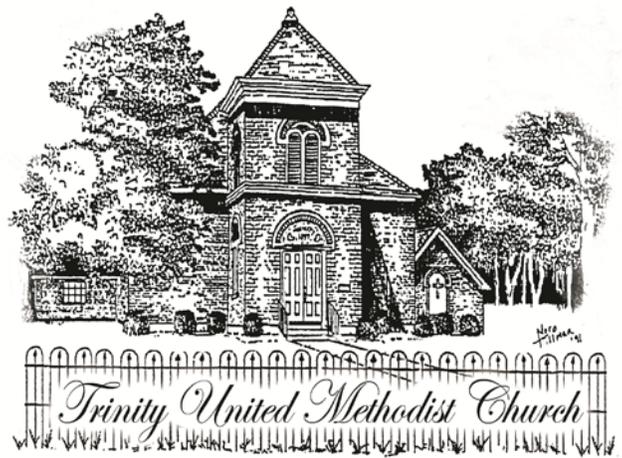




Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



2084 Wilson Pike · Franklin, TN 37067 · 615.794.2665
Pastor Dennis Meaker: 615.794.2665 · djmeaker@gmail.com

February 1, 2017

Understanding the New Testament Philippians

*9 Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11 NRSV*

Scholars agree that the Letter to the Philippians was written by Paul. However, like 2 Corinthians, it appears to be a conflation of two letters; that is, two separate letters written by Paul to the Church at Corinth were edited into one letter.

In the first two chapters Paul is expressing his thanks to the Philippians for their support of him while he is in prison. We don't know why Paul was imprisoned and we don't know where he was imprisoned. In verse 1.13 he references preaching the Gospel to the Imperial Guard which makes scholars believe that he was being held in an Imperial City, possibly Rome, Ephesus or Caesarea. Paul sees this as suffering for the sake of the Gospel and proclaims that his imprisonment has simply given him access to a new group of people to evangelize: Caesar's Praetorian Guard. He also mentions a disciple named Epaphroditus beginning in 2:25. He describes him as a messenger from Philippi and a minister to Paul. Epaphroditus apparently came to Paul to deliver some gifts and then to help Paul. In the process he became very ill and almost died. Epaphroditus is upset because the Church at Philippi has learned of his illness and its members are distressed. He regrets that he has caused the people at Philippi this distress and is heading back to Philippi. However, in verse 4:18 Paul refers to receiving gifts from Philippi delivered by Epaphroditus. Accordingly, scholars believe that chapters 3 and 4 represent a letter of thanks sent when the gift was delivered and chapters 1 and 2 represent a letter sent either with Epaphroditus when he returned to Philippi or a letter sent through someone else, possibly Timothy, after Epaphroditus returned to Philippi.

One of the principal themes in Philippians is that suffering for the Gospel is an inevitable result of accepting Christ. This is not an attempt to glorify the idea of suffering but to explain the inevitable effect of preaching the Gospel and to assure the Church that it was not a sign of the weakness of God or Christ. In the eyes of many in that culture, the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus was an indication that he was a false God or that he had no support from God. Recall how the disciples fled after the arrest of Jesus. The Messiah was not supposed to be arrested and

crucified. Therefore, in the minds of many, Jesus could not have been the Messiah. Likewise, for the opponents of Paul and the church, they would point to Paul's imprisonment as a sign of God's disfavor.

Preaching the Gospel brought the Church into conflict with the local Jewish communities, into conflict with those who worshipped other Gods and often into conflict with Roman authorities as the Roman Emperors were treated as living Gods. We can get some sense of the peril associated with preaching the Gospel by looking at the correspondence between the emperor Trajan and one of his administrators, Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia. Although this correspondence is dated around 112 CE, perhaps 50 or more years after the writing of Philippians, the attitudes expressed reflect just how precarious life could be in the Roman Empire. Pliny, a shameless "brown-noser," is constantly asking Trajan for guidance. He writes to Trajan to ask how Christians should be treated and, in the course of that request, explains what he has been doing:

*In the meantime, this is the plan which I have adopted in the case of those Christians who have been brought before me. I ask them whether they are Christians, if they say "Yes," then I repeat the question the second time, and also a third -- warning them of the penalties involved; and if they persist, I order them away to prison. For I do not doubt that -- be their admitted crime what it may -- **their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy surely ought to be punished.***

Curious as to why these Christians should be so persistent and obstinate in their beliefs, he undertakes an "investigation:"

*I then thought it the more needful to get at the facts behind their statements. Therefore I placed two women, called "deaconesses," **under torture**, but I found only a debased superstition carried to great lengths, so I postponed my examination, and immediately consulted you.*

Trajan offered Pliny the following guidance:

You have adopted the right course, my dear Pliny, in examining the cases of those cited before you as Christians; for no hard and fast rule can be laid down covering such a wide question. The Christians are not to be hunted out. If brought before you, and the offense is proved, they are to be punished, but with this reservation -- if any one denies he is a Christian, and makes it clear he is not, by offering prayer to our gods, then he is to be pardoned on his recantation, no matter how suspicious his past.

Over time, being a Christian was a crime punishable by imprisonment or death. As noted by Pliny, just being obstinate in their belief was a sufficient basis for punishment since such persons were likely trouble-makers of some sort.

Paul challenged the Philippians to imitate Christ as they live out the Gospel. In doing so he incorporates an early Christian hymn, cited above, that is probably one of the most beloved passages in the New Testament. For our sake, Christ accepted the ultimate humiliation and punishment despite being the equal of God. Therefore, the Church ought to be selfless in its living out of the Gospel.

Next week: Colossians

United Methodist Council of Bishops Issues a Statement Regarding the Executive Order on Immigration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 30, 2017

Minneapolis: Bishop Bruce R. Ough, president of the United Methodist Council of Bishops, issued a statement regarding President Trump's executive order on immigration at a press conference sponsored by the Minnesota Council of Churches. The event, held at Hennepin United Methodist Church, gathered faith leaders to discuss the topic of immigration. Bishop Ough participated in today's event in his role as resident bishop of the Dakotas-Minnesota Area of The United Methodist Church. The statement maintains The United Methodist Church's unity in standing with other faith traditions to denounce the order, as well as calling all to remember Jesus' words from Matthew 10:40: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me."

"I call upon the people of The United Methodist Church to see the face of Christ in the refugee," Bishop Ough said. "Say 'no' to the walling off of our country and our hearts and say 'yes' to their hope – our hope – for new life. Let us unite and work together to bring the soul of this country to a living birth!"

The full text of Bishop Ough's statement follows:

Today, I stand with colleagues representing several faith traditions to strongly denounce President Trump's widespread attack on immigrants and refugees. President Trump's reckless, ill-conceived executive orders will divide families, impose a religious test for Muslims facing forced migration, penalize communities providing sanctuary and wall off the United States from our neighbors. These actions are expensive, unnecessary and profoundly antithetical to our values of compassion, dignity and justice for all individuals regardless of nationality, religious affiliation or legal status.

The biblical witness is clear and unambiguous. Walls are unbiblical. Hospitality is biblical. Denying one's neighbor is unbiblical. Welcoming the stranger is biblical. It is not surprising that Judaism, Christianity and Islam teach the reign of God as a banquet to which all peoples are invited. We are to welcome the sojourner, love our neighbor and stand with the most vulnerable among us. These very values from our sacred texts and faith traditions are currently reflected in the mandate of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and must not be usurped by any executive order. Orders, legislation or administrative actions that would have the U.S. State Department disqualify refugees from protection and resettlement based on their nationality or religion are a denial of the very principles this nation was built upon, contradict the legacy of leadership our country has offered the world, and dishonor our shared humanity.

Jesus was explicit in his teachings. In Matthew's gospel Jesus says, "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me." (Matthew 10:40).

Refugees and immigrants arrive among us, not only with their needs, but also bearing gifts of energy, resourcefulness, love of liberty and hope. These gifts have always contributed to the renewal of our society and the church.

Above all, these strangers bring to us the Christ. When we welcome a stranger we welcome Jesus, and when we welcome Jesus we welcome our creator. Refugees, immigrants, those yearning to be free—these are the ones whom Jesus spoke about when he said, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me” (Matthew 25:35).

Repeatedly Jesus tells his disciples:

*“For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”
(Matthew 16:25)*

The original Greek language is far more poetic, powerful and prophetic. In finer translations of the Greek language, we hear Jesus saying:

“Whoever seeks to build a wall around their soul shall destroy it; whoever tears down the wall (around their soul) shall bring their soul to a living birth.”

The very soul of our country is at stake. When we abandon strangers who are at risk of bigotry, xenophobia and violence we not only destroy their hope, we destroy our own souls. When we fail to assist the refugees fleeing danger, we not only place them in harm’s way, we do harm to our own souls. When we build walls of concrete, or walls of divisive rhetoric, or walls of fear, or walls of immoral immigration policies, we build a wall around our own souls.

Christ calls us to tear down the walls around our souls that we might live fully and abundantly. Thus, I call on the Trump administration and the U.S. Congress to rescind the harmful executive orders and save the soul of our country. I call upon the people of The United Methodist Church to see the face of Christ in the refugee. Say “no” to the walling off of our country and our hearts and say “yes” to their hope – our hope – for new life. Let us unite and work together to bring the soul of this country to a living birth!

*Bishop Bruce R. Ough, President
Council of Bishops
The United Methodist Church
January 30, 2017*

Media contact:
Diane Degnan
presscenter@umcom.org
615.742.5406

Please be in Prayer for the Families of Rev. Paula Hoos and Pegine Hill

We were saddened and shocked to receive the following news on January 23rd from Rick Hoos, husband of Rev. Paula Hoos who served Trinity UMC as pastor for five years.

Sad unbelievable news. Paula has died of an overwhelming pneumonia here in New Zealand. We've both been sick off and on this whole tour. Yesterday she got dramatically worse, and died this evening in the Christchurch Hospital ICU despite getting prompt extended excellent care. I am functioning in shock.

Paula was both a colleague and a friend. We started Vanderbilt Divinity School together in 1997. At that time she was already a Professor of Anatomy in the Medical School. Like me she was answering a call to ministry late in life. Many of you have spoken to me about the impact her ministry had on your lives.

The memorial service for Paula will be held on Friday, February 3rd at 2:00 at Christ United Methodist Church. Visitation will be from 1:00 to 2:00.

Pegine Hill, a long-time member of Trinity UMC and treasured friend of several of our members, also passed away unexpectedly. Her service will be held at Trinity UMC on Saturday, February 4th at 3:00. A reception for family and friends will follow in the Fellowship Hall.

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 received two new members of the Group when we started up again after the Christmas holidays but there is room for more. We are currently studying Genesis.

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

February 5. Sermon: God and Evolution, Faith and Science. Some people have begun to treat observable scientific facts as threatening to Christian Faith. However, the truth can never threaten our faith. My texts are John 1:1-5 and Gen 1:1-2:4a.

February 12th. Sermon: Working the Garden. We are not in the business of saving souls. Salvation is the work of God. Rather, we are called to tend the garden.

Worship Leaders Schedule

February 5

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Tommy and Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Marty and Dana Bauguess, **Ushers**

February 12

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**

Dorise and Bill LeCates, **Greeters**

Ken and Jan Strait, **Ushers**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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.

A joint meeting of the **Finance Committee and the Trustees** will meet again following worship this Sunday. Reports from various members will be provided related to projects being pursued at the parsonage. If you are a member of these groups, please plan to attend.

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. There are a number of openings for volunteers.

The Nanette Crowell Companions in Christ Sunday School Class is both learning and enjoying a new discussion-based study. We are reading a book, "Ask." This book explores "faith questions in a skeptical age."

We enjoy discussion about what we are reading 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 February

Donnie Hartsock, Joyce Edwards, Bert Winton, Maurice Edwards, Jeanne Rybolt, Patricia Stevens, Eric Crowell.

Happy Birthday to each of you!