



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Wesleyan (United Methodist) Theology New Birth

*“Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.
⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ John 3:5-7*

One of the most pernicious heresies of the twentieth century is embodied in the term “Born Again Christian.” A heresy is a false teaching that leads us away from the Gospel. And the way this term has been used and understood by many Christians places it in the category of heresy.

To begin with, if one is a Christian they have, by definition, been born again. As the term is commonly used by news outlets and too many Christian traditions it implies that there are two categories of Christians: general run of the mill Christians and an elite group of Christians who have been “born again.” That is the heresy and it is harmful to the body of Christ. This harmful teaching about the New Birth is often accompanied by a teaching that, if you have been “born again,” you can name the day, hour and minute of the experience. Some falsely teach that, if you cannot identify the moment of new birth, you have not really experienced salvation. This teaching can be especially devastating to youth who are made to feel unworthy because they have not shared an experience that their peers claim to have experienced.

However, it is not possible to channel all spiritual experience into one mold. That particular heresy was one that Paul was addressing in his first letter to the Corinthians. Paul tells the Christians of Corinth that the Spirit of God works in different ways in different people but is still just one spirit:

⁴ Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵ and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸ To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

To claim to have discerned the one and only way that the Spirit of God can manifest in the heart of a believer is presumption that almost defies comprehension. Who are we to proclaim that God can only work in another's life according to rules we lay down? Wesley knew some people who did appear to have experiences of the Spirit that seemed to strike like a lightning bolt. Wesley himself had a memorable spiritual experience that provided him assurance of salvation. However, Wesley also observed that others experienced a more gradual form of conversion.

In Wesleyan theology the new birth is viewed as part of a larger experience that Wesley called *Regeneration*. Regeneration begins when the prevenient grace of God brings about an *Awakening*; an awareness of our need for salvation. Such awakening can be triggered in many ways. A personal tragedy, a traumatic experience, a single conversation or many conversations with a close friend, even a sermon might start to awaken a person to their need for a saving relationship with God. Or it might be a combination of some or all of these experiences. This process might be very sudden and therefore memorable or it might be a gradual process taking place over a period of months or even years. If one is raised in the church, attending Sunday School and church all their life, the process probably will be a more gradual one.

As a result of the awakening, the person comes to acknowledge the sin in their life and the need for *Repentance*. Repent is a term borrowed from Judaism and means literally "to turn." Repentance in Judaism and Christianity means to turn your life back to God. Repentance involves acknowledging the sin in our lives and acknowledging that we are dependent upon the Grace of God for life. Repentance means to acknowledge that, without the help and grace of God, we cannot live lives of righteousness; that is live in "right relationship" with God. Moreover, it includes the acknowledgment that God enables righteous living through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This right relationship with God through Christ is what we mean when we speak of salvation. It includes not only forgiveness of our past sins but the gracious assistance of God to live lives in right relationship to God. It is also the power that binds us together as the Body of Christ.

With repentance and acceptance of Christ comes the *New Birth*. The Justifying Grace of God places us in right relationship with God; brings us salvation. As discussed in previous articles, the prevenient and sanctifying grace of God also continues to work in our lives calling us back when we stray and working to perfect us in love; to help us claim the image of God which we all share.

If you have accepted Christ in your life you have been born again. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise. And, if you feel the need to reaffirm that acceptance of Christ, the United Methodist Church offers a liturgy for that purpose. We utilized it last Sunday: Reaffirmation of Baptism. It is not rebaptism (which is not practiced in the United Methodist Church) but an opportunity to renew the vows made when you were baptized or confirmed. Last Sunday's event was a congregational reaffirmation. However, the liturgy can be used for individuals, just as the Liturgy for Baptism is used for individuals. If you wish to reaffirm your faith, reaffirm your baptismal vows, let me know and I will schedule it for a Sunday of your choosing if at all possible.

January 24th Ebenezer Dinner

In the Old Testament an Ebenezer is a monument to the work of God in our lives. Everyone is cordially invited to attend an Ebenezer Dinner on January 24th, at 5:00 PM to celebrate all that God has done, and is doing, at Trinity UMC. We will look in detail at our financial results for 2015 and will also look ahead to 2016 and beyond. The meal will be catered. There is no charge for the meal but it would be helpful to know how many of you will be able to come. Please let Dana Bauguess know if you will be able to attend. Dana needs this information by January 19. Please let her know as soon as possible.

Thursday Morning Bible Study

Our Thursday morning Bible Study meets 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 Matthew and have begun a study of Luke.

The Poverty and Justice Bible

¹⁷ You have worn out the LORD with your words. And yet, you ask, "How did we do that?" You did it by saying, "The LORD is pleased with evil and doesn't care about justice." Malachi 2:17 CEV

How are we wearing out the Lord with our words? When we tell people that the Lord despises the poor. When we tell people that good Christians should despise the stranger. When we tell people that Christians do not love (i.e. care about the welfare of) their enemies but hate their enemies. Living as a Christian is not easy and is not without risk. Scripture makes that clear. It's all right to find those words uncomfortable. It is not all right to deny them.

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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		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

January 17th: Sermon: A Life Remembered. This will be a special service. We all knew and loved Nanette Noffsinger Crowell. But Nanette's life and ministry reached far beyond Trinity UMC. On January 17th Stephanie Nelson, a long-time friend of Nanette's, will offer her witness of what Nanette's life and ministry meant to her. She will also bring a special gift honoring Nanette. Our texts are Philippians 4:8-9 and 1 Corinthians 13.

January 24th: Sermon: As Unlikely as it Seems, We Are the Body of Christ. Enough said. My Texts are Luke 4:14-21 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a.

Worship Leader's Schedule

January 17

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

January 24

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Pat Moran & Linda Robinson, **Greeters**

Dawn & Richard Stevens, **Ushers**

Announcements

Give the gift of music and give to Trinity! Mystisa Records has just announced the re-release of two of Brooks Crowell's previous albums, "**Christmas at Burke Hollow**" originally released in 2009 and "**Love Ye The Lord**" released in 2011. Digitally re-mastered to enhance the quality of the recordings, these CD's make a great inspirational gift. The CD's are available in Fellowship Hall for \$12 each and the proceeds for this re-release go to Trinity UMC general fund.

The **Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School class** has begun a new study. We will be studying, **“Jesus: Understanding His Death and Resurrection.”** This is a study of Mark 14-16 which we will continue for six weeks. This study was created by Kay and David Arthur who are well known for founding “Precept Ministries.” Please consider being a part of this inspiring and interesting study. We enjoy fellowship as well as our Study. All are welcome to join us in Sunday School. Our fellowship begins at 9:45, the study begins at 10:00 AM.

Rehearsals for “This Man.” Further details will be provided when the dates for rehearsals are worked out. Hal and Rachel will be leading the musical which will be performed Palm Sunday. For those of you who have an interest in singing, you will want to be a part of this musical adventure.

Birthdays in January

Cherry Klein, Dawn Stevens, Dennis Meaker, Ensley Mason, Renee Fetting, Judy Richardson, Linda McGill, Jessica Moore, Laura Otto

Happy Birthday of each of you!