



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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But It Says So Right Here!

⁶ Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. ⁷ For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸ and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. ⁹ This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. ¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. ¹¹ For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work.

2 Thessalonians 3:6-11 NRSV

Some people never grow tired of some scriptures. Most notable are those dealing with homosexuality, marriage, capital punishment, lakes of fire and the words of Jesus that “the poor will always be with us.” In an earlier time the passages telling slaves to be happy in their slavery were also popular. These passages are usually used as clubs to beat people down. But a closer look at these scriptures might cause some to stop quoting them. For instance, in Matthew 26:11 Jesus tells his disciples

¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me... NRSV

This passage is often used by people to justify not helping the poor, apparently on the theory it is a useless practice; sort of like ladling the ocean with a tea spoon. However, as he so often did, Jesus was quoting the Torah, the Law. In Deuteronomy 15:11 we find the following:

¹¹ Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, “Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.” NRSV

Rather than a statement of futility it is an affirmation of the obligation of those with the resources to help the poor. Jesus was not commanding his disciples to ignore the poor, but he was admonishing them that his time with them was limited.

A favorite passage of the Apostle Paul that is often hauled out to beat the poor is the passage from Second Thessalonians quoted above. When used, the assumption seems to be that anyone receiving public assistance in this nation is not working. In actuality, according to census data, around 60% of people receiving food stamp assistance and able to work (i.e. not disabled, not children and not elderly) were working. You

might remember the story over the last year of companies who had web sites advising their employees how to get welfare assistance. In fact, in 2013 approximately \$100 million in food stamps were redeemed on military bases by military families. We are asking our soldiers to die for us but we are not paying our soldiers enough to support their families.

Still, 2 Thessalonians clearly says that “the idle” should go hungry. Or does it? Recall that what we read in our bibles are translations of documents written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. In this case, the word translated as “idleness” in newer translations was translated another way in the King James Version. Where the NRSV and other modern translations say: ¹¹ *For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work...*, the King James Version translated the passage this way:

¹¹ *For we hear that there are some which walk among you **disorderly**, working not at all, but are busybodies.*

And, in fact, the Greek word being translated here (*ataktos*) means “without order” or “disorderly,” not “idle.” The Greek passage actually uses a play on words that could be literally translated, “some people are being disorderly, not working but working around.” ¹ In other words, Paul has directed the community to conduct itself in a particular manner, but there are those who are not doing what he ordered. They are being disorderly, “playing at working” or involving themselves in the business of others. Paul was preaching an apocalyptic theology that predicted the imminent return of Christ. Most likely these disorderly people have decided that, since the end of time has arrived, there is no point in working at mundane jobs and are instead preaching about the coming judgment and waiting for the end rather than doing their work. This was causing a disruption in the ministries of the Church that Paul wanted to address.

Still, I suppose that someone could say that I am merely playing with a passage that I don’t like and that Paul really had no concern for those in need. However, Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians makes it clear that he did have a very strong concern for those in need. In Chapter 8 Paul is admonishing the Church at Corinth to be generous in giving to assist the Church in Jerusalem and its people:

¹³ *I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between* ¹⁴ *your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance.* ¹⁵ *As it is written,*
“The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little.” 2 Corinthians 8:13-15 NRSV.

Paul never abandoned the concept that the Body of Christ was called to share its blessings with those in need. Paul believed, as a Jew, that those with blessings needed to “open their hands to the poor and needy” and he preached it as a Christian.

Always be careful when you find yourself swinging a club composed of scripture. Look again. The Gospel is supposed to be Good News, not a club.

One Hundred and Fifty Years Living As The Body of Christ

As many of you already know, we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of Trinity UMC on June 13th and 14th. People are already beginning to work on the celebration but we need your help.

¹ Gaventa, B. R. (1998). *First and Second Thessalonians* (pp. 128–129). Louisville, KY: John Knox Press.

Please talk to Cheryl Wilson, Nancy Conway or Jeanne Rybolt about ways that you would like to help and to see if they have tasks that you hadn't considered. *In particular, we need someone who would be willing to help produce and edit a media presentation of peoples' recollections and experiences at Trinity in recent years and in years past.* If you would like to be a part of that effort, please contact Rev. Meaker.

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.

⁵ I will keep you safe only if you change your ways. Be fair and honest with each other. ⁶ Stop taking advantage of foreigners, orphans, and widows. Don't kill innocent people. Jeremiah 7:5-6 CEV

Jeremiah was speaking to Jerusalem at a time when it was threatened by conquest. The people had convinced themselves that God would spare the city for the sake of the Temple. But Jeremiah, speaking for God, makes it clear that God is expecting his people to live according to his law. That law called for fair dealing with all people, even foreigners

³⁷ He said to him, " 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus summed up the "Law and the Prophets." That person you are trying to hurt, or whose despair you are avoiding seeing, is your neighbor.

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

May 10th: Sermon: You Don't Have to Believe That Everything in the Bible Should Be Taken Literally. The Bible can become something we worship. That should not happen. The bible is a means of hearing the Word of God for our lives. My texts are Luke 1:1-4 and 2 Timothy 3:14-17.

May 17th: Sermon: To be Christian, You Must Believe in Christ. Seems straight-forward. My texts are Matthew 16:13-19 and John 1:1-5.

Worship Leader's Schedule

May 10

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**

Larry Eastwood & Sam Richardson, **Ushers**

May 17

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

Announcements

"Companions in Christ" Sunday school class has begun a new study. Adam Hamilton is a pastor and Christian author who has written a number of books, some of which we have studied previously. Our current study is an effort to make sense of God's will. Some of the questions we are discussing are, "Why do the innocent suffer," "Why do my prayers go unanswered," "Why can't I see God's will for my life?" and "Why God's love prevails."

We meet at 9:45 AM in the adult Sunday school room. Everyone is welcome to join us as we enjoy fellowship and study together.

Please sign up to be host/hostess for the first Sunday meal. The sign-up list is on the bulletin board. It would be very helpful if each month could be filled in.

Our church will be serving and providing food at **61st Avenue United Methodist Church Saturday, May 23**. If you are able to volunteer, please see Charles Wilson.

May Birthdays

Tommy Cotton, Sam Richardson, Jim Winton

Happy Birthday to each of you!