” which is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Nashville. Sixty-First Avenue UMC is located in the heart of the Nations community. There were also 75 to 100 homeless persons who ‘resided’ in the area for most of their time. There are a number of wooded areas in the vicinity and some of the homeless made camps in this area or tried to find a suitable hidden place in the Park (the Police would run them out of the park if they were spotted there at night.) Others huddled in allies and doorways, including the covered porch of the church.

When I arrived at West Nashville I found a solid community of people who were interested in ministry with the poor. Many of these people lived in the community although some came into the city from as far away as Pegram. However, the Church needed more people and donations if it was to remain in ministry in that neighborhood. Also, the presiding Bishop of the Tennessee conference at that time had each church reporting monthly on the membership of the churches as well as professions of faith.

I was certainly interested in having West Nashville grow in membership and ministry, but it seemed wrong to me to be focused on seeking growth for growth's sake. I did not want to pray to God that God send us people so we could pay the bills, including my own salary. After much reflection I instead focused on what I decided was a suitably pious prayer: “Lord, please send us those people who need Christ in their lives.” Over the next several months, I wore that prayer out.

Shortly after I arrived at West Nashville a parishioner suggested that we renew a ministry that had flourished for a while at the church. It was a weekly community meal. This was a meal open to anyone who wished to come, including the homeless and poorer families in the area. Over time this meal became a blessing to many people in the area. By the time I left West Nashville nine years later it was serving around 150 plates of food a night to around seventy-five people every week. A pantry ministry grew up alongside this ministry, as well as a ministry that provided coats, warm clothes and blankets in the winter months.

I was present at almost every meal, often cooking or serving food. I would also circulate among the people who came, getting to know many of them. It was not unusual for some of these people to seek other help from the church, wanting to speak with me privately about one problem or another. Sometimes there was help that I could offer, but often there was little more I could do for these people.

One night a woman asked to speak with me privately. She had been pointed out to me by others as one of the prostitutes that worked the area. A number of these women were regulars at the Thursday night meal. She might have been as old as thirty but she appeared to be much older than that. When someone asked to speak with me privately I'd ask them to step back into the hall, away from the crowd but in sight of the fellowship hall. Some of the people who came to the meal were most likely dangerous and I did not want to be out of sight of the other volunteers.

This woman's name is lost in my memory, except that I recall it was a 'Southern' name of sorts. I'll call her LuLu. I assumed that she wanted money for rent or utilities, something that we could not provide. Instead she began telling me some of her recent story. She told me that her parental rights for her children had been terminated and she didn't think she'd ever be able to see her children again. She also told me that she had been diagnosed as HIV positive but that it would be at least three months before she could see a specialist for her condition and, even then, she had no idea how she would pay for her medicine. Finally, she was being evicted from the room she rented. She then said these words: "Pastor, I don't know how I can go on like this. I need Jesus in my life."

I stumbled through some prayers with LuLu and she left shortly thereafter. I, however, was aware that I stood convicted by her words. I realized that, despite weeks of "pious" prayer that God should bring us people who needed Christ in their lives, I had, in my heart, been praying that God bring us more of those upwardly mobile, upper middle class families with two and a half kids who could help stabilize the budget of the Church and pay my salary. Instead, God had answered the words I prayed and gone and brought us someone who needed Christ in their life. From that time forward in my ministry at West Nashville I resolved that I would do my best to welcome every person who came to the Church as someone brought to us by God.

On any given day someone new might come to our doors. They might come for a Sunday morning service, for some event, or come seeking assistance. No matter the reason that they come, nor whether we can help them with the particular problem they might present to us, we must make every effort to welcome them in the name of Jesus Christ. Assume that every such person has been sent to us by God who knows that they need Christ in their life.

## 72+U The Mission and Ministry of the Tennessee Conference and Trinity UMC

*After this the Lord appointed [seventy-two] others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Luke 10:1-2*

The mission of the Memphis and Tennessee Conferences of the United Methodist Church is to Discover, Equip, Connect and Send lay and clergy leaders who shape congregations that offer Jesus Christ to a hurting world, one neighborhood at a time. The values underlying this mission are:

Unrelenting love for all people  
Integrity  
Excellence  
Faithfulness and Fruitfulness  
Innovation

Luke 10:1-2 describes the beginning of the first missionary effort of the Disciples of Jesus Christ. Some translations state that Jesus sent forth 70 disciples, others say that he sent forth 72. The Tennessee and Memphis Conferences, under the leadership of Bishop William McAlilly have adopted that scripture as a map for our own mission in our communities. The Bishop has invited us to view our communities as our mission fields, seeking to bring the Gospel to everyone in our communities.

In the coming months I will bring you more information about this mission initiative and how we might be a part of it.

### 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](http://www.Justicebible.org).

*<sup>8</sup>Tell the heavens  
to send down justice  
like showers of rain.  
Prepare the earth  
for my saving power  
to sprout and produce justice  
that I, the LORD, create. Isaiah 45:8 CEV*

Isaiah would have us understand two things about God's Justice. First, God's Justice is like a force of nature. It cannot be stopped any more than can the rain. Moreover, God's Justice promotes the growth of God's Justice, just as rain promotes the growth of plants. Isaiah invites us to call for the Justice of God.

<sup>2</sup> Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, <sup>4</sup> they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. <sup>5</sup> Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" <sup>6</sup> They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup> And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground.<sup>r</sup> <sup>9</sup> When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. <sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" <sup>11</sup> She said, "No one sir."<sup>s</sup> And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again." John 8:2-11 CEV

Jesus also invites us to consider the nature of God's justice. Many Christians seem eager to call down the "justice" of God with regard to things they believe are wrong in our society. Yet Jesus invites us to consider the full nature and scope of God's justice which acknowledges that only God is righteous; only God is without blame.

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<sup>r</sup> Other ancient authorities add *the sins of each of them*

<sup>s</sup> Or *Lord*

## Prayer Ministry

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

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	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

March 8th: Sermon: **Things Human and Things Divine**. What does it mean to focus on the divine instead of the human? My texts are Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 and Mark 8:31-38.

March 15<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: **God So Loved...** Although many people are fond of quoting John 3:16, do we truly believe in God's Love? My texts are Ephesians 2:1-10 and John 3:14-21.

## Worship Leader's Schedule

### March 8

Houston Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Larry Eastwood & Sam Richardson, **Greeters**

Elaine & Mike Rohrig, **Ushers**

**March 15**

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

**Announcements**

The ladies of the church (UMW) will be meeting **Tuesday, March 10 at 6:00 PM.** We will meet at church to discuss our 150<sup>th</sup> year quilt. You will learn where we are in the planning and more importantly how you can be involved in the next steps. You will be excited to see and hear what we're doing! Please let Dana know if you plan to attend so that she can plan the food. ([dbsquare@aol.com](mailto:dbsquare@aol.com)) or call 615-791-4577 (home phone).

**March Birthdays**

**Pat Moran, Marty Bauguess, Tom Moore, Jeff McKernan, Herb Haynes, Eva Fetting**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**