



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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‘Seeing’ the Gospels Together The Church Preserves its Memory and Shares what’s Important

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Mark 1.1 NRSV

An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham. Matthew 1.1 NRSV

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, ³ I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. Luke 1:1-4

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

Simply reading the opening verses of the four Gospels provides a clue that the writers of these Gospels were not attempting to write biographies or even informative reports in the nature of newspaper accounts. Each writer was seeking to describe the nature of Christ, and God’s act through Christ, to specific communities of Christians. The four Gospels preserved in the Bible are universally acknowledged to have been written between 65 CE and 95 CE; i.e. between 35 and 65 years following the crucifixion. There are other ‘Gospels’ available but these are all dated between 100 and 400 years after the death of Christ. The four Gospels in the bible were included in the Canon after three centuries of use by Christians seeking to hear the Word of God for their lives.

First, a brief word about the Gospels not included. From time to time you may have noticed a supermarket tabloid proclaiming the discovery of the “Secret Gospels” that the “Church” is hiding. If anyone wishes to look at these Gospels I have most of them in my office library. They can also be found in any well stocked bookstore or public library. They surely must be classified as very poorly kept secrets. They are not included in the Canon because they do not, by any stretch of the imagination, convey the Gospel as preached by Jesus, Paul or any of the original Apostles. Several are written from the standpoint of the early Christian heresy of Gnosticism. Long before they were rejected by leaders in the Church they were rejected by the members of the Churches themselves.

Most scholars believe the Gospels were written in the order Mark, Matthew, Luke and John. Mark, Matthew and Luke are often referred to as the synoptic Gospels because of their similarities. Synoptic is based

on a Greek word meaning ‘seen together.’ The majority of scholars posit that Mark was written around 65 CE. Matthew, using Mark and other material as sources, is believed to have been written between 75 and 80 CE. Luke, using Mark and other sources, is more difficult to date but most scholars place it as being written after the Gospel of Matthew around 80 to 85. Finally there is the Gospel of John which scholars date from 95 to 100 CE.

A casual reading of the synoptic Gospels, Mark, Matthew and Luke, disclose their similarities. Matthew and Luke follow the general narrative outline of the Gospel of Mark which is why most scholars date it as being the first Gospel. Matthew and Luke both contain material in common that is not included in the Gospel of Mark. An example is the Beatitudes, although in Matthew they are found in the Sermon on the Mount and in Luke in the Sermon on the Plain. Scholars believe that the authors of Matthew and Luke may have had a source document that contained this material. In your reading you may come across a reference to the Q source. Q stands for the German word *Quelle* meaning ‘source.’ If this document exists it has never been found. It is also possible that both authors simply relied on a well-established oral tradition for this material. Both Gospels also contain materials that are unique. No written sources for this material have ever been found. Examples are the differing accounts of Jesus birth with the story of the Wise Men in Matthew and the story of the Shepherds in Luke; the parable of the Good Samaritan that is found only in Luke and the parable of the workers in the vineyard found only in Matthew.

Each of the Gospels was written for a specific community of Christians and we can get some sense for the make-up of that community from the way the Gospels account unfolds. For example, Mark seems to be directed toward a group that is probably made up of Jews and gentiles living on the margins of society. The focus of the Gospel is found in the preaching of John the Baptist: Repent and believe, for the Kingdom of God is drawing near. There is an urgency to the Gospel. A casual reading of the Gospel will reveal the repeated use of the word ‘immediately.’ Immediately Jesus went here. Immediately Jesus went there. Immediately this action was taken. One can almost feel out of breath after reading the Gospel.

Matthew, on the other hand, was very likely written to a community primarily consisting of Law observant Jewish Christians. It begins by placing Jesus in the line of Abraham and David. Jesus was a Jew and was the Messiah. To be the Messiah he had to come from the line of David. There are also allusions to the life of Moses. Moses survived the killing of the innocents by Pharaoh. Jesus survived the killing of the innocents by Herod. Moses went back to Egypt. Jesus was carried to Egypt by his parents. Moses received God’s law on a Mountain. Jesus proclaimed God’s law from a mountain side. Many passages in Matthew describe Jesus as fulfilling prophecies of the Old Testament. All of these connections would have been important to law observant Jewish Christians.

The Gospel of Luke also has strong connections with the Jewish community but also with the Gentile community. Scholars have suggested that it was written to a community that had many Gentile ‘God fearers’; i.e. Gentiles who were associated with the local Jewish community but who had not converted. Unlike the genealogy of Matthew which focuses on Jesus as a son of Abraham and David, Luke takes Jesus back to the creation of humankind in the Garden of Eden. Of all the Gospels, Luke is most focused on issues of economic disparity. For example, where Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount quotes Jesus as saying, “Blessed are the poor in Spirit” Luke, in the Sermon on the Plain, quotes Jesus as proclaiming “Blessed are the poor.” It is in Luke that we find the parable of the Rich Fool and his barns and the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Luke is constantly warning about the danger of riches becoming the focus of our lives. The Gospel of Luke is part of a two volume work, Luke/Acts. Luke tells the story of Jesus and Acts tells the story of the beginning of the Church.

The Gospel of John is a departure from the synoptic Gospels. You get a sense of the cosmic scope of John in the opening verse quoted above. Where Matthew and Luke place Jesus in a human genealogy, John makes it plain from the beginning that Jesus is God incarnate; the Word made flesh and walking among us. The Gospel of John does not contain any parables and Jesus' mother is never mentioned by name. John focuses on the work of God's Spirit in the world and Jesus as the embodiment of God's presence in the world. The animosity between Jesus and the Jewish community is also heavily emphasized in the Gospel of John. This has led many scholars to conjecture that John's community contained a number of Jews who had been rejected by the Jewish community for becoming Christians.

What then are Christians to do with these varying accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus? The fact that they were made a part of the Canon only after two or three centuries of use in the Church should be our guide. The Church was attempting to describe the mystery of God's salvific act through Jesus Christ. That is a mystery that we can never fully explain; never fully comprehend. But, in the text of all four Gospels, the early Church and all that followed have found the Word of God for their lives.

A Pastoral Word in Response to the Orlando Tragedy From Bishop Bill McAlilly

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

Please receive this pastoral word from Bishop Bruce Ough, President of the Council of Bishops. It comes with my blessing and affirmation. I request that you share this with your people.

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United Methodists across the world are horrified by the despicable act of terrorism in Orlando, Florida, that took the lives of 49 individuals and wounded 53 others.

We are in shock. We join those who grieve. We pray for the victims, their families, and the LGBTQ community targeted by this hateful attack. We stand against all forms of violence, committed anywhere in the world by anyone.

We stand with our Muslim brothers and sisters who have condemned this heinous act. We pledge to work together to overcome evil with good, terrorism with peace, hatred with love, and inequity with justice. We commend the Florida Annual Conference as they gather this week in Orlando. They, along with Bishop Ken Carter, are our connectional presence in the midst of this tragedy. We pray that God will work through them to be a source of Christ's witness, reconciliation and healing to the brokenness of an entire community. As the people called United Methodist, let us not lose heart, but redouble our commitment and efforts to fulfill God's vision of the Beloved Community throughout the world. As we combat evil, let us not let evil fill our hearts. As we struggle to end violence, let us not let violence become our way of life. As we battle terrorism, let us not become terrorists in the process. As we seek to be vigilant, let us not let fear curtail our hospitality. As we pray for peace, let it begin within our own spirits.

*In the peace of the Lord,
Bishop Bruce R. Ough
President, United Methodist Council 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

June 26th: Sermon: Walk the Road. Jesus turned his face toward Jerusalem and the Cross. And then he invited us to come along but, only after we looked at where he was going. My texts are Galatians 5:1, 13–25 and Luke 9:51-62.

July 3rd: Sermon: The Fourth of July and Freedom. We are a free people. But, if we choose, we can give away our freedom. Paul pleads with us not to give our freedom away. My texts are Psalm 30 and Galatians 5:1, 13–25.

Worship Leader's Schedule

June 26

Linda Robinson, **Liturgist**
Elaine Rohrig and Pat Moran, **Greeters**
Erin and Chuck McKibben, **Ushers**

July 3

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**
Mike and Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**
Mike and Renee Fetting, **Ushers**

Announcements

The Men's Club will meet this Saturday, June 25 at Marty's barn. All men are encouraged and invited to attend.

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.

Parent's Night Out:

"The Parents Night Out team is looking for volunteers to help launch this family ministry! We need **6 volunteers for each of the following dates/times.** The initial two PNO evenings will be **July 15th and July 29th from 5:30-9** and we need **volunteers to serve from 5-9:30.** Volunteers will serve by staffing the various stations for the children attending and by serving a pizza dinner to the children. No experience necessary- just a heart to serve! All are welcome and we need many hands in order to ensure the success of this ministry. Once you sign up, a member of the PNO team will contact you with details. Please sign up to share your gifts!"

Volunteers are needed to help with this year's VBS. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board by the side door. If you have questions, please contact Dawn Stevens at (615)-638-8827 or dawnstevens1961@gmail.com details. This Thursday, June 23, interested volunteers are meeting at 6:30 PM. Please plan to attend this

meeting if you are able to volunteer for VBS. You will be blessed! **Dates of VBS: Monday, July 18 through Thursday, July 21. Time is 6:30 – 8:00 PM each day.**

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.

Trinity UMC Directory: We are updating our directory. If you are not listed in the current directory, if you have changed address, phone numbers, email address, we would like to make these changes in the directory. **Please see the document on the table at the back door. Please make your changes on this document.**

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 June

Lynn McGill, Jo Cotton, Mike Fetting, Richard Stevens, Nancy Conway, Kenneth Stevens, Larry Eastwood

Happy Birthday to each of you!