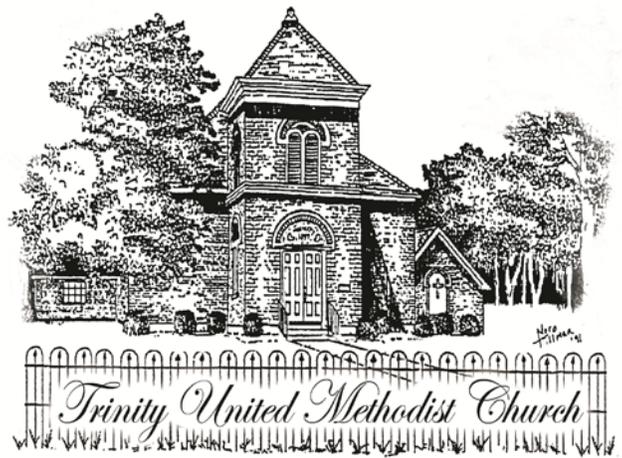




Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the New Testament Colossians

¹² As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. ¹³ Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col 3:12-17 NRSV

As with Ephesians, scholars question that Colossians is an authentic letter of Paul. The most persuasive reasons for questioning authorship are a distinctly different writing style and, as will be discussed below, a very different theology of resurrection than is found in Romans and First Corinthians.

Colossians is principally concerned with the issue of false teachings that are leading people away from the Gospel as preached by Paul. The exact nature of these teachings is hinted at in Col 3:8-23. It seems that the false teachers are focusing on worship of "elemental spirits" and even of angels, emphasizing the importance of "visions" and also emphasizing Jewish law observance. As in the authentic letters of Paul, the writer emphasizes the "spiritual circumcision" of the believers over the physical circumcision. The writer also emphasizes that there is no need to worship elemental spirits and angels, or comply with Jewish law when they have already accepted Christ who is supreme:

²⁰ If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the universe, why do you live as if you still belonged to the world? Why do you submit to regulations, ²¹ "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch"? ²² All these regulations refer to things that perish with use; they are simply human commands and teachings. ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-imposed piety, humility, and severe treatment of the body, but they are of no value in checking self-indulgence.

3 So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, ³ for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory. Col 2:20-3:4 NRSV

As in Paul's letter to the Galatians, the writer is encouraging his people not to fall into the trap created by these false teachings. However, one reason scholars question that Paul is the author of this letter is his almost disinterested approach to these false teachings and their teachers. In Galatians, in his deep anger, he speaks of wishing that the false teachers were castrated and he chides the Galatians for having lost their minds. Here the writer simply mocks the law as something that is no longer relevant.

The writing style used by the writer in Colossians is very different than in Paul's undisputed letters. Paul tends toward a short and crisp writing style. The writer of Colossians, however, uses long convoluted sentences. This difference does not show up in the translation since it would make the English very difficult to understand. But it is very obvious in the original Greek.

The writer of Colossians also has a distinctly different theology of the resurrection than that expressed in Romans or First Corinthians. For example, in First Corinthians Paul places our resurrection as coming at the return of Christ at the end of time:

*²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹ For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²² for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, **then at his coming** those who belong to Christ. 1 Cor 15:20-23 NRSV*

Likewise in Romans Paul says this about the resurrection:

*What then are we to say? Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? ³ Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too **might** walk in newness of life. Romans 6:1-4 NRSV*

Paul agrees with the statement in Colossians that we are baptized into Christ's death but asserts that the resurrection will come on Christ's return. See also 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 where Paul describes the Returned Christ calling the living and the dead to him on the last day.

The writer of Colossians, however, seems to have a theology of "realized" resurrection. For him, our baptism into Christ's death is accompanied by our baptism into Christ's resurrection:

¹² when you were buried with him in baptism, you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. ¹³ And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. Colossians 2:12-14

Which theology is correct? Maybe that's not the question. Whenever scripture speaks about death it is speaking about something that we can't fully know while we live. We are trying to use the language of the living to describe a reality that can only be experienced after life. This particular "conflict" in scripture shows up in both the Old and New Testaments. As I search the scriptures for the Gospel in this regard I find great comfort in the words of Psalm 139:

*⁷ Where can I go from your spirit?
Or where can I flee from your presence?*

⁸ *If I ascend to heaven, you are there;
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.*
⁹ *If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
¹⁰ even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast...*
I come to the end—I am still with you. Ps 139 7-10; 18b

Finally, contemplate these words of guidance from the writer of Colossians that I think does speak the gospel for my life:

¹² *As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.* ¹³ *Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.* ¹⁴ *Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.* ¹⁵ *And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.* ¹⁶ *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.* ¹⁷ *And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Col 3:12-17*

Next week: 1 and 2 Thessalonians

For Everything There is a Time

So it says in Ecclesiastes. For reasons that I will try and explain in more detail below, I have decided to retire at the end of this Conference year. A new pastor will be appointed to begin leading Trinity UMC on July 1.

I first perceived a call to ministry in 1991. I was a partner at Waller, Lansden, Dortch and Davis, one of the top law firms in Nashville. I had three children, none of whom had graduated high school, as well as a mortgage and all the other obligations that go along with marriage and family. Becoming a United Methodist Pastor made no economic sense. Accordingly, I took two aspirin and got a good night's sleep. Six years, and many bottles of aspirin later, I entered Vanderbilt Divinity School. I entered full time ministry in 1998 while still in school. My income dropped by 80% but we somehow managed. I closed my last case in December of 1999 and subsequently put my Law License on inactive status. It's been twenty years since I entered Vanderbilt and all our kids are out of college and on their own. I've never regretted my decision. Although I missed the practice of law I never questioned that I was doing what I should be doing.

I've been very blessed in my appointments, both by the people in my churches and in the longevity of my appointments. My first appointment was to a four-point charge in Maury County, the Santa Fe ("FEE") circuit. There is a painting of one of those churches on my office wall. I served the Santa Fe Circuit three years. I had asked to stay at Santa Fe the third year because the people had been so supportive of the juggling that was required for me to both serve the Churches and go to school. I was appointed to West Nashville UMC in 2001. I served West Nashville until 2010. I was appointed to Trinity in June of 2010. Some of the people I entered ministry with have had six or more appointments in the same period of time. Some have also run afoul of some very dysfunctional congregations. People like you have made my years in the ministry a true blessing.

As many of you know, in 2005 I was diagnosed with Congestive Heart Failure, caused by a virus that attacked my heart. The virus seriously weakened my heart and that condition has limited the extent of my physical activity ever since. Because of the available medications and treatments, by 2006 I was able to continue working fulltime although in 2012 I had to have a pacemaker/defibrillator implanted. The last eighteen months, however, it has become harder for me to give my ministry here at Trinity the time it needs. I am often very tired. In fairness to the Church, after much prayer and reflection, I decided that I would retire at the end of this Conference year.

I have notified Stacy Bell, the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Committee of my plans, as well as Allen Black our District Superintendent. It is still early in the appointment process for the Conference so they will have adequate time to consider who will be appointed. As United Methodists, we understand that the Bishop and the Cabinet make appointments but they will take into account the needs of the Church in making that appointment. Allen Black will also consult with the Staff Parish Committee regarding the appointment of the next pastor and communicate any desires and concerns to the Bishop and Cabinet.

In the meantime, there is still a lot happening in the coming months. We are about to start Lent, there is the Easter Egg Hunt to plan as well as Holy week and Easter services. With the coming of Spring we will look again to running our Parents' Night Out Program, incorporating the lessons learned last Fall. I have asked Donnie to schedule an Administrative Board/Program Council meeting for later this month.

Every day is a Day of New Beginnings as one our hymns says. This is one of those. Should any of you have any questions about this process I'll be glad to discuss it with you.

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

We were saddened and shocked at the passing of Rev. Paula Hoos and Pegine Hill. Dealing with death is never easy and especially when those deaths are unexpected as was true for both of these people. Paula's service was held last Friday and Pegine's last Saturday. Please continue to be in prayer for the families of Paula and Pegine.

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 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. My texts are Deuteronomy 30:15–20 and 1 Corinthians 3:1–9.

February 19th. Sermon: You Shall Be Holy. I can't speak for you, but I've never felt 'Holy,' let alone 'perfect.' Yet the passages this week call us to be Holy and Perfect. Should we give up right now? My texts are Leviticus 19:1–2, 9–18 and Matthew 5:38–48.

Worship Leaders Schedule

February 12

Liturgist

Dorise and Bill LeCates, Greeters

Ken and Jan Strait, Ushers

February 19

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Julia Moore and Maurice Edwards, **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.

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!