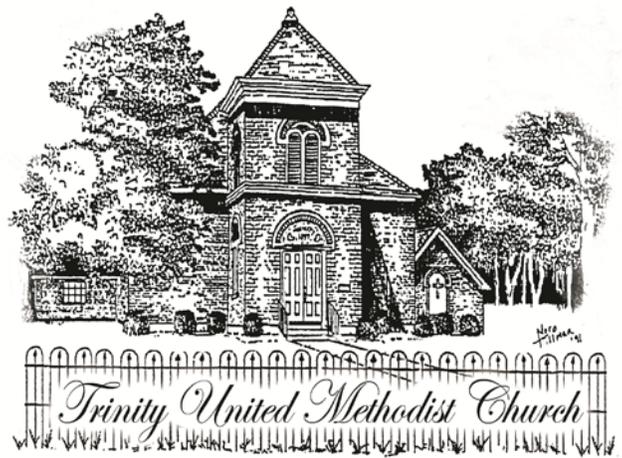




# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## Lord, Send Us Those People Who Need Christ in Their Lives A Story of conviction

*<sup>2</sup> I want their hearts to be encouraged and united in love, so that they may have all the riches of assured understanding and have the knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Col 2:2-3 NRSV*

At least since the time of John Wesley, people in the church have used the term “conviction” to describe a personal revelation, an epiphany, that someone needs God in their life. Paul speaks of this concept when he speaks of the “assured understanding” of the Gospel. Most of us have had a number of such experiences. One of mine came during my ministry at West Nashville UMC.

When I was appointed to West Nashville UMC in 2001, I found a church placed on the border line between relative affluence and deep poverty. West Nashville is located on Charlotte Pike. To the South is a library, a pleasant park, and neighborhood with many upwardly mobile people; young professionals with families and above average income. To the North is a neighborhood called “the Nations” which is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Nashville. Sixty-First Avenue UMC is located in the heart of the Nations community. There were also 75 to 100 homeless persons who ‘resided’ in the area for most of their time. There are a number of wooded areas in the vicinity and some of the homeless made camps in this area or tried to find a suitable hidden place in the Park (the Police would run them out of the park if they were spotted there at night.) Others huddled in alleys and doorways, including the covered porch of the church.

When I arrived at West Nashville I found a solid community of people who were interested in ministry with the poor. Many of these people lived in the community although some came into the city from as far away as Pegram. However, the Church needed more people and donations if it was to remain in ministry in that neighborhood. Also, the presiding Bishop of the Tennessee conference at that time had each church reporting monthly on the membership of the churches as well as professions of faith.

I was certainly interested in having West Nashville grow in membership and ministry, but it seemed wrong to me to be focused on seeking growth for growth's sake. I did not want to pray to God that God send us people so we could pay the bills, including my own salary. After much reflection, I instead focused on what I decided was a suitably pious prayer: “Lord, please send us those people who need Christ in their lives.” Over the next several months I wore that prayer out.

Shortly after I arrived at West Nashville a parishioner suggested that we renew a ministry that had flourished for a while at the church. It was a weekly community meal. This was a meal open to anyone who wished to come, including the homeless and poorer families in the area. Over time this meal became a blessing to many people in the area. By the time I left West Nashville nine years later it was serving around 150 plates of food to around seventy-five people every week. A pantry ministry grew up alongside this ministry, as well as a ministry that provided coats, warm clothes and blankets in the winter months.

I was present at almost every meal, often cooking or serving food. I would also circulate among the people who came, getting to know many of them. It was not unusual for some of these people to seek other help from the church, wanting to speak with me privately about one problem or another. Sometimes there was help that I could offer, but often there was little more I could do for these people.

One night a woman asked to speak with me privately. She had been pointed out to me by others as one of the prostitutes that worked the area. A number of these women were regulars at the Thursday night meal. She might have been as young as thirty but she appeared to be much older than that. When someone asked to speak with me privately I'd ask them to step back into the hall, away from the crowd but in sight of the fellowship hall. Some of the people who came to the meal were most likely dangerous and I did not want to be out of sight of the other volunteers.

This woman's name is lost in my memory, except that I recall it was a 'Southern' name of sorts. I'll call her LuLu. I assumed that she wanted money for rent or utilities, something that we could not provide. Instead she began telling me some of her recent story. She told me that her parental rights for her children had been terminated and she didn't think she'd ever be able to see her children again. She also told me that she had been diagnosed as HIV positive but that it would be at least three months before she could see a specialist for her condition and, even then, she had no idea how she would pay for her medicine. Finally, she was being evicted from the room she rented. She then said these words: "Pastor, I don't know how I can go on like this. I need Jesus in my life."

I stumbled through some prayers with LuLu and she left shortly thereafter. I, however, was aware that I stood convicted by her words. I realized that, despite weeks of "pious" prayer that God should bring us people who needed Christ in their lives, I had, in my heart, been praying that God bring us more of those upwardly mobile, upper middle class families with two and a half kids who could help stabilize the budget of the Church and pay my salary. Instead, God had answered the words I prayed and gone and brought us someone who needed Christ in their life. From that time forward in my ministry at West Nashville, I resolved that I would do my best to welcome every person who came to the Church as someone brought to us by God.

On any given day someone new might come to our doors. They might come for a Sunday morning service, for some event, or come seeking assistance. No matter the reason that they come, nor whether we can help them with the particular problem they might present to us, we must make every effort to welcome them in the name of Jesus Christ. Assume that every such person has been sent to us by God who knows that they need Christ in their life.

## Rev. Will Wells Is the Newly Appointed Pastor for Trinity UMC

Stacy Bell, the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, announced on Sunday April 10<sup>th</sup> that Rev. Will Wells has been appointed as the next pastor of Trinity UMC. Rev. Wells is currently serving Fayetteville First United Methodist. His wife, Pamela, is also a United Methodist pastor and will take over as pastor to College Grove UMC in June. They will live in the parsonage at College Grove. Moving day for Tennessee Conference pastors is June 20<sup>th</sup> and Rev. Well's first Sunday will be July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

### UMC Bishops Call Special Session of General Conference for 2019

April 25, 2017 By [Ricky Harrison](#) [Leave a Comment](#)



Council of Bishops

### The United Methodist Church

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2017

Washington, D.C.: The Council of Bishops (COB) has called a Special Session of the General Conference of The United Methodist Church (UMC) to be held February 23-26, 2019 in St. Louis, Missouri, USA. In announcing the call, COB President Bishop Bruce R. Ough said the Special Session will be held in accordance with Division Two – Section II – Article II of The Constitution of The United Methodist Church as recorded in Paragraph 14 of *The Book of Discipline (2016)*.

The purpose of the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference will be “limited to receiving and acting on a report from the Council of Bishops based on the recommendations of the Commission on a Way Forward.”

The 32-member Commission was appointed by the Council of Bishops to assist the bishops in their charge to lead the church forward amid the impasse related to homosexuality. The Commission's task includes examining paragraphs in *The Book of Discipline* concerning human sexuality and exploring options to strengthen the unity of the church.

Per the Constitution of the Church, the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference shall be composed of the delegates to the 2016 General Conference or their legal successors or alternates, except when a particular annual conference or missionary conference shall prefer to have a new election.

The Secretary of the General Conference will communicate with annual conference secretaries regarding updated delegate information, seating of reserve delegates, and the issuance of new certificates of election for annual conferences choosing to hold new elections.

The Commission on the General Conference and the Business Manager of the General Conference will develop and forward additional information regarding the logistics of the special session of General Conference at the appropriate time.

“The Council of Bishops encourages the entire church to continue in deep, unceasing prayer for Holy Spirit breakthroughs for the Commission on a Way Forward and the Special Session of General Conference,” Bishop Ough said.

## **What will the church do about the Intersexed? Just call them mistakes?**

*Part of the issues that will likely be covered in the Special General Conference include issues of transgender individuals. The following is a blog post from a retired United Methodist Pastor dealing with the concept of “purity” that underlies many of the scriptures people use to justify discrimination against homosexuals and transgender individuals.*

June 28, 2016 by [Christy Thomas](#)

*So what do we do with the [Intersexed](#), those born with ambiguous genitalia? Shall we just call them God’s mistakes and be done with them?*

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### **A black and white world is easier for all**

The world is ever so much easier to deal with when everything divides into two neat categories. This is good, that is bad. This is heaven, that is hell. This is day, that is night. This is right, this is wrong. This is a wave; that is a particle. Except we know matter can be both waves and particles!

This is what much of the “holiness code” found in the Hebrew Scriptures is about: categorizing as much of the world as possible into good (clean) and bad (unclean). Semen and menstrual blood were unclean. Childbirth was unclean. Women, in general, had so many possibilities of being rendered unclean by bodily secretions that they were permanently barred from priestly roles.

Men who had damaged genitalia or physical deformities were also barred permanently from such roles. They were perpetually “unclean.” Certain parameters had to be met to be “clean.” There could be no confusion about the nature of the item/person to be categorized. Therefore, the mingling of unlike things became by definition unclean: the mixture of two kinds of cloth; the mixture of milk and meat.

The mixture of clothing did not escape categorization: men were to wear men’s clothing and women were to wear women’s clothing. Thus the church threw hissy-fits over women wearing slacks, despite the fact that they are significantly more modest than many dresses or skirts.

## **What WILL we do with the Intersexed?**

Separation and exclusion were part of the process. Work and rest had to be rigidly separated. The Sabbath had to be perfectly cleaved from the regular work week. A big part of the holiness code involved the careful separation of that which is male and that which is female. There was no crossover. This is male, that is female. Period.

So what do we do with the [Intersexed](#), those born with ambiguous genitalia? Shall we just call them God's mistakes and be done with them? Because if the holiness codes are to serve as guides to our lives, there is simply no place for such indefinable people, for they don't fit neatly into either "male" or "female" categories.

The interpretation of Scripture texts has always invited disagreement. As much as we would like it, there simply is not one, final word on anything. The size of theological libraries and the varieties of Christian belief and experience bring this home. Furthermore, much of the interpretative process, along with the controversies, has been affected by the growing world of scientific inquiry.

## **Science and faith issues**

Very few still live as those grounded in a geocentric three-storied universe with a fixed earth and the sun, moon and stars revolving around it in concentric spheres. But it is possible to make a case that the Bible teaches it. And while a significant minority (particularly in the US) of Christians still hold to a seven 24-hour-day creation at a fixed point in time in the somewhat recent past, far more do not.

Yet those who appreciate science to illuminate God's way of creation still see the Bible as a trustworthy source of revelation. They have been able to incorporate evidence of the vast age of the universe and the processes of evolutionary change into their interpretations of the poetic creation passages in Genesis.

Many believe that while the Scriptures teach genocide, slavery, and rape of captured women as normal and justified activities, such passages do not reflect the heart of God. Instead, they are the actions of flawed humans who were making their interpretations of how to understand what Pure Holiness demands of impure humanity. Our reasoning powers, our experiences, our faith, family and national traditions, our fears, our neuroses all radically shape how each person reads the Scriptures. Truly no one has the capabilities of a perfectly objective reading.

## **Flaming wars and fractured churches**

Right now, we experience flaming wars and fractured churches over the question of how to decide whether the homosexual community is just making unholy choices from which they can repent or whether one's sexual orientation is actually inborn and unchangeable. Before we can answer that question, I ask us to stop and say, "**What about those born intersexed?**" In this case, we may clearly state that the choice of their non-normative sexuality was made for them. They did not "choose" their "lifestyle" as so many accuse that those in the GLBTI community do.

And I say again, "**Shall we just call them mistakes and be done with it?**"

The Intersexed don't fit anywhere within a Biblical world that insists on a clean delineation between male and female. They mess up every single category. They mess with our minds. They mess with our theologies.

They really mess with the Adam/Eve dichotomy that many call upon to show the model for the only God-approved marriage arrangement and the only place for people to find loving fulfillment of their intimacy/sexuality needs and desires.

Church, we have a problem.

**Will we** be able once again to let science help us interpret the Holy Scriptures in a way that reflects Jesus' ministry of inclusion? After all, he opened the kingdom of heaven to the unclean of the day: menstruating and foreign women—about as bad as it got in those days.

**Will we** deal with the inevitable discomfort at being unable to hold to clean categories but still hold to the redemptive power of the Gospel?

**Will we** be the Church to all people?

**Will we** do the same thing that the courageous first followers of Jesus did and declare boldly, “there is no male or female!”

**Will we** humbly acknowledge both our lack of knowledge and the lack of knowledge of the Biblical writers of human nature even as we continue to acknowledge the God-breathed nature of the Holy Scriptures?

**Will we** say with conviction, “God creates, but does not make mistakes!” Remember what God said over and over again about the created world: “It is good.”

We must address the place in God's creation of those born outside of what we generally call normal. Because when we do, we will also better be able to clarify the rest of our arguments about human sexuality.

I write this as one who has essentially identified with the “Progressive” Christian movement. However, I do not write to demand that those who call themselves “Traditionalists” or “Orthodox” change their minds about their positions. I only ask that all of us hold our positions with humble grace and be willing to ask the hard questions about them.

### **A host of complex questions awaits us**

I am aware that a whole host of complex questions will arise by taking a position that there is not a rigid separation between male and female. By going there, we have to ask again what to do with the biblical witness of the creation narrative and the Gospel passages with Jesus' reference to them:

*“Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”* ([Mt 19:4-6](#))

*Jesus replied. “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”* ([Mk 10:6-9](#))

I honor the Scriptures and believe they give us what we need to enter into God's redeeming place of grace. I am very aware of the slippery slope concerns, that by opening doors to alternate understandings of human sexuality,

we also open doors to deeper and deeper immorality. But two thoughts continually come to mind here. **One, we have wrongly focused the majority of our concerns over immorality on “who is having sex with whom”** rather than the wider question of, “Where do I treat others in a way I personally hate to be treated?” As we rightly enlarge the definition of immorality, we are able to address it more holistically. **Second, our argument about the dangers of the slippery slope needs to be directed to Jesus.** Many of Jesus’ actions as recorded in the Gospels are in direct opposition to the standards set by the Holiness Codes we read in the Hebrew Scriptures. He touched the dead, the leper, the menstruating woman, the foreign woman—all untouchables of the day, all as scandalous to those around him as the emerging GLBTQI world is to those who hold to more traditionalist views. Jesus’ insistence on violating those codes contributed mightily to the need to get him out of the way by the traditionalists of his day. Personally, I think they acted with the best of motives. Purity matters. It did then. And it does now.

But we’re going to have to think more broadly about what purity is if we are going to be carriers of the Gospel to the world as it exists today.

*Please continue in prayer for the United Methodist Church as it struggles with these issues in the coming months.*

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

- VBS director. It’s not too soon to start planning. The director will get to choose the VBS theme and date.
- Nursery level (pre-K) lesson plans coordinator. We have approximately 100 lessons and related crafts ready to use currently. Coordinator will need to refresh these periodically and be able to show others the set up.
- Wardrobe supervisor for the Christmas pageant. We have 70-80 costumes currently and have fabrics, patterns, etc. for several more. This role is about getting the costumes ready for the pageant as well as helping participants get “suited up”.

## **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. 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.

## **Thursday Morning Bible Study**

The Thursday Morning Bible Study Group meets weekly on Thursdays from 10:00 to 11:30 AM. We have room for you! We are currently studying Judges.

## 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

**April 30, 2017: Sermon: Essentials of Christianity: It's All About Christ.** That shouldn't be a controversial proposition. After all, we are called Christians. Yet too often the Church gets caught up in issues that have very little to do with Christ.

**May 7, 2017: Sermon: Essentials of Christianity: We Worship God, Not the Bible.** As Christians we profess that God was revealed to us in Jesus Christ. We turn to the stories of scripture to understand the living Word that is Jesus Christ. But, if we are not careful, we can find ourselves slipping into worshiping the Bible itself instead of God. The Bible becomes, in effect, an idol.

## Worship Leaders Schedule

### April 30

Dana Bauguess, **Liturgist**

Hal and Rachel Newman, **Greeters**

Ken and Jan Strait, **Ushers**

### May 7

Jason Aldred, **Liturgist**

Dorise and Bill LeCates, **Greeters**

Stacy and Jan Bell, **Ushers**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Families are encouraged to **bring diapers** of various sizes as we collect them as part of the “No child wet behind.” A collection box will be in Fellowship Hall for your donations.

The Men’s Group will be providing a **Pancake Breakfast Saturday, May 6. Breakfast will be ready at 8:00 A.M.** There is no charge for the breakfast but donations will be accepted. All proceeds will be used to support the men’s ministries. Bring your friends and neighbors for wonderful food and fellowship.

**An Administrative Council meeting is scheduled for this Saturday, April 29.** All members are part of the Administrative Council. All members are encouraged to attend this meeting at **9:00 A.M.**

A meeting of the **church trustees** will take place this **Sunday, April 30** immediately after church. Church maintenance issues will be discussed. All church attendees and members are encouraged to observe our church and if there are maintenance issues that are identified, please make **Sam Richardson** aware. He requests that your concerns be written. All trustees are encouraged to attend this meeting.

We will be serving food to the congregants at **61<sup>st</sup> UMC**. Additional dates for providing and serving food are: **May 20 and June 17**. Sixty-First Ave. UMC will be closing in late June. This is a wonderful opportunity for serving others. Please make **Charles Wilson** aware if you are able to serve.

**GraceWorks** has a shortage on many items in our food pantry, and we need your help restocking it! Here is a list of some very critical items needed in our food pantry: **Critical Needs:** Canned green vegetables (not green beans), Canned beans, Canned meat (not tuna), Cereal, Hamburger Helper type boxed meals, Soup. Please support this important ministry with your regular donations. The box is located beside the side door.

**The Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School Class:** 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, Houston Hartsock, Erin McKibben**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**