



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## Understanding the New Testament The Book of Acts Part 1: Pentecost and Jerusalem

*When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Acts 2:1-4 NRSV*

*<sup>43</sup> Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All who believed were together and had all things in common; <sup>45</sup> they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. <sup>46</sup> Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Acts 2:43-47 NRSV*

*<sup>7</sup> When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, <sup>9</sup> if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, <sup>10</sup> let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. Acts 4:7-11 NRSV*

*<sup>3</sup> Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. <sup>4</sup> He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Acts 9:3-4*

As noted previously, The Gospel of Luke is a two volume work. The first volume is the story of Jesus' birth, life, teachings, death and resurrection. The second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, tells the story of the early years of the Church and the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem and into the greater Roman Empire. For reasons that will be discussed, the Book of Acts is sometimes referred to as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.

Acts opens immediately after the resurrection appearances described in the Gospel of Luke. By the end of the tenth verse of Acts Jesus has ascended and the Apostles are on their own. They have been told to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Acts describes the “birth” of the church as the Day of Pentecost. The Disciples, gathered together in a room in Jerusalem, are suddenly surrounded by wind and something like fire. Each receives the Holy Spirit and begins speaking the Gospel in the many languages in use in the Roman Empire. The effect is that each hears the Gospel in his own language, an image that remains powerful today. Note that there is another account of the church receiving the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel of John Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit onto the disciples before he ascends into Heaven. John 20:19-23.

A subtle theme in the Book of Acts is that the Church is not a creation of people but a creation of God through the Holy Spirit. At several points, the Apostles and disciples seek to guide the Church only to be overridden by the acts of the Holy Spirit. For instance, one of the first things to take place in the book of Acts is the selection of an Apostle to replace Judas. Acts 1:12-26. Nowhere has Jesus told the Apostles that they must replace Judas. This is something they came up with themselves. They first develop selection criteria (it must be a man who had been with the group from the time of the Baptism of John through the resurrection). Having identified two potential candidates, they decide to have God choose between the two of them by casting lots. Matthias is selected as the new twelfth apostle. That is the last time Matthias is mentioned in scripture. As will be seen, God had another candidate in mind: the persecutor of the Church, Saul of Tarsus.

Likewise, the Apostles later determine that some members of the church are widows of members from outside Jerusalem (Hellenists). They first determine that they, the Apostles, should not waste their time waiting on tables when they have serious praying and studying to do. They therefore select seven “deacons” to serve the community; service meaning waiting on tables and looking after the widows. Two of the seven selected, Stephen and Phillip, empowered by the Holy Spirit, become the first evangelists of the church. God had something in mind for them other than waiting on tables.

The Church gets its start in Jerusalem through the preaching and teaching of the Apostles. However, this immediately brings them into conflict with the Jewish authorities. Peter and John are arrested and brought before the Temple Council for preaching the gospel. They are released with the warning to stop preaching about Jesus. This is a pattern repeated several times. One of those arrested is Stephen. Stephen becomes the first Christian martyr, stoned to death for preaching the Gospel.

The persecution of Christians in Jerusalem caused some to flee the city. One of these was Phillip who fled to Samaria. It was here that Phillip became an evangelist spreading the Gospel to non-Jews. The church was moving outward from Jerusalem. With the help of the Spirit Phillip continued preaching the Gospel throughout Judea.

It was at this point that Saul of Tarsus had his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Saul had been present at the stoning of Stephen and, we are told, held the coats of those who did the stoning. He asked for, and received, the right to pursue Christians wherever he found them. While on the road to Damascus he has a vision of the risen Jesus that strikes him blind. By the time he recovers his sight, with the help of the Holy Spirit, he has repented and is prepared to spread the gospel himself.

## **Advent Is About God Reaching Into Our World**

*And the Word became flesh and lived among us...*

*John 1:14*

This Sunday is the First Sunday Advent. It’s Advent or, as many Christians in the rest of the world call it, ‘the Christmas Season.’ We will soon be hearing the debates about the “true” meaning of Christmas and whether the “true” meaning is lost in all the commercial activity. There will also be those bemoaning the use of ‘Holiday Season’ over Christmas Season. However, even if you listen closely, you probably won’t hear a consistent message from Christians about the true meaning of the season.

For some Christians Advent is about “Peace on Earth,” something the world did not experience in Jesus’ lifetime or the two thousand years since. For many, it’s a “Spirit of Good Will Toward All People,” the message exemplified in the classic *Christmas Carol*, by Charles Dickens. For still others, the primary focus is the Christ Child in the manger as the symbol of new life and hope. Yet, while all these aspects certainly have their place in the celebrations of the season, Advent is first and foremost about God reaching into our world.

The writer of John says it best in the verse quoted above. “The Word became flesh and walked among us.” The faith claim of Christianity is that God so wanted us to be reconciled to God, that God reached into our world and became a part of our reality. The incarnation, the birth of Christ, is the center of our theology. The atoning sacrifice was a reality once God became flesh. Flesh must, at some point, die. Christ’s death on the Cross would have no meaning if God had not been made flesh, nor would the resurrection. God took on human life and humanity killed that life. God responded with still more life. God’s love cannot be turned away, even when confronted with the worst humanity can do.

The word Advent literally means “coming.” God came into our reality. God sought us out where we live. In that act is the Gospel, the Good News. In that act is the hope of “Peace on Earth and Good Will to All People.”

## The Advent Wreath

*<sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. <sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.*  
*Isaiah 60:2-3 NRSV*

Who is Christ to you? Why is Christ important to you and to the world? The liturgical meanings behind the Advent Wreath seek to provide answers to those questions.

Many Christians want to separate their “religious life” and their “secular life.” We have often been raised to think of our faith as something personal and something that can be separated from our day to day activities. Yet the Old Testament Prophets, Jesus, the Apostles and other writers of the New Testament rejected the idea that we can separate our religious lives from our secular lives. They taught that there is only life and the choice to live that life in relation to God or something else. The Advent Wreath is a liturgical symbol of Christ as the center of our existence. Each week we light a different candle on the Advent Wreath.

**Christ our Hope:** The first week of Advent we acknowledge that Christ is our hope for salvation of the world. The lectionary readings focus on those passages of scripture that speak of God ending time. One of the most powerful images comes from Isaiah 25:

*<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,  
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.*

*<sup>7</sup> And he will destroy on this mountain  
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,  
the sheet that is spread over all nations;*

*<sup>8</sup> he will swallow up death forever.*

*Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces,  
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.*

*<sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day,*

*Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us.  
This is the LORD for whom we have waited;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Isaiah 25:6-9 NRSV.*

Isaiah envisions a great feast where God is not only the host but a loving parent. God will remove the “shroud” from the world; the constant fear of sin and death that clouds our existence. God will wipe away all tears and bring salvation. Christ as hope for the world reminds us that, regardless of what happens, this is God’s world and that ultimately God will bring salvation to the world.

**Christ the Way:** The emphasis of the Second Sunday in Advent is Christ as the way we are to live our lives. Typical of the lectionary readings for this day is Romans 15:4-6:

*<sup>4</sup> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. <sup>5</sup> May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. NRSV*

When we are baptized or confirmed, we are not pledging our allegiance to God and Christ. We instead profess to adopt a new way of living in the world that is focused on God and patterned on the life and teachings of Christ. We cannot separate this religious commitment from our daily lives because we acknowledge that the lives we live will reflect our faith and beliefs.

**Christ our Joy:** This is the theme for the Third Sunday in Advent. The color purple is most often associated with penitence. Three candles of the Advent Wreath are traditionally purple recognizing that we have turned our lives away from God and are in need of repentance; that is turning back to God. Traditionally, the Third Sunday in Advent the candle is pink which is a color associated with Joy. We celebrate that Joy is another name for Christ. We believe that our Joy is founded on God’s act in Jesus Christ. My favorite advent reading for the Third Sunday in Advent is from Philippians:

*<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phillipians 4:4-7 NRSV*

For many it is hard to fathom how we can “rejoice” in the face of the evil in the world. It might help put this verse in context to know that, when Paul wrote it, he was in prison facing possible execution by the Romans. Paul could rejoice because, come what may, salvation was assured through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

**Christ the Prince of Peace:** On the Fourth Sunday in Advent we celebrate Christ as a living presence in this world. We celebrate Christ as the one always with us and who constantly calls us to peace. One of the advent readings commonly used on the fourth Sunday in Advent is from Matthew:

*“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup> She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”*

*<sup>22</sup> All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:*

*<sup>23</sup> “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel,”  
which means, “God is with us.” Matthew 1:20-23 NRSV.*

The promise of Emmanuel is God with us. Ours is a living faith, and we acknowledge that there is not a moment of the day that Christ is not with us. As Jesus stated in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always, to the end of the Age."

**The Christ Candle:** Finally there is the Christ Candle, the large white candle in the center of the Wreath that is lit on Christmas Eve. White is the color of new life and, in our tradition, it is also the color of death and resurrection. The white candle in the Advent Wreath symbolizes all three of those ideas. We remember the night of the incarnation, the night Christ was born. We acknowledge that, with his birth as a human child, God accepted the inevitability of a human death, the atoning sacrifice. And we are reminded of Easter Sunday and the defeat of sin and death through the resurrection of Christ. Lighting of the Christ Candle also symbolizes God's promise to bring light into the world:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. John 1:1*

The next time you look at the Advent Wreath, take a moment to reflect on who Christ is and God's act of salvation through Jesus Christ.

## **Advent at Trinity UMC**

### **Celebrating Communion during Advent**

You have heard me say that Christians are a people of the cross and the table. The Table of the Lord is an especially powerful symbol for the church. Everyone gathers around that table bringing all of who they are, good and bad, to the table. Around the table we pray that God make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world. In other words, we pray that God empower us as the Body of Christ.

During the four Sundays of advent, on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day we will celebrate communion during each worship service. This is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the meaning of the sacrament for our lives as disciples. It is also appropriate, as we prepare to celebrate the incarnation of God, that we remember each week the words of Christ as he prepared to die for us. "Do this in remembrance of me."

### **Hanging of the Greens Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup>**

This Saturday you are invited to come to the Church and prepare it for the Advent and Christmas Seasons. We will put up the Christmon Tree and decorate the sanctuary. We will also put up decorations in the Fellowship Hall. We'll begin around 9:00. We'll have coffee, juice, fruit and donuts available as well.

### **The Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant and Chili Supper, December 11<sup>th</sup>**

Every Church Christmas pageant shares these characteristics: there is a rush of preparation over three to four weeks, high levels of anxiety to get the performance organized, the effort to get young children to learn a few lines of dialogue and deliver them on cue and the effort to put the performance on with a minimum of mistakes. There is one more characteristic of Church Christmas Pageants. Despite the best efforts of the organizers the result is a somewhat chaotic presentation of the Christmas Story. However, no one really minds that because their children are part of that chaotic presentation.

The Unrehearsed Christmas pageant also produces a somewhat chaotic presentation of the Christmas story but it substitutes a lot of fun for the anxiety and stress usually accompanying a pageant. Instead of weeks of preparation, everyone arrives the night of the performance. They select a costume as a shepherd or sheep, a star or an angel, a wise person, a cow, a donkey, or an innkeeper and spouse. A narrator reads the Christmas story while the costumed participants act out this old and wonderful story. Christmas songs are sung and the story is retold to a new generation. 'Kids' of all ages are invited to get dressed and participate.

Immediately following the Pageant we will gather in the Fellowship Hall for a Chili Supper. Everyone who desires is invited to make a pot of their favorite Chili and share it with the congregation. If you plan on bringing Chili, please let Marty Bauguess know.

The **Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant and Chili Supper** will be held **Sunday, December 11<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 PM** at Trinity United Methodist Church. We will get into our costumes between 4 and 4:30 with the pageant starting at 4:30. Please come and be a part of this joyful event and bring a friend or two to join in the fun.

*[We are still looking for a 'Holy Family' and a 'Baby Jesus.' We can make do with a baby doll but it's our preference, if at all possible, to have a baby and its parents as the Holy Family. If you know someone who has had a baby in the last year and who would be willing to participate, please contact Reverend Meaker. Remember, there are no lines to learn and we provide the costumes!]*

#### **Friday December 16<sup>th</sup> : Serving Lunch at the Last Minute Toy Store**

On December 16<sup>th</sup> Trinity UMC will be serving lunch for the workers at the Last Minute Toy Store at 61<sup>st</sup> Ave. UMC. Lunch is served from 11:00 to around 4:00. If you are interested in volunteering please contact Charles Wilson.

#### **Sunday December 18<sup>th</sup>: Lessons and Carols and Blue Christmas**

During Worship on December 18<sup>th</sup> we will celebrate with a traditional service of Lessons and Carols. This service reminds us, through scripture and song, of the promised coming of Christ and God's Love for the World.

It is also our tradition to include a **Blue Christmas** Observance on the Fourth Sunday in Advent. The Christmas Season is not a time of joy for all people, especially those who have lost a loved one. For many such people the coming of the holidays only emphasizes the loss in their lives and the grief that they feel. Also, for the many people dealing with sickness and chronic disease and for those suffering depression, the coming of the holidays and the unfulfilled desire to feel Joy can be quite painful. Along with communion on the fourth Sunday in Advent we will also offer an anointing for healing. The anointing is merely making the sign of the cross on your forehead with olive oil, coupled with a prayer for healing in body and spirit. Anointing is one of the oldest liturgies in the Church and one recommended by scripture. James 5:13-15. Consider making this simple act of devotion a part of your observance of Advent.

#### **Sunday December 18<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM. Christmas Concert and Carol Sing Led by the Nashville Singers.**

The Nashville Singers will be with us once again on December 18<sup>th</sup> to offer a concert of Seasonal Music and lead us in singing traditional Christmas Carols. A reception with light Refreshments will follow.

## **Saturday December 24<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 PM: Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion Service**

It's Christmas Eve. Let's face it. If it's not done by now it probably won't get done. It's time to stop and remember why this day is celebrated by billions the world over. Gather with us for a traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Communion service.

## **Sunday December 25<sup>th</sup>: Christmas Day Worship and Fellowship: 10:00 to Noon.**

Every five or six years, Christmas Day falls on a Sunday. We will not hold Sunday School but we will gather between 10:00 and 11:00 to share in fellowship and a light breakfast. At 11:00 we will gather for worship. Children (of all ages) are invited to come in their pajamas. Our worship with scripture and song and celebrate the Birth of Christ.

## **Preacher, What Does the Bible Say about ...?**

From the time I came to Trinity I have stated on numerous occasions that I am willing to consider a sermon, or sermon series, on any subject that is of concern. If there is a subject upon which you would like me to preach I will consider it. If I do not think it appropriate for a sermon I will explain why. It might also be appropriate to address some issues as part of a Newsletter article or series or as part of the Sunday School curriculum. But, if at all possible, I will seek to speak to these issues that are of interest on Sunday morning. One purpose of worship is to contemplate our relationship with God and if something is bothering you it is likely bothering others as well.

## **Thursday Morning Bible Study**

The Thursday Morning Bible Study Group meets weekly on Thursdays from 10:00 to 11:30 AM. We will not meet on Thanksgiving Day. We will start a study of the Book of Genesis on December 1, 2016.

## **Prayer Ministry**

The following persons are part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Leslie Eastwood	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson

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

**November 27<sup>th</sup>: The Day and the Hour.** Advent begins today. The First Sunday in Advent scriptures all deal with the end of time. When will it arrive? What will it be like? No one knows. Christians are called to live each day as if the end of time might arrive... now. My texts are Isaiah 2:1–5 and Matthew 24:36–44.

**December 4<sup>th</sup>: God's Limits.** God can do anything. Or are their limits? My texts are Isaiah 11:1–10 and Matthew 3:1–12.

## Worship Leaders

### November 27

Jason Aldred, Liturgist  
Mike and Renee Fetting, Greeters  
Ken and Jan Strait, Ushers

### December 4

Houston Hartsock, Liturgist  
Tommy and Jo Cotton, Greeters  
Sam and Judy Richardson, Ushers

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**GraceWorks** has a shortage on many items in our food pantry, and we need your help restocking it! Here is a list of some very critical items needed in our food pantry: **Critical Needs:** Canned green vegetables (not green beans), Canned beans, Canned meat (not tuna), Cereal, Hamburger Helper type boxed meals, Soup. Please support this important ministry with your regular donations. The box is located beside the side door.

**Rain:** There are many communities that desperately need rain. We are one of those communities. Please pray for rain.

**Hosts and Hostesses for First Sunday Lunch:** Please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. Please add your name to host this occasion for the coming months.

**The Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School Class** is both learning and enjoying a series of videos, narrated by Ray Vanderlann. The videos as well as the narration take place in ancient lands described in

the Old Testament. We enjoy discussion about what we are learning and the application of the lessons to our lives. We enjoy fellowship beginning at 9:45 with our study beginning at 10:00. All are welcome to join us as we pursue Biblical truths and the application for our lives.

**Birthdays in November**

Cheryl Wilson, Greg Locke, Betty Haynes, Ken Strait, Brooks Crowell, Ross Crutcher

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**