



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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John Wesley “On the Trinity”

⁷ For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. 1 John 5:7 KJV

John Wesley was what some call a practical theologian. By that I mean that the theology he preached and practiced was a theology that was meant to be lived out in day to day life and one that was readily understood by those to whom he preached. This is in contrast to other theologians like Luther or Calvin, or the early church Fathers like Augustine who wrote essays and books attempting to describe the nature of God, salvation and divine providence. Wesley rarely spoke in metaphysical terms. This practical approach to theology is evident in his sermon, “On the Trinity” written in 1775. Wesley tells his parishioners that the doctrine of the Trinity is laid out in scripture. Although he does not mention it, it was also laid out in the Articles of Religion of the Church of England. However, he points out the folly that often follows when human beings attempt to capture the nature of God in such words as “person” or even Father, Son and Spirit. His basic instruction to his audience is to believe in the Trinity even though they do not understand the Trinity.

“But,” says his audience, “How can we believe in that which we cannot understand?” Wesley’s sermon then focuses on that question and, in so doing, gives us a fascinating picture of the mind of John Wesley and the breadth of his knowledge of the sciences. Wesley points out that people “believe in” or accept many things that they do not understand. He begins by pointing out that people believe in the existence of the Sun without understanding much of anything about it. In the process he references the works of Ptolemy, Tycho Brahe and Copernicus:

To begin with the latter: You do already believe many things which you cannot comprehend. For you believe there is a sun over your head. But whether he stands still in the midst of his system, or not only revolves on his own axis, but rejoiceth as a giant to run his course; you cannot comprehend either one or the other: How he moves, or how he rests. By what power, what natural, mechanical power, is he upheld in the fluid either? You cannot deny the fact: Yet you cannot account for it, so as you satisfy any rational inquirer. You may indeed give us the hypothesis of Ptolemy, Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, and twenty more. I have read them over and over: I am sick of them; I care not three straws for them all. Each new solution but once more affords New change of

terms, and scaffolding of words: In other garb my question I receive, And take my doubt the very same I gave. Still I insist, the fact you believe, you cannot deny; but the manner you cannot comprehend.

Wesley then starts speaking of the nature of light itself, referencing early efforts at measuring the speed of light. The speed of light was not measured until almost 100 years later but it is apparent that Wesley had read about early efforts to measure it, resulting in a close approximation, as well as scientific speculation about the nature of light:

You believe there is such a thing as light, whether flowing from the sun, or any other luminous body; but you cannot comprehend either its nature or the manner wherein it flows. How does it move from Jupiter to the earth in eight minutes; two hundred thousand miles in a moment? How do the rays of the candle, brought into the room, instantly disperse into every corner? Again: Here are three candles, yet there is but one light. I explain this, and I will explain the Three-One God.

Wesley then moved on to the nature of the air we breathe:

*You believe there is such a thing as air. It both covers you as a garment, and,
Wide interfused,
Embraces round this florid earth.*

But can you comprehend how? Can you give me a satisfactory account of its nature, or the cause of its properties? Think only of one, its elasticity: Can you account for this? It may be owing to electric fire attached to each particle of it; it may not; and neither you nor I can tell. But if we will not breathe it till we can comprehend it, our life is very near its period.

Note his speculation about the role of electricity “attached to each particle” of air. Wesley was fascinated by electricity and had conducted some experiments with electricity.

Wesley uses several other examples of belief in things that we do not understand and then finishes with what is then known about human physiology:

I bring but one instance more: At the command of your soul, your hand is lifted up. But who is able to account for this? For the connexion between the act of the mind, and the outward actions? Nay, who can account for muscular motion at all; in any instance of it whatever? When one of the most ingenious Physicians in England had finished his lecture upon that head, he added, Now, gentlemen, I have told you all the discoveries of our enlightened age; and now, if you understand one jot of the matter, you understand more than I do.” The short of the matter is this: Those who will not believe anything but what they can comprehend, must not believe that there is a sun in the firmament; that there is light shining around them; that there is air, though it encompasses them on every side; that there is any earth, though they stand upon it. They must not believe they have a soul; no, nor that they have a body.

Wesley was a biblical scholar and had read extensively about Christian history and theology. However, he was also highly educated and likely a genius. He spoke and wrote in English, French, Greek, German and Latin. He was knowledgeable about history and about the cultures that England had encountered. He wrote about the economics of his country, about the problems and effects of trade and about the political and cultural aspects of the world as he knew them. In short, he did not limit his learning to what was contained in the bible.

I find this sermon illuminating in light of the discussions still taking place among some Christians in the United States. Too many seem willing to write off any body of knowledge that challenges their understanding

of scripture. Too many seem to prefer to remain ignorant of other cultures, customs and other religions. Wesley offers a model of a Christian who is not threatened by either scientific research or cultures and ideas that are new to him. We would do well to emulate his approach in our dealings with our world.

Charge Conference

It's that time of the year again. For those of you new to the United Methodist Church, a 'Charge' is a Church or group of Churches under the leadership of an appointed pastor. All members of a Charge are responsible for its governance. To appreciate how deeply the concept touches Methodist polity and practice, turn to UMH 413, *A Charge to Keep I Have*. This hymn was written by Charles Wesley in 1762. The Charge Conference, made up of the pastor, lay leadership and members, is to meet at least once a year in a meeting chaired by the District Superintendent. It is at this meeting that the Pastor's compensation is set and the leadership for the coming year is approved.

In years past the District Superintendent has come to each Charge to hold this conference. This year the Columbia District will be meeting in clusters. Our cluster is made up of ten Charges. There will be separate sessions for each Church and a joint worship service for all the churches in the cluster. The cluster that includes Trinity will meet at Epworth UMC on October 4th. Our business meeting is scheduled from 5:15 to 5:30. There will be a joint worship service from 4:00 to 5:00. I encourage everyone who is available to attend the worship service and the separate business meeting.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

We have begun our Thursday morning Bible Study on Thursday mornings between 10:00 and 11:30. Anyone is welcome to attend. It has been my practice to allow the group to decide what parts of the bible they wish to study. Based upon the requests I have received we have begun a study of the Gospel of Mark.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

⁴You people crush those in need and wipe out the poor.

⁵You say to yourselves, "How much longer before the end of the New Moon Festival? When will the Sabbath be over?"

Our wheat is ready, and we want to sell it now. We can't wait to cheat and charge high prices for the grain we sell. We will use dishonest scales

⁶and mix dust in the grain. Those who are needy and poor don't have any money.

We will make them our slaves for the price of a pair of sandals."

Amos 8:4-6 CEV

Like many of the prophets before him, Amos spoke against false piety. Here he described business people who want the religious festivals and Sabbath celebrations to be over so that they can get back to business. But the business they want to get back to is cheating their customers, especially the poor who had little or no recourse to the courts. While focusing on the form of religion, the business people are indifferent to the commandments against lying, cheating and stealing, as well as the commandments to be merciful to the poor.

One Sabbath, Jesus and his disciples were walking through some wheat fields. His disciples were hungry and began picking and eating grains of wheat. ² Some Pharisees noticed this and said to Jesus, “Why are your disciples picking grain on the Sabbath? They are not supposed to do that!”

³ Jesus answered:

You surely must have read what David did when he and his followers were hungry. ⁴ He went into the house of God, and then they ate the sacred loaves of bread that only priests are supposed to eat. ⁵ Haven’t you read in the Law of Moses that the priests are allowed to work in the temple on the Sabbath? But no one says that they are guilty of breaking the law of the Sabbath. ⁶ I tell you that there is something here greater than the temple. ⁷ Don’t you know what the Scriptures mean when they say, “Instead of offering sacrifices to me, I want you to be merciful to others?” If you knew what this means, you would not condemn these innocent disciples of mine. ⁸ So the Son of Man is Lord over the Sabbath. Matthew 12:1-8 CEV

Jesus and his disciples are challenged by the Pharisees for breaking the Sabbath. Like Amos, Jesus reminds them that the core of the Law is respect and concern for your fellow man.

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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

September 26th: Sermon: A Very Disturbing Scripture. A scripture that seems to call for the self-mutilation and dismemberment is very disturbing. What can it mean? My texts are James 5:13-20 and Mark 9:38-50.

October 4th: Sermon: The Best Meal You Ever Ate. What was the best meal you ever ate? It's World Communion Sunday. My texts are Mark 14:22-26 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Worship Leader's Schedule

September 27

Stacy Bell, **Liturgist**

Linda Robinson & Pat Moran, **Greeters**

Donnie & Renita Hartsock, **Ushers**

October 4

Hal Newman, **Liturgist**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Ushers**

Announcements

The "**Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ**" Sunday School class is studying, "**Loving 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.

As you read earlier, the **Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School** class is collecting non-perishable food items for Grace Works. The following is a listing of the items that they are most in need of. This collection is a ministry of our church that each person can participate in and is a meaningful way to serve God as we serve others in our community. Thank you for your contributions.

Pantry Items

Canned Ham or Chicken

Crackers, Spaghetti Sauce (in plastic jars or cans)

Canned Beef Stew

Jelly

Boxed Meals (like Hamburger Helper)

Boxed Mashed Potatoes

Rice

Canned Fruit

Pasta

Fuel Bags

All individual sizes please.

Juice Boxes

Shelf stable liquid milk boxes

Canned/Package Meat with crackers

Cereal

Microwaveable Meat Meals

Easy Mack

Pudding Cups

Cheese or Peanut Butter Crackers

A Scattering of the Ashes Ceremony for Nanette Noffsinger Crowell will be held at Burke Hollow on 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 on 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.

September Birthdays

Elva Beard, Joann Harper, Jessica Bauguess, Wanda Folds, G.L. Jones, Bill LeCates

Happy Birthday to each of you!