



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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For Everything There is a Season: The Closing of West Nashville UMC

⁴⁰ *And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'* Matthew 25:40 NRSV

*My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really **believe** in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? ² For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, ³ and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a **seat** here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "**Stand** there," or, "**Sit** at my feet," ⁴ have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? James 2:1-4*

Sunday afternoon I helped lead the last service at West Nashville United Methodist Church. It stood in West Nashville for around 125 years and, especially in recent years, provided a much needed ministry to a community that is economically compromised. However, the problems with the building make it impractical to repair and the property is not considered ideal for the construction of a new church building. It is being placed on the market later this month.

It was a bittersweet experience for me. I saw many people I had not seen in at least six years, including the children of the children that used to come down front for Children's Time. I was also permitted to lead the communion service for the last time. It was also a sad time, as all endings are sad. Change is the nature of life and endings always come, something that is familiar to everyone in time but especially familiar for pastors. Pastors are often called upon to give a voice to the grief that we all feel when something comes to an end, be it a human life, a retirement or the closing of a ministry or Church. Yet pastors, or at least this pastor, have as hard a time as any trying to make sense in the face of grief and loss. As often as not, the only 'reason' to be found in an ending is that stated long ago by the writer of Ecclesiastes. "*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.*" Ecclesiastes 3:1 NRSV.

West Nashville UMC holds a special place in my heart because it taught me what it means to be in ministry; what it means to try and live as the Body of Christ. I shared that story during the final service and I want to share it with you as well.

I was appointed to West Nashville UMC in June of 2001. At that time I was starting my fourth year as a United Methodist pastor and was just one year out of Vanderbilt Divinity School. My first appointment had been a four point charge in Maury County where I'd served for three years. When I arrived at West Nashville it had money problems. West Nashville always had money problems. West Nashville had a group of generous

givers who had fairly substantial resources. It also had a larger group of generous givers with substantially fewer resources. It seemed clear to me when I arrived that we needed to broaden the giver base. But how?

As part of the overall plan I thought of prayer, but I wasn't sure the form that prayer should take. It seemed crass to pray for people to supplement the budget. So I settled on what I believed to be an "appropriate" prayer. I asked God to bring us people who needed Jesus Christ in their lives. I wore that prayer out for months.

During this period two parishioners came to me with a proposal for a ministry to feed the homeless and poor in the community. This was the start of the West Nashville Thursday Community meals. This ministry grew rapidly. Soon we were serving over fifty people around a hundred plates of food every Thursday night. We also distributed dry groceries and supplies from a pantry filled with donations.

A fairly common occurrence on any given Thursday night was someone seeking help other than food. For the most part there was little we could do but I always listened to anyone who asked to speak with me. So one night a woman asked to speak with me about something. I knew her by reputation as a local prostitute. There were a number of women in that category who came to the meals. For a while several of their pimps also came, mostly to mock us. But, when they couldn't get any kind of a rise out of us, they got tired of the game and stopped coming.

I stepped down the hall from the dining area so we could have some privacy but so I could also keep an eye on the activity in the Fellowship Hall. The woman, who I will call Lucy, began to speak. She said that DHS was working to revoke her parental rights to her young daughter. She was dealing with a substance abuse problem and had just been told that she was HIV positive. She then said, "Pastor, I just can't go on like this. I need Jesus Christ in my life." I prayed with her there in the hallway. She was crying and so was I. We were both under conviction by the Holy Spirit, the prevenient grace of God. She had come to realize that she needed Jesus Christ in her life and I realized that I did as well. You see, I realized that, despite the words I used, I had been praying that God bring us the young professionals living across the street on the other side of Charlotte Avenue along with their two and a half kids and their tithes. But instead God had answered the words of my prayer and brought us someone who needed Jesus Christ in her life.

From that time forward I resolved that I would do my best to see everyone I encountered as someone who needed Jesus Christ in their life and I would assume that everyone I encountered was someone crossing my path at the urging of God. I also acknowledged that God might be influencing events because it was I who needed the guidance in my own faith walk, and not the person I encountered. I also came to realize that 'ministry', as often as not, takes place in the unscheduled moments and often at inconvenient times. My experiences at West Nashville continued to shape my ministry in more ways than I can enumerate and does so to this day.

I'm sure it will not surprise anyone that I reminded the people at the service last Sunday that the Church was not the building we were closing, but that the Church is the Body of Christ. All those formed by the ministry of West Nashville, those members of the Body of Christ, will move on to other congregations and continue to live as the Body of Christ. And, as is always the case, from this ending will come new birth.

A Pastoral Letter from the Southeastern Jurisdictional College of Bishops to the United Methodists in the Southeastern Jurisdiction

A few weeks ago the General Conference of the United Methodist Church was held. The United Methodist Church in the United States is divided into Jurisdictional Conferences. The Tennessee Conference is part of the Southeastern Jurisdiction. Jurisdictional Conferences elect Bishops to serve the Conferences of the Jurisdiction. The Southeastern Jurisdictional Conference started last Sunday. Below is a letter from the Bishops of the Southeastern Jurisdiction.

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We celebrate the way God is working through you and the churches you represent to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Your witness is making a difference in the lives of individuals and communities around the world.

We write this pastoral letter with hope in Jesus Christ. Yet our hearts are heavy as we recognize that as a result of our denominational conflicts we stand at a fragile place. Our Christian witness is defined, not by an absence of conflict, but by how we act in our disagreements.

Many in our church are working to change our Book of Discipline's current position on human sexuality, believing that it is exclusive, unjust and based on a misinterpretation of Scripture. These actions are being done through processes our polity has in place for making such changes.

Many others in our denomination are working to maintain our Book of Discipline's current position on human sexuality, believing that it is grace-filled, orthodox and biblically-based. These actions are also being done within the context of our church's polity.

Still others in our denomination, including some Boards of Ordained Ministry and Annual Conferences, are acting in nonconformity to our church's legislation about marriage and ordination standards. These actions are not within in the bounds of our church's polity.

We, the Southeastern Jurisdictional College of Bishops, grieve over the deep divisions in our beloved United Methodist Church. We recognize the pain felt both by those advocating for and those opposing change. We also view the acts of nonconformity as a violation of our covenant and as divisive and disruptive.

As a College of Bishops, we are fully committed to keeping the promises we made at our ordinations and consecrations, including:

- shepherding all persons committed to our care;
- leading our areas in mission, witness and service;
- ordering the church, including administering processes for handling complaints about violations of our Book of Discipline that occur within our episcopal areas;
- and seeking unity in Christ, including the work the General Conference requested the Council of Bishops do in relation to the Commission on Human Sexuality;

We invite you to join us in prayer as we strive to faithfully and compassionately fulfill our covenant with God, the church and one another. We also encourage you to stay the course in your covenant relationship with God, the United Methodist Church and each other.

In Christ,

The Southeastern Jurisdictional College of Bishops

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 25th 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	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

July 17th: Sermon: Famine of God's Word. We'd be upset if we had no food to eat, water to drink, a home to live in and the good things in life to enjoy. Would we be as upset if we could have everything else we wanted but had to go without the Word of God? My texts are Luke 10:38–42 and Amos 8:1–12.

July 24th: Sermon: Are You Now, or Have You Ever Been, A Christian? There is an old saying that goes, "Be careful what you wish for, you may get it." The saying is sometimes modified to say, "Be careful what you pray for, you may get it." The Lord's Prayer calls for a new world order.

July 17

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**

Ken and Jan Strait, **Greeters**

Maurice and Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

July 24

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Hal and Rachel Newman, **Greeters**

Larry Eastwood and Linda Robinson, **Ushers**

The men's group is planning to attend an evening Sound's game Friday, July 22. The start time for the game is 7:05. Wives and family members are included in the invitation. Please make Marty Bauguess aware if you are planning to attend. He will need to know by Sunday, July 17.

Parents Night Out: The dates for this event in July are this Friday, July 15 and Friday, July 29. 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.

VBS

Vacation Bible School begins next **Monday, July 18 and continues through Thursday, July 21. Each day, the time will be 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM.** The time for VBS has been extended thirty minutes because of the great activities that will be provided for the children. Momentum for this special time is building for the volunteers who are participating as well as the children who will be attending.

The enrollment form is online on our website, www.trinityfranklinUMC.org. Please utilize this form and share this address with neighbors and friends.

If you have questions, please contact Dawn Stevens at (615)-638-8827 or dawnstevens1961@gmail.com.

Erin McKibben is hosting a weekly devotional meeting at her home, “Meditations on Tuesdays.” This weekly meeting will take place each week through July. Time of meetings is 7:00 – 8:30 AM. Her address: 8358 Carriage Hills Drive which is off of Wilson Pike across from Ravenwood High School.

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 July

Leslie Eastwood, Jeff Otto, Linda Robinson, Renita Hartsock

Happy Birthday to each of you!