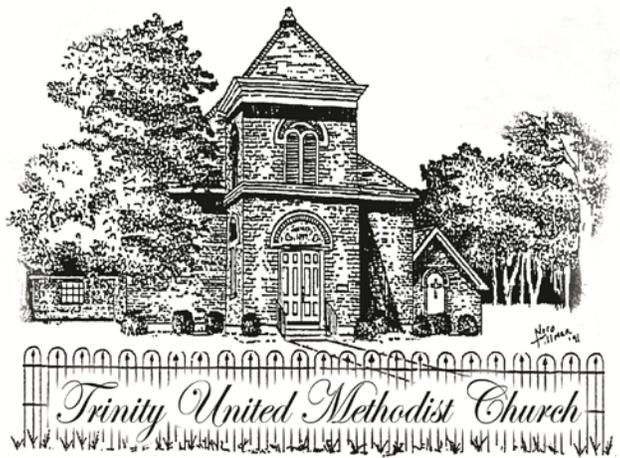




Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the New Testament The Letter to the Hebrews

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ² looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

The letter to the Hebrews is not, strictly speaking, a letter at all. Although the ending includes some words of a personal nature, including mention of someone named Timothy, the letter itself is in the form of a sermon. In fact, the author describes the letter as a “word of exhortation” in verse 13:22. We do not know who wrote the letter or to whom it was written. It gained acceptance as scripture among the churches sometime in the third century.

The primary focus of Hebrews is arguing that Christ and Christianity are superior to Judaism. Among other things the author discusses how Christ is superior to the angels and to the prophets, including Moses. He asserts that the new covenant through Jesus Christ is superior to the covenant of the law made with the people of Israel. He also discusses the superiority of Christ as a Priest from the line of Melchizedek to the priests descended from Levi. Melchizedek is a priest mentioned in Genesis 14:17-20 who was honored by Abraham. Finally he asserts that Christ is the perfect sacrifice that obviates the need for the sacrifices that were made in the Temple. Parts of the letter are troubling in that it provides a very warped view of the Jewish tradition and conflicts with much of the theology proclaimed by the apostle Paul. It is thought that the community to whom the author was writing might have been a gentile community leaning toward conversion to Judaism.

It is clear that the community receiving this letter has suffered persecution and could expect to be persecuted again. Thus the author says:

³² But recall those earlier days when, after you had been enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³ sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and persecution, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴ For you had compassion for those who were in prison, and you cheerfully accepted the plundering of your possessions, knowing that you yourselves possessed something better and more lasting. ³⁵ Do not, therefore, abandon that confidence of yours; it brings a great reward. ³⁶ For you need endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. Hebrews 10:32-36

See also Hebrews 12:7-12. As has been discussed previously, the persecution of Christians was somewhat haphazard and arbitrary. Quite often the authorities did not go looking for Christians unless they had done something that drew attention to themselves. Yet, when they were targeted, the persecution could be quite brutal. The most likely reason for persecution was probably the refusal to worship the Roman gods, including the Roman Emperors, although the practice of communion also generated claims that Christians were killing infants and eating their flesh and drinking their blood.

Putting aside some of the anti-Jewish rhetoric, there is a message here for the 21st century church. Following Christ is likely to result in opposition, even if not persecution. And we are to keep in mind that the Body of Christ includes all those who have gone before us as well as those who make up the church today. Finally, there is the reminder that God, through Christ, knows what it is to live and die as a human being. Hebrews 4:14. Through Christ we worship a God who understands us in every regard.

Next week: James

Scholarship Opportunity

One of our members, Jean Robinson, is a member of Alpha Delta Kappa, an organization for Women Educators. The organization is offering a \$1000 scholarship to a deserving young woman who is currently pursuing an Education degree or to a High School Senior who intends to pursue an Education degree. The application deadline is April 7th. If you are interested, or know of a young woman who would be, applications for the scholarship are available in the pastor's office.

The Journey to Easter

The first five Sundays in Lent I will offer a sermon series titled, "The Journey to Easter." The series, based upon the Lectionary readings for those Sundays, will focus on our life journey as Disciples of Christ. I have also written a Lenten Study Guide for this series. The Adult Sunday School class will be using this study for the first five Sundays in Lent. For those not attending Sunday School, but who wish to use the guide, I have made it available on our web site in the Newsletter section.

Volunteer Opportunities

- Host for the Easter Egg Hunt. The hunt has been held the Saturday before Easter for the last couple of years. "Training" and some supplies are available for this event.....
- 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 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 Exodus.

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

March 12th. Sermon: The Journey to Easter: *There's No Map*. If we are on a journey, where's the map? The bad news is that there is no map. The good news is that a map is not required. What is needed is commitment to the journey.

March 19th. Sermon: The Journey to Easter: *God Walks With Us*. If this is a journey, where is the map; the document that tells us where we're going? The bad news is that there isn't a map. The good news is that we don't need one. You see, what's called for is commitment to the journey itself, not a map.

Worship Leaders Schedule

March 12th

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**

Maurice and Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**

Joann Harper and Linda Robinson, **Ushers**

March 19

Linda Robinson, **Liturgist**

Gina and Brandon Stewart, **Greeters**

Mike and Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Brittany Collom and Houston Hartsock will marry this Saturday, March 11 at 2:00 PM here at Trinity. All are invited to attend this wedding. The RSVP email address is hartsockwedding@gmail.com or tell Brittany or Houston of your plan to attend.

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 are currently enjoying our lenten study, "The Journey to Easter." We enjoy discussion about what we are reading and the questions at the end of each chapter generate interesting discussion as well as thoughtfulness. 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 March

Pat Moran, Marty Bauguess, Sherry Locke, Lilly Otto, Herb Haynes, Ava Fetting, Isabella Stafford

Happy Birthday to each of you!