



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## Understanding the Old Testament Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph and the Descent into Slavery

*Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. Gen 12:1-2 NRSV*

*"I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Exodus 3:6 NRSV*

The story of the people of Israel begins in Genesis 12. God calls the man Abram to go to a distant land and promises to make of Abram a great nation. That is, God promises that this man who currently has no descendants will be the patriarch of a nation of people. This is an extraordinary promise to make to a man who is already seventy-five years old and whose wife, Sari, has moved beyond child bearing age. Yet, by the end of Genesis, the promise has begun to be fulfilled. This nation is to be a blessing to the world. That is the meaning of being the Chosen People. The People of Israel were chosen by God to be a blessing to the world by keeping God's Law and being an example of how to live together.

God makes two additional promises or covenants with Abram whom he renames Abraham; literally ancestor of a multitude. God covenants to give the land that came to be known as Canaan to Abraham and his descendants. More significantly, God covenants to be their God. Genesis 17:1-8. Throughout the rest of the Old Testament when the Covenant with Abraham is referred to, the text is usually referring to the covenant to be the God of the people of Israel. Even references to the Covenant of Circumcision is a reference to the Covenant to be the God of Israel since circumcision marked the people of Israel as a people claimed by God.

Abraham had two sons, Ismael and Isaac. Ismael was born to the slave of Sarah and was eventually cast out of the people. But God promised Abraham that God would bless Ismael and make of him a great nation. Muslims claim to be the descendants of Ismael. Isaac was born to Sarah.

A confusing story in Genesis is God's order to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Although abhorrent to us, the sacrifice of the first born son to the god a tribe worshipped was a common practice in the Middle East. Abraham's obedience to that command of God must be evaluated in light of that custom. Although this is a disturbing story, it is best seen as a story that explains why the people of Israel did not practice child sacrifice. When the law is given to the people by God, child sacrifice is forbidden, although it is a practice that the people of Israel wrongfully took up from time to time. In later centuries engaging in child sacrifice was seen by the prophets as a rejection of God's law and an example of Israel's apostasy.

Like Abraham, Isaac ultimately had two sons as well, Esau and Jacob. God chose Jacob as the son who would carry on the Covenant, even though Jacob is portrayed as a schemer and conman of sorts. Ultimately God reaffirms God's Covenant with Jacob and gives him a new name. God names Jacob Israel, "the one who strives with God." Genesis 32:22-32. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are usually referred to as the patriarchs of Israel. At several places in scripture, God identifies God's self as "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Jacob had twelve sons: Reuben (Jacob's firstborn), Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher. Each of these sons would be the patriarch of one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

Joseph was not popular with his older brothers. Rather than kill him, they conspired to sell him into slavery in Egypt. But God continued to bless Joseph and Joseph became a counselor to the Pharaoh of Egypt. Because of his position in the Egyptian court, Joseph was able to help his people when a great famine struck the region. During the famine, the people of Israel resettled in Egypt and prospered and multiplied. However, later Pharaohs became fearful of these people within their borders and enslaved them. The people of Israel remained slaves in Egypt for 400 years.

## **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. I want to reaffirm that offer since it's been a while since I have stated it. 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.

## **New Disciple Bible Study**

Disciple Bible Study is a powerful experience that can open the bible up for the participants. I would be willing to begin a new class this September if at least seven people desired to undertake the 34 week study. I could do this study on Monday or Tuesday nights between 7 and 9. If participants would prefer to meet on a week day that could also be arranged. In years past I have also taught Disciple Bible Study between 7 and 9 AM Sunday mornings. If you are interested please contact me at the Church. If you desire additional information for yourself or to give to a friend I have some explanatory booklets available.

## **Thursday Morning Bible Study**

The Thursday Morning Bible Study Group has voted to take a break for the summer. We will begin again on August 25<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 AM. At that time we will start a study of Philippians.

## **Prayer Ministry**

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

Elva Beard  
Larry Eastwood  
Leslie Eastwood

Rachel Newman  
Kenneth Stevens  
Patricia Stevens

Sam Richardson  
Judy Richardson  
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**

**August 14<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: I have come to Start a Fire.** Some passages of scripture are disturbing. One of the most disturbing is this passage from Luke that speaks of Christ rending families apart. Where is the Gospel in that? My texts are Hebrews 11:29–12:2 and Luke 12:49–56.

**August 21<sup>st</sup>: Sermon: Clergy Robs and Clown Suits.** How absurd for one sinner to stand before a room of sinners and declare, "Thus sayeth the Lord God!" My texts are Luke 13:10–17 and Jeremiah 1:4–10.

## **Worship Leaders:**

### **August 14**

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Donnie and Renita Hartsock, **Greeters**

Hal and Rachel Newman, **Ushers**

### **August 21**

Erin McKibben, **Liturgist**

JoAnn Harper and Pat Moran, **Greeters**

Larry Eastwood and Linda Robinson, **Ushers**

**Parents Night Out:** The date for the next event is Friday, September 2. Going forward, PNO will take place the first Friday of every month. Please make your friends and neighbors aware of this opportunity for children ages 4-12. Please pray for the children and the volunteers who will be participating.

**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. We have many empty spaces.

**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 August**

**Mike Rohrig, Charles Wilson, Dana Bauguess**

Happy Birthday to each of you!