



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Worshipping Ignorance Rather Than God

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, 2 the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3 Then God said, "Let there be light..." Genesis 1:1-3 NRSV

In the early 1600s, Galileo Galilei was ordered to stop teaching the "Copernican theory." The Copernican theory had been declared heretical because it was deemed to contradict scripture. The Copernican theory stated that the Earth was not the center of the universe but rather that the sun was the center of the universe and that the Earth, along with other planets and stars, circled the sun. No one today questions that proposition insofar as it describes the solar system. We have sent devices and people into space and we know that the Copernican theory is correct in so far as it describes the solar system. Even Copernicus had not grasped the vastness of the universe; had not envisioned a universe filled with galaxies and other astronomical wonders. He had not envisioned a solar system that orbited a gigantic black hole at the center of the galaxy and that was itself traveling through space at break-neck speeds. We can look back now and marvel at the ignorance of those Church leaders who condemned people to torture and death in a misguided attempt to "protect" the bible and God from the discoveries of science.

Yet, 400 years later, the same sort of attacks continue to take place. People still seek to suppress the discoveries of science in the ignorant and harmful belief that they are being faithful to the bible. We are limiting the education of our children, placing them at a disadvantage in the international community, by limiting the teaching of science and by teaching pseudo-science.

The Clergy Letter Project was started thirteen years ago by a university science professor named Michael Zimmerman. Professor Zimmerman believes that "religion and science are compatible and [there is a need] to elevate the quality of the debate of this issue." <http://www.theclergyletterproject.org> Over twelve thousand Pastors, Priests, Rabbis and Imams from around the world have signed a statement supporting the proposition that studying science and faith are not antithetical. The Christian variant of the letter states, in part:

We the undersigned, Christian clergy from many different traditions, believe that the timeless truths of the Bible and the discoveries of modern science may comfortably coexist. We believe that the theory of evolution is a foundational scientific truth, one that has stood up to rigorous scrutiny and upon which much of human knowledge and achievement rests. To reject this truth or to treat it as "one theory among others" is to deliberately embrace scientific ignorance and transmit such ignorance to our children.

I signed the letter when it was first proposed in 2004.

This resurgence of religious opposition to science is of real concern to everyone, especially to parents of children still in elementary or high school. Tennessee, like many Southern states, has passed legislation that allows such pseudo-science as “Intelligent Design” or “Creationism” to be taught in public schools as “alternate theories.” The supposed rationale for this legislation is to allow all theories to be taught. However, the legislation’s use of the term “theory” is unrelated to a scientific understanding of a “theory.”

A scientific theory is derived by forming a hypothesis regarding physical laws based upon observation. The hypothesis is then tested by experimentation to see if it accurately predicts how those physical laws work. The results of the experimentation are observed and the hypothesis refined. The method and results of the experimentation are carefully recorded to allow others to reproduce the experiment and observe the results for themselves. Once the hypothesis has been thoroughly tested experimentally, it rises to a level of a theory. A theory may still be wrong in some respects but it provides a basis for forming new hypotheses and new experiments.

A theory is not some wild conjecture totally lacking in scientific evidence but a thoroughly observed phenomenon that has been experimentally tested and proven by hundreds, thousands or millions of scientists. Our science is based upon the work of scientists throughout the centuries patiently building upon what others learned through careful experimentation. As Sir Isaac Newton said in a letter to a colleague, “If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.”

In contrast is the pseudo “theory” of “Creationism” or “Intelligent Design.” Rather than starting from observation of the physical world and moving forward by careful experimentation, intelligent design declares that there was a creator who created all that exists. This is a religious proposition with which I and many Christians agree. However, it IS NOT a proposition that can be proven by applying the scientific method. There is no experiment that can be created by human beings that will prove that God created the Universe or prove that God did not create the universe. Belief in God as the creator of the universe is a matter of faith, not science. There is no science of Creationism or Intelligent Design. Teaching these propositions as science not only undermines our children’s education but, in public schools, is unconstitutional as an establishment of religion. As Christians we profess belief in the existence of a God who cannot be seen but whose existence we nevertheless experience. Science cannot prove the existence of God nor can it disprove the existence of God. Science can help us understand the complexity of the universe God created. For many scientists, the more they see of the wonders of the universe the greater their faith.

John Wesley believed that our faith beliefs must be reasonable. He proclaimed that he would as soon give up his soul as his God given power to reason. Our faith proclaims that God created the universe and that God desires us to live in the universe, sharing it with all the rest of God’s creations. We should move forward with the call to live in the Kingdom of God and live in wonder at the complexity of the universe being disclosed by modern science. For the sake of our children, speak out against the effort to teach religion as science in our schools.

Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations

Bishop Robert Schnase has written a book titled *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. Regardless of the shape that ministry takes at Trinity UMC, there are practices that are followed by healthy growing churches. Healthy growing churches practice:

1. Radical Hospitality
2. Passionate Worship
3. Intentional Faith Development
4. Risk-taking Mission and Service and
5. Extravagant Generosity.

Copies of this book are available in my office for those members who wish to read it.

Please be in prayer for our church as we begin a new season with new leadership. Please come and participate in the prayer, study and discussion of these issues by the Dreams and Visions Committee over the coming months. We are the Body of Christ, called to live in this world as the presence of Christ. Join with your fellow members as we seek to discern where God is calling us into ministry in this community.

Risk-Taking Mission and Service

What is meant by Risk-taking mission and service? It is mission and service that takes us outside of our comfort zones; mission and service that we've never attempted before and to people outside of our everyday community. It might include a mission trip to another country, or mission and ministry in an area of our own community that is new and strange to us. It might also mean mission and service in connection with unpopular causes, maybe even causes that we are struggling with.

Two scriptures come to mind when I think of risk-taking ministry and service. The first is the book of Jonah. Jonah did not want to minister to the people of Nineveh. He hated the people of Nineveh and would have been happy if God chose to wipe the city from the face of the earth. When told to go and preach to the people of Nineveh, he ran in the other direction. It was only after his time in the belly of the great fish that he changed his mind and went to Nineveh. Jonah had forgotten that the ministry was God's ministry, not Jonah's.

Imagine Jonah going to his friends and neighbors seeking help with this ministry. Most likely, everyone in his community felt the same way about Nineveh as he did. "You want me to give you money so you can go help Nineveh? No way!" That is an example of risk-taking ministry. Today it might mean a mission trip to Cuba or working with undocumented immigrants. Risk-taking ministry can take many shapes.

Consider also Matthew 25:31-46. In this passage, Christ reminds us that the smallest act of compassion we do for someone is done for Christ. In effect, each person we encounter offers a chance to encounter the living Christ. In helping others, we open a way for God to work in our own lives. We give God room to change us.

Extravagant Generosity

Let's begin with what Extravagant Generosity does not mean. It **does not** mean that you give everything you own to the church. It does mean that you accept that all that you have, all that we all have, is a blessing from the hand of God. Take a moment to consider Deuteronomy 8:11-18, presented here from "The Message" translation of the bible:

Make sure you don't forget God, your God, by not keeping his commandments, his rules and regulations that I command you today. Make sure that when you eat and are satisfied, build pleasant houses and settle in, see your herds and flocks flourish and more and more money come in, watch your standard of living going up and up—make sure you don't become so full of yourself and your things that you forget God, your God, the God who delivered you from Egyptian slavery; the God who led you through that huge and fearsome wilderness, those desolate, arid badlands crawling with fiery snakes and scorpions; the God who gave you water gushing from hard rock; the God who gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never heard of, in order to give you a taste of the hard life, to test you so that you would be prepared to live well in the days ahead of you.

If you start thinking to yourselves, "I did all this. And all by myself. I'm rich. It's all mine!"—well, think again. Remember that God, your God, gave you the strength to produce all this wealth so as to confirm the covenant that he promised to your ancestors—as it is today.

One of the principle themes of scripture, and one that may well consume more pages of scripture than any other, is the problem wealth and possessions pose for us in our relationship with God and one another. It is very easy to allow our desire for wealth and the security it represents to dominate our lives. Recognizing that all we have is a blessing from God, meant to be shared and used not just for our well-being but for the well-being of others, is an important aspect of discipleship.

In speaking with the church at Corinth (2 Cor. 8:13-15), Paul dealt with the fear some had that they were being asked to give up too much:

¹³ I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between ¹⁴ your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. ¹⁵ As it is written, "The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."

The call to extravagant generosity is a call to proportional giving: giving from our abundance in proportion to that abundance. In many ways, it is the hardest spiritual practice for us to embrace.

Pick up the book, "*Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*" from Rev. Meaker. There are still some copies available in the pastor's office and more are readily obtainable. A copy of the book will be given to any member who wishes to read it. This book will provide a foundation for all we seek to accomplish in our effort over the coming years to discern where God is calling this church to minister in this community.

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 10th 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 20th and Rev. Well's first Sunday will be July 2nd.

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".

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 1 Samuel. The last bible study before the Summer Break will be June 15th.

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

May 28, 2017: Sermon: Essentials of Christianity: We Are the Body of Christ. I firmly believe that the modern church has lost the fundamental understanding proclaimed by the Apostle Paul to the Church at Corinth. *"You are the Body of Christ and individually members of it."* 1 Corinthians 12:27. After the proclamation, *"He is Risen,"* I consider these words to be the most important in scripture. My texts are Matthew 22:34-39 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31.

June 4, 2017: Sermon: In My Father's House... Wherever I've served over the last 19 years I've always offered to preach on scriptures that were of interest or concern to members of the congregation. However, very few people have taken me up on that offer. As I approach my last few Sundays here at Trinity I'm pleased to be able to offer a sermon on a requested scripture passage, John 14:2: *In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?* This is also Pentecost. My texts are Acts 2:1-21 and John 14:1-14.

Worship Leaders Schedule

May 28

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Gina and Brandon Stewart, **Greeters**

Maurice and Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

June 4

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**

Dorise and Bill LeCates, **Greeters**

Jan and Stacy Bell, **Ushers**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

We will be serving food to the congregants at **61st UMC**. The remaining date for providing and serving food is **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 May

Tommy Cotton, Laura Rinne, Sam Richardson, Jim Winton

Happy Birthday to each of you!