



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Worship of the Printed Page but not the Word

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Ps 119:105 NRSV

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1 NRSV

I recently preached on the danger of worshipping the printed page, the words of the bible instead of seeking to hear the Word of God within the Bible. The Tennessee Legislature has offered a powerful example of how we should not use the bible. With all the very vital problems facing our State, the Legislature has taken the time to pass legislation declaring the “Holy Bible” the Official State Book.

It’s hard to know where to start criticizing this bill. In the first place it is clearly an establishment of religion in violation of the US and Tennessee constitutions. The First Amendment to the United States Constitution states:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...

Article One Section 3 of the Tennessee Constitution states that:

That all men have a natural and infeasible right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of their own conscience; that no man can of right be compelled to attend, erect, or support any place of worship, or to maintain any minister against his consent; that no human authority can, in any case whatever, control or interfere with the rights of conscience; and that no preference shall ever be given, by law, to any religious establishment or mode of worship. (Emphasis added.)

Clearly this legislation is both an Establishment of a Religion (Christianity) and a preference given by law to Christianity. Passing this type of bill is not only a waste of legislative time when other more important matters need addressing, but it is an invitation to a lawsuit that will cost taxpayers to defend.

Secondly, the bill specifically refers to the “Holy Bible” as if there was only one text upon which all Christians rely. However, the Holy Bible, as we Christians know it, is written in Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. There is no one place where it can be found gathered together in the original languages. Scholars pick and choose from various manuscripts to assemble the bible. Some of these “manuscripts” contain only a sentence or

two, some a few pages and others may contain a complete book of the bible. In your bible you probably have footnotes in some places indicating that “other manuscripts contain a different text” with reference to a particular passage. Those footnotes are referencing the many manuscripts that are referred to in assembling the bible.

Since this is the United States, let’s assume the legislature is referring to English translations of the Bible. But, are those translations those used by the protestants or the Catholics. For, you see, Protestants and Catholics use different canons. Does the Legislature mean to exclude the version of the bible used by Catholics or the version used by Protestants?

As far as translations, I have ready access to over 50 English translations of the “Holy Bible.” Each of these versions looks at the original languages and seeks to provide a sound translation into English. But, scholars being scholars, not all agree on every translation and meaning. Moving beyond English there are literally thousands of translations into other languages and dialects. Each seeks to convey the Word of God based upon the original Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic. But some ideas as expressed in one language cannot be easily expressed in another language. For example, the bible uses at least five Hebrew and Greek words that can be translated “love” in English. However, as used in Hebrew and Greek, those words describe particular kinds of love. English, as well as other languages, must use additional words to express those concepts and, even then, may be expressing them very imperfectly. And that is just one word. Consider all the synonyms in the English language and you start to appreciate the scope of the problem.

Finally, this action by the legislature is exactly the type of act that is routinely condemned in scripture. A meaningless gesture that looks like it was meant to honor God while not requiring anyone to actually live according to the Word of God. Consider this well known passage from Micah:

⁶ *“With what shall I come before the LORD,
 and bow myself before God on high?
 Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
 with calves a year old?
⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
 with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
 Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
 the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”
⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
 and what does the LORD require of you
 but to do justice, and to love kindness,
 and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:6-8 NRSV*

Micah reminds the people that worship or reverence is meaningless unless your life expresses the will of God. Or consider this passage:

⁵ *Is such the fast that I choose,
 a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush,
 and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
 Will you call this a fast,
 a day acceptable to the LORD?*

- ⁶ *Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?*
- ⁷ *Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?*
- ⁸ *Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.*
- ⁹ *Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.*

*If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
¹⁰ if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.
Isaiah 58:5-10 NRSV*

God, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, states that the true worship that God desires is living lives that take care of one another. Feeding the hungry and taking care of the homeless. Then of course there is Matthew 25:31-46 where Jesus says that what we do for the least among us we do for Jesus, or Jesus noting that not everyone who says “Lord, Lord” will enter the Kingdom of heaven. Matthew 7:21. Worshipping the printed page of scripture is not the worship of God. Living as the Body of Christ, with true love and concern for one another, is the worship of God. And, in point of fact, worship of God is not a governmental activity. It is the work of Disciples.

The Word of God is not the printed page. The Word of God is the light that shows us where to walk in life. The Word of God is Jesus Christ who calls us to be the Body of Christ, loving God and loving neighbor. We read scripture to hear the Word of God for our lives. We do not worship the printed page, we worship God. This Bill is not yet law. Give prayerful consideration to contacting Governor Haslam and asking that he veto this bill. (SB1108).

Cedar Crest Summer Camp

This Sunday, April 10, during Children’s Time, Russell Casteel will speak to the Children and the rest of the congregation about the Tennessee Conference’s Summer Camp programs. Russell is the Director of Cedar Crest Camp and Retreat Center. He will share the opportunities that Cedar Crest has to offer for camp this summer and will have information that you can take home. Trinity supports the Conference Summer Camp program and will help any family in need of assistance in sending their children to camp. We hope to see you this Sunday.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

Our Thursday morning Bible Study meets 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 just begun a study of the Gospel of John.

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		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

April 10th: Sermon: If You Love Me. All the Gospels recount that Peter denied Jesus three times. Only the gospel of John recounts this encounter between Jesus and Peter in which Jesus asks Peter three times, "Do you love me?" But, Jesus is also asking the same of us. My texts are Acts 9:1–6 and John 21:1–19.

April 17th: Sermon: The Lord Is My Shepherd. We don't run into many shepherds. What does this mean? My texts are John 10:22–30 and Psalm 23.

Worship Leader's Schedule

April 10

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers**

April 17

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Erin & Chuck McGibben, **Greeters**

Ken & Jan Strait, **Ushers**

Announcements

Vacation Bible School

Dawn Stevens will be the leader for VBS this year. This promises to be an exciting and wonderful experience for the children. Dawn will need all of us to help in preparation for this great event. More information will be forthcoming as the time draws near.

Please plan to attend the **Administrative Council Meeting** planned for this **Saturday, April 9 at 9:00 AM**. There will be important information for discussion.

We will be serving food this **Saturday, April 9 at 61st. United Methodist Church**. Volunteers will need to be at the church by 4:00 PM. Please make Charles Wilson aware of your intention to be there. You will enjoy the fellowship and worship with the church members after serving dinner.

Seeking Volunteers for Ministry Outreach Opportunities

Seeking one or more volunteers to take on the responsibility of the following communications activities: Maintaining the church calendar on our website, facebook pages, and bulletin board. Ongoing maintenance of this task will allow us to reach out to those who find our sites but need more information. We need some to provide and update: Providing website content for our various programs and Sunday School classes. Training is available. Please make Pastor Dennis aware if you are interested in this opportunity.

Children's Ministries

Our church is in a period of discernment with respect to our children's ministries. The Nelsons gave us such a fantastic gift in honor of our beloved Nanette. Please continue to pray for us as we determine how best to use it in her honor and to continue Trinity's legacy of "Living as, and leading others to become, Disciples of Jesus Christ."

Mother's Day-Out Ministry Meeting

Attention! Calling all who have volunteered and all who have expressed interest in the development of a Mother's Day Out Program at Trinity - A meeting will be held this Sunday, April 10th, immediately after the Worship Service to discuss the vision of this new ministry, review the state law and local codes for operating this type of child care program and identify a bank of volunteers that can commit to staffing the program. We will need to identify a volunteer to be the "point

person" or "program director" who would oversee the daily operations and program activities of this new ministry. Please be in prayer for our Children's Ministry, the Trinity UMC Mother's Day Out Program and in identifying your role in support of this important ministry.

We are also exploring the possibility of another new ministry that has been brought forth that could begin simultaneously and support the Mother's Day Out Program - a program called "MOPS" (Mothers of Pre-Schoolers) MOPS is a Christian program for just this group; young moms with preschoolers. The moms attend a Bible study and the children are cared for by a team of volunteers that also serve as mentors for the moms. Ideally, we could develop these ministries that offer childcare with lessons that coincide with what Mommy is learning. It is exciting to see that our Children's Ministry could encompass not only the spiritual formation of the child but extend throughout the family. Please plan to attend.

The **Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School class is currently studying**, "Fire On The Mountain" by Ray Vander Laan.

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 April

Betty Whitefield, Mary Coleman, Jo Oliphant, Jason Aldred, Houson Hartsock

Happy Birthday to each of you!