



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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August 7, 2013

## The New Math of Jesus

*“Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.  
<sup>54</sup> Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; <sup>55</sup> for  
my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. John 6:53-55*

*<sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from  
me you can do nothing. John 15:5 NRSV*

Ever hear of the New Math? When my eldest daughter started school the New Math idea in schools was probably around 10 years old. It wasn't the way I learned math, and it was somewhat hard for me to help her. They introduced symbolic mathematical relationships very early. If  $a=b$ , and  $b=c$  then  $a=c$ . If A is part of subset B and B is part of subset C, then a and b are part of a subset of C. I understood it, I thought, but it was difficult to discuss with an eight year old. Who would have thought that you would turn to the Gospel of John and find Jesus speaking the language of the New Math?

Jesus said and did some shocking things according to the Gospels, but it is likely that nothing was more shocking than these words: “Eat my flesh, drink my blood.” In the vast majority of cultures around the world cannibalism is viewed with horror. From that standpoint alone these words are shocking. But for law observant Jews they must have been wholly repugnant.

In scripture, and under the law, the source of life was to be found in the blood. So the law prohibited the eating of the life blood of all animals. Jews could not eat meat that had not been properly bled after slaughter and Jesus offers them a picture of drinking his blood. Jews could only eat certain types of meat from certain animals and Jesus offers them a picture of eating human flesh. We who grew up in the Church, who have always celebrated the Eucharist, have a hard time understanding how revolting Jesus' words and images were for the people who first heard them.

These words continued to cause trouble for the Church in its first 300 years. From time to time the Roman authorities and others in power would seek out Christians for arrest and imprisonment on the basis that they had secret rituals that involved cannibalism; even that they used the flesh of kidnapped babies. Why then this image of eating flesh and drinking blood?

Jesus is telling people that accepting him into your life, and following him, is much more than an intellectual decision. Accepting Christ means changing your life. It's much more than saying, "Well, I like Jesus. He seems a good sort. Guess I'll follow him for a while." Jesus says it doesn't work that way. "In order to follow me, you become part of Me and I become part of you." That's the New Math of the Gospel. "If I'm in you, then you are in Me."

Jesus compares himself to the Manna that God gave the people in the wilderness. Remember that story? The people are hungry in the wilderness. They are yelling at Moses for bringing them out there. So God sends manna, a crusty bread-like substance that the people can gather from the ground each day and eat. Jesus says, "I'm like that bread that God sent to the people in the wilderness, and I'm much more. If you take me into your life you will have everlasting life."

Everlasting life is not something off in heaven after you die. Too often I think people get caught up in the idea that salvation, a life-saving relationship with God, is something that takes place after death. Jesus is talking about taking him into your life here and now. Christ and God becoming a part of your life in the here and now. I will abide in you. You will abide in me.

What does it mean that you abide in Christ and Christ abides in you? It means, in the first instance, to remember that we are from God and, through Christ, connected to God. We tend to gloss over our relationship with God most days. Even on Sundays, that day of the week when we especially turn to God, we can get caught up in other things and lose sight of God. We get caught up in the mechanics of getting to Church, the problems of getting the kids ready, the traffic tie ups on the way in. By the time we get to Church, God may be the last thing on our minds.

To abide in Christ means to open yourself to that relationship with God. To stop and remind yourself that God created you, loves you and is with you every moment of every day. Firstly, remember that we are from God and, through Christ, made one with God. Secondly, abiding in Christ and allowing Christ to abide in you means seeing the world as Christ sees it. Seeing the needs of the people around us and seeing the blessings that we have that can address those needs.

This is hard for us because we tend to look at the world in terms of what is happening to us and what is happening to our families. I know I do. I worry about how I'll pay this bill or that bill. I worry about my health and health of my family. If I allow myself, I'll turn totally inward and look at only the needs that I have and the needs of those closest to me.

But Christ constantly calls us away from self-centeredness to see the needs in the world around us. We are called to see those needs that don't directly touch our lives; to see the needs that we have to walk out of our way to address; the needs we have to really look for to see. Abiding in Christ, and Christ abiding in you, means that you see the world as Christ sees it.

Thirdly, abiding in Christ and allowing Christ to abide in you means being the presence of Christ in this world. I say it most every week. You are the body of Christ, you collectively. The Church is the body of Christ, the living presence of Christ in this world today.

Again, that goes to the idea that God didn't act through Christ to make us all happy when we are dead and gone! Christianity is about the world we live in today. Our faith is supposed to make a difference in the world today. And one of the mechanisms that God works through is the Church. All of us together living our

lives in ways that honor God, and that spread the love of God. We can reach out to our neighbors and practice the love of God in our daily lives.

This is one of the hardest ideas for us to accept. It's much easier by far to sit in Church on a Sunday morning and contemplate how nice the world would be if we all loved one another, rather than working each day to make that happen. Yet, that is what we are called to do. Take seriously the idea that we are the Body of Christ and to reach out into our neighborhoods, into this city, this State, the nation and the world. No one of us can, by ourselves make a change in the world. But together, as the Body of Christ, with the help of God, we can.

That is why we are here. God is calling us to be instruments through which the world is changed. By abiding in Christ, and allowing Christ to abide in us, to change the world, bringing the Kingdom of God to Earth.

The Gospel of John offers us a new form of Math, "Kingdom of God mathematics." "If you will abide in me, then I you will abide in you." The Church, the Body of Christ + the Spirit of God = equals the Kingdom of God. Not when everyone is dead and gone, not some paradise after death, but right here and now. Christ has extended the invitation, "Abide in me." Christ is waiting for us to accept that invitation.

## The Poverty and Justice Bible

*The Poverty & Justice Bible* is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to [www.Justicebible.org](http://www.Justicebible.org).

<sup>18</sup> *You shall appoint judges and officials throughout your tribes, in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall render just decisions for the people.* <sup>19</sup> **You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.** <sup>20</sup> **Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.** Deut 16:18-20

"Justice and only Justice." People often speak of God as a God of love. And there are many scripture passages that you can turn to that describe God in terms of love. Yet scripture also makes it plain that God is a God of Justice. Justice is part of God's nature. Failure to maintain fair systems of justice is an affront to God. Nor is justice the same as legality. For example, slavery was legal in this nation for almost two centuries. But, was it "just" in the eyes of God, to kidnap people from their homes and force them into slavery? There are many examples of Courts following the law yet failing to render just judgments. As Christians we must always ask if our Courts reached a just result; not merely if the law was followed.

<sup>9</sup> *Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue,* <sup>10</sup> *and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to bring charges against Jesus, they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"*

<sup>11</sup> He said to them, “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? <sup>12</sup> How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.” Matthew 12:9-12

The law said that there should be no work on the Sabbath. However, the Law made exceptions for some things that had to happen every day or for emergencies. One still had to milk cows on the Sabbath and if an animal was in danger of dying from accident then steps could be taken to help the animal. But, was it unlawful “work” to heal a man’s hand on the Sabbath when one might wait until the next day? Some said it was. Jesus said, is it ever unlawful to “do good, to show charity? Jesus attempted to show the people that the law was meant to allow people to focus their attention on God and God’s love for creation. If your “work” was taking care of others, you were not offending God but sharing God’s love with the world.

### **“Un-named” Prayer Concerns**

From time to time I will lift up an un-named prayer concern. Some have inquired why the concern is un-named. There are times when people share a concern with me asking for prayer but they do not wish the details of the concern discussed within the congregation. As I point out when that concern is raised, God knows what it is. If we simply lift that concern up together, we can confidently leave the rest in God’s hands. Anyone in the congregation could offer such a concern as well.

And, to address concerns several of you have raised, no recent requests have concerned me or my health. While I have used such a request that way in the past at other churches, I don’t believe I have made an un-named request for myself since I have served Trinity UMC. I thank-you for the concern.

### **Graceworks’ Ministries**

Graceworks has on-going needs in their ministries to the community. In particular, at the present time, the following items are in short supply:

Toilet Paper	Shampoo/Conditioner
Razors	Shaving Cream
Dishwashing Liquid	Cleaning Supplies
Laundry Detergent	Soap
Toothpaste	Toothbrushes

If you are able to contribute any of these items, please bring them by the Church and we will deliver them to Graceworks. Thanks for your support of this ministry.

### **Still Looking for Worship Leaders**

The Worship Ministry is central to any church because it involves the majority of the members every week. Central to the Worship Ministry is the leadership of the laity. Judy Richardson and I are trying to organize the worship leadership schedule so that it is easier for people to plan in advance when they will be serving as **Greeters, Liturgists , Ushers and Counters.**

I would very much like to see greater participation in worship leadership from the laity. If you would like to make worship leadership part of your ministry in the church, please contact either Judy Richardson or Rev. Meaker.

## **The Problem of Personal Information**

At one time it was not unusual to distribute lists of birthdays and other personal information within the Church. Such lists can still be created today if people wish to add their names to them. However, despite many requests to the contrary, I have chosen not to put information about birth dates, other than birth month, or other personal information, in the newsletter. Once this information has been posted in an online newsletter it is available to everyone. Our birth dates are an important piece of personal information that can be used as part of an effort to steal someone's identity. For much the same reason we do not post addresses and telephone numbers of members and we do not publish information about who is in the hospital. If a thief knew that someone was in the hospital they might take the opportunity to target that person's home for a break-in. The potential misuse of online information is something that we all need to be careful about.

## **Prayer Ministry**

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

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

**August 11<sup>th</sup> Sermon: The Lived Belief in God.** Faith is a word that gets thrown around a lot, but what does it mean? My texts are Luke 12:32–40 and Hebrews 11:1–3, 8–16.

**August 18<sup>th</sup> Sermon: I Have Come to Start a Fire.** Being a Christian is all about harmony, isn't it? My texts are Isaiah 5:1–7 and Luke 12:49–56.

## Worship Leaders Schedule

### August 11

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Ushers**

Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**

### August 18

Rodger Klein, **Liturgist**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

## Announcements



You are invited to "**Old School Sunday School**" at **9:45** in the Fellowship Hall. We are singing, praying, studying scripture and caring for one another as we strive to become new people in Christ. Our curriculum is Cokesbury's Adult Bible Studies and our template is Colossians 3:12-17. **Join us Sunday for "Old School Sunday School"!**

**"Companions in Christ" gathers at 9:45.** We are talking about how to be better companions to our fellow Christians, discover what our spiritual gifts are, and dig deeper into what we believe and why. Please come and enjoy this time with your church family and deepen your spiritual connection with God. We will meet in the Youth Sunday School room. All are welcome!

**Ministry with 61<sup>st</sup> Ave. UMC.** We will be providing food and worshipping at 61<sup>st</sup> UMC **Saturday, August 17<sup>th</sup>**. The remaining date to serve and worship this year is **November 16**.

**ATTENTION Finance Committee Members:**

**The following are future Finance Committee meeting dates:**

September 14, 2013 – 2014 Budget Review and Approval

October 19, 2013 – Review 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Financial Results

January 18, 2014 – Review 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter & 2013 Financial Results

**Choir Rehearsal:** There will not be any rehearsals during the month of August.

**Men's Group:** The Men's group will be providing music during the service **Sunday, August 18.** They are looking forward to a **golf outing September 23** and will be hosting the **Pancake Breakfast October 12.**

**August Birthdays**

Mike Rohrig, Sarah Jordan, Larry Kirk, Charles Wilson, Dana Bauguess.

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**