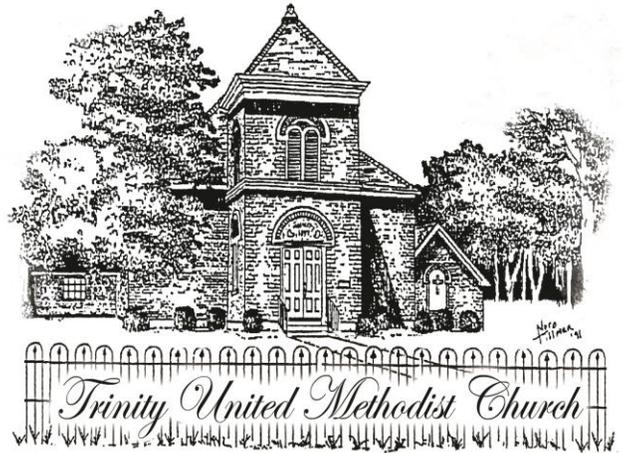




Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



2084 Wilson Pike · Franklin, TN 37067 · 615.794.2665
Pastor Dennis Meaker: 615.794.2665 · djmeaker@gmail.com

October 7, 2015

Baptism Part One: The Theology

*¹⁹ Go therefore and make **disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... Matthew 28:19 NRSV*

During the worship service at Charge Conference this past week Allen Black, the District Superintendent, preached a sermon about baptism. Since it's been a while since I have addressed that topic in the Newsletter I thought I'd take the next two weeks to review the United Methodists beliefs concerning Baptism. This week I'll discuss the theology of Baptism and next week we'll look at the Covenant of Baptism used in the United Methodist Church.

In the United Methodist tradition Baptism is considered a sacrament. A sacrament is an outward sign of the inward working of the grace of God.¹ United Methodists recognize two sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. In contrast, Catholicism recognizes seven sacraments.

The essential aspect of Christian Baptism is the recognition of adoption by God and the start of a new life in Christ. This can be seen in the accounts of Jesus' baptism. For example, Mark 1.4 states:

⁴ John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

John's baptism was not Christian Baptism but rather a baptism of repentance. John was calling on people to repent of their sins: to turn their lives back to God. As a symbol of their promise to repent, John baptized. A symbolic washing away of sin or impurity was a common practice in First Century Judaism. However, when Jesus is baptized something new takes place:

¹ By "God's Grace" I mean the unearned and transforming love of God.

⁹ *In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.* ¹⁰ *And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.* ¹¹ *And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."*

God took part in the Baptism of Jesus, conferring the Holy Spirit upon him and claiming him as his son. Similarly, we consider baptism to be a sign of God's adoption of the person being baptized. The Apostle Paul expressed it this way:

¹⁵ *For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!"* ¹⁶ *it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God,* ¹⁷ *and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him. Romans 8:15-17 NRSV*

We have been adopted by God and are heirs to God's Kingdom. Because we believe that God is involved in the sacrament of Baptism we recognize all Christian baptisms, even if a particular Christian tradition would not recognize a baptism that took place in the United Methodist Church.² For the same reason, we do not re-baptize. Re-baptism suggests that God may not have "gotten it right" the first time. We do have a liturgy that invites us to remember our baptism and allows us to reaffirm our baptismal vows.

Baptism is also a rite of initiation into the Church. Again, from the United Methodist perspective, initiation in the Church is incorporation into the Body of Christ by an act of God's grace. In First Corinthians 12:12-23 Paul describes it this way:

¹² *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.* ¹³ *For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

Paul spends most of First Corinthians reminding the Corinthians that they are the Body of Christ, made so by the Spirit of God.

What about the baptism of infants and those who cannot answer for themselves? This is a dispute as old as the church. It is certain that, in the first century, whole families including children, servants and slaves were baptized when the head of the family was baptized. As time went on, some church leaders began to question baptizing persons who could not make the baptismal vows for themselves.

Some traditions don't view Baptism as a sacrament. They do not believe that the Grace of God is at work in Baptism. For them Baptism is solely a rite of initiation into the Church. The emphasis is not on the Act of God adopting the person but on the commitment made by the person being baptized. For that reason they object to baptizing those who cannot answer for themselves, especially infants.

United Methodists baptize infants because we believe that God has already claimed that infant as God's own. The infant is part of the Church and will be raised in the church. When an infant is baptized every person in the Church, including the guardians of the child, covenant to raise the child in the church, to nurture the faith

² It should be noted here that we do not recognize the baptism of the Mormon Church. Even if the baptism is in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit it is not intended to be Christian Baptism. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is not a Christian tradition.

of the child and help them come to the point in their lives when they can profess their faith for themselves. We celebrate the profession of faith by someone baptized as an infant as Confirmation of their faith. When an adult is baptized Baptism and Confirmation takes place at the same time.

Another dispute that goes back to the very beginning of the Church is that of how the water of Baptism is to be used. Because the sacrament of Baptism celebrates something that God has already done in the life of the person being baptized it makes no difference if the person is immersed in water, if the water is poured over their head or if the water is sprinkled over them. The water is merely a symbol of God's Grace. To suggest otherwise is to claim that there is something that a human being could do to prevent the operation of God's Grace. Baptism is not a prerequisite for salvation. Salvation is an act of God and always under the control of God. However, United Methodists will baptize by immersion, pouring or sprinkling, depending upon the desires of the person being baptized and the available facilities.

Next week I'll review the vows we make when we baptize.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

We have begun our Thursday morning Bible Study on Thursday mornings between 10:00 and 11:30. Everyone is welcome to attend. It has been my practice to allow the group to decide what parts of the bible they wish to study. We have concluded our study of Mark and have begun a study of Matthew.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

Jonah was really upset and angry. ² So he prayed:

Our LORD, I knew from the very beginning that you wouldn't destroy Nineveh. That's why I left my own country and headed for Spain. You are a kind and merciful God, and you are very patient. You always show love, and you don't like to punish anyone, not even foreigners.

³ Now let me die! I'd be better off dead. Jonah 4:1-3 CEV

Jonah is a mirror for our times. Jonah is the reluctant prophet to the people of Nineveh. He would have been glad to preach doom and destruction to Nineveh except for one thing. He knew that, if the people of Nineveh repented God would forgive them. And that is what happened. Now Jonah is disgusted because God loves not only Jonah but also the people Jonah hates. There are many in the country today who have little use for those who are different or those who were not born here. There is real hate being expressed against immigrants in many quarters. How often do we end up being angry at the thought that God loves not only us, but those we hate?

³⁶ Then Jesus asked, "Which one of these three people was a real neighbor to the man who was beaten up by robbers?"

*³⁷ The teacher answered, "The one who showed pity."
Jesus said, "Go and do the same!" Luke 10:36-37 NRSV*

Jesus provides a variation of the Jonah story in the story of the Good Samaritan. Samaritans and Jews despised one another. In telling this story Jesus describes a situation that was unthinkable to his audience. A hated Samaritan comes to the aid of a Jew. When Jesus asks, "Which of these three was a real neighbor," the

man answering cannot even bring himself to say the word Samaritan. Jesus invites us to consider the Kingdom of God where our worst enemy turns out to be our savior.

=====

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

October 11th: Sermon: The Scariest Words in Scripture. Although we don't like to admit it, these words of Jesus haunt us. Can Jesus be serious? My texts are Psalm 22:1-15 and Mark 10:17-31.

October 18th: Sermon: Reporting For Duty. Too often we convince ourselves that we know what's best; what needs to be done. We wonder why God hasn't taken care of things our way. My texts are Hebrews 7:23–28 and Mark 10:46–52.

Worship Leader's Schedule

October 11

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Mike & Renee Fetting, **Greeters**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Ushers**

October 18

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Jan & Stacy Bell, **Ushers**

Announcements

The **UMW** will meet **Tuesday evening, October 13**. We will enjoy dinner, business and fellowship. All ladies are invited to attend.

The "**Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ**" Sunday School class is studying, "**Serving God.**" We have extra books and extra chairs if you would care to join our class. **The class begins promptly at 9:45.** All are welcome to this time of learning and fellowship.

A Scattering of the Ashes Ceremony for Nanette Noffsinger Crowell will be held at Burke Hollow **Saturday, October 17 at 3:00 p.m.** The family is inviting the Trinity UMC congregation to be a part of this ceremony as we gather to share memories and to carry out Nanette's final request.

Laity Sunday 2015 will be Sunday, October 25. This is the Sunday that calls the Church to celebrate the ministry of Christians of all ages in the home, workplace, congregation, community and in the world. Worship will be led by the "laity". Please plan to attend this special time of worship.

There is an opportunity to serve at **61st St. United Methodist Church Saturday, November 7**. Volunteers are needed to serve the evening meal and to enjoy worship after dinner. Fellowship takes place before and during dinner. Please make Charles Wilson aware if you are available for this opportunity.

Birthdays

Elaine Rohrig Julia Moore, Jan Strait, Reba Collier

Happy Birthday to each of you!