



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## Understanding the New Testament The letters of 1&2 Peter

<sup>4</sup> Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and <sup>5</sup> like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-5

<sup>5</sup> For this very reason, you must make every effort to support your faith with goodness, and goodness with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with endurance, and endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with mutual affection, and mutual affection with love. <sup>8</sup> For if these things are yours and are increasing among you, they keep you from being ineffective and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> For anyone who lacks these things is nearsighted and blind, and is forgetful of the cleansing of past sins. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, brothers and sisters, be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. <sup>11</sup> For in this way, entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you. 2 Peter 1:5-11

The 1&2 Letters of Peter were almost certainly not written by Peter nor were they both written by the same person. According to all the Gospel accounts, Peter was a largely illiterate peasant fisherman who spoke Aramaic. Both of these letters were written in literate Greek and reflect knowledge of Greek rhetorical devices. Additionally, they are distinctively different in style indicating that they were written by different people. Finally, 2 Peter is not referenced in any other Christian literature until the late Third century. Also, as discussed below, it references the circulation of Paul's Epistles as a body of scriptures, indicating that it was written long after Paul's death.

First Peter is principally concerned with remaining faithful in the face of persecution and, as much as possible, avoiding antagonizing the authorities and the surrounding community. As has been discussed in regard to previous letters, Christian persecution by the Roman Empire was very haphazard until the middle to late third century. Nor was it illegal to practice Christianity. The general Roman attitude toward religion was to allow most any religion to be practiced. What was offensive was the refusal to also worship Roman Gods. Judaism, being an ancient and respected religion, was generally spared persecution on this account. However, once Christianity emerged as a religion in its own right, it was viewed as a "new" religion and not accorded any respect by the authorities.

The writer of 1 Peter focuses the people's attention upon their baptism into Christ. This has made them a "Holy people:"

<sup>9</sup> *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

<sup>10</sup> *Once you were not a people,  
but now you are God's people;  
once you had not received mercy,  
but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10*

As a Holy People they are to conduct themselves honorably in all things so that even those who malign them as Christians will have to acknowledge their good deeds. Consistent with their faith, they should accept the authority of all "human institutions." Wives should comport themselves consistent with the practice of the surrounding community and slaves must not revolt even if there are subjected to cruelty by their masters. 1 Peter 2:18. It was passages like this last, taken out of context, that were used to justify slavery. Above all, a Christian should expect to suffer for his faith just as Christ suffered.

<sup>9</sup> *Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing.* <sup>10</sup> *For*

*“Those who desire life  
and desire to see good days,  
let them keep their tongues from evil  
and their lips from speaking deceit;  
<sup>11</sup> let them turn away from evil and do good;  
let them seek peace and pursue it.  
<sup>12</sup> For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,  
and his ears are open to their prayer.*

*But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.” 1 Peter 3:9-12*

Second Peter is primarily focused upon the problem of false teaching and "false prophets," probably Gnostics. The author rejects the idea that "cleverly devised myths" (2 Peter 1:16) are necessary to reveal the Gospel when the straight forward accounts of eyewitnesses (the Gospels) provides all the information necessary. One of the most intriguing references in the letter comes at the end:

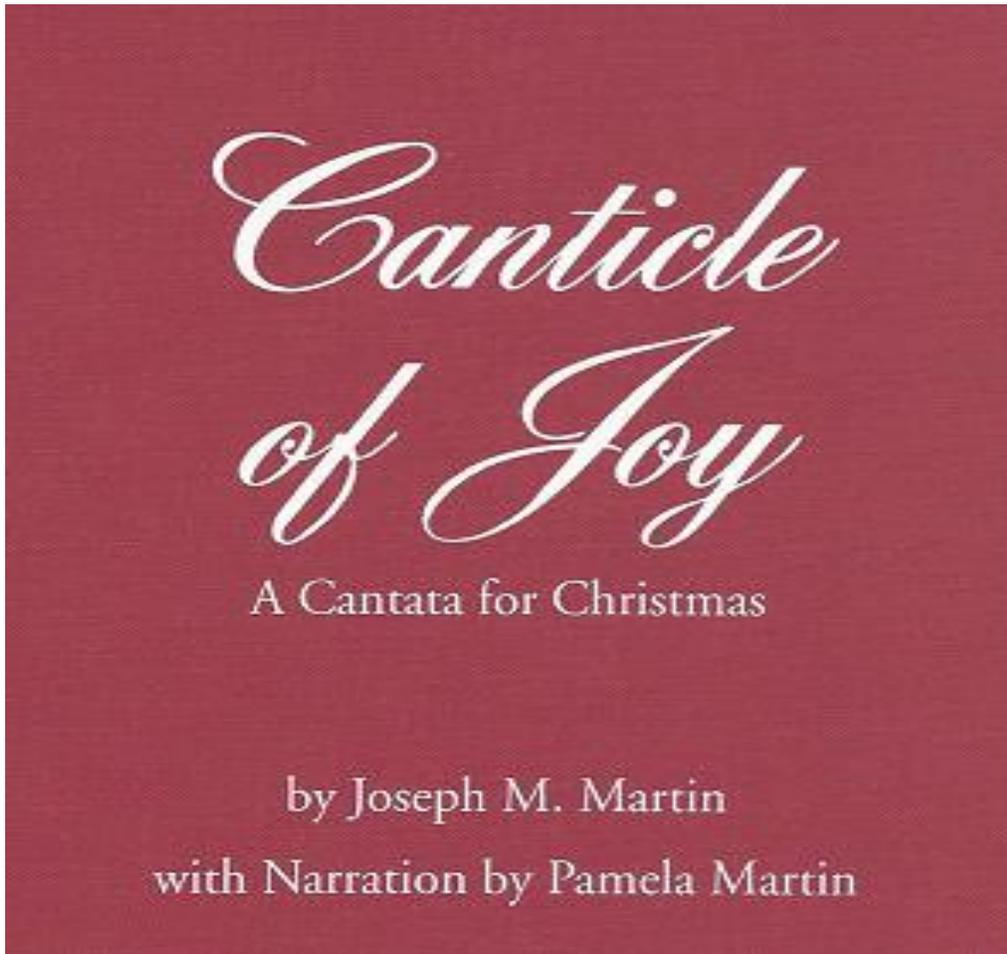
<sup>14</sup> *Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish;* <sup>15</sup> *and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,* <sup>16</sup> *speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures.* <sup>17</sup> *You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability.* <sup>18</sup> *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. 2 Peter 3:14-18.*

By the time this letter is written, the letters of Paul are circulating as scripture; i.e. being treated as scripture by the Churches. But, as happens today, there are problems interpreting those letters and some people twist them to their own ends. The writer cautions the Churches, and us, to be careful in our reading of these letters.

Both letters have relevance to our lives as Christians. First Peter reminds us that we are called to live as the Body of Christ, to be the presence of Christ, in this world. Even when we are criticized for our faith, we

must remain faithful to that call. Second Peter emphasizes the importance of sound teaching and warns against efforts to subvert our faith into a religion for a few who can learn the “secret.” Christianity is not about secrets. It is about sharing the Gospel that Christ came for the salvation of the whole earth and all its people. We share that good news when we live lives that exemplify the life of Christ.

*Next week: 1,2,&3 John and Jude*



**CHRISTMAS CANTATA**  
**Sunday, December 22, 2013**  
**4:00 PM**

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST**  
**2084 Wilson Pike, Franklin, TN 37067**

**FREE CONCERT PUBLIC INVITED!**  
**Please plan to attend a reception following the concert.**

## Year End Giving

*From the Finance Committee:*

*"Please keep in mind that if you want any cash gifts you make to the Church to be counted as 2013 giving, we need to receive the checks in hand not later than Sunday December 29th. This will allow us time to get the check deposited in our bank account before December 31st. All of us who handle the finances of TUMC appreciate the generosity of our congregation and the financial support that we receive from our members. Please remember TUMC in your year-end giving plans."*

## Advent Study and Sermon Series A Different Kind of Christmas

During this season, I am leading an Advent study called "A Different Kind of Christmas." We meet in the Fellowship Hall at 9:45. Each participant will receive a devotional guide with readings for the rest of December. My sermons for the five Sundays in December will also deal with the topics in the Study. The topics for the study and the sermons are:

Expect a Miracle  
Giving Up On Perfect  
Scandalous Love  
Jesus' Wish List  
By A Different Road

The study and sermon series is based upon material developed by Rev. Mike Slaughter. Please prayerfully consider being a part of this study.

## Advent Eucharist

The Lord's Supper is the central expression of who we are as the Body of Christ. We come together around the same table bringing all our troubles, all our concerns and all our differences. At the Table of Lord we pray that God make us "One with Christ, one with each other and one in ministry to the world." We will celebrate the Eucharist each Sunday in Advent.

## 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 and justice, 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>24</sup> The LORD doesn't hate  
or despise the helpless  
in all of their troubles.  
When I cried out, he listened  
and did not turn away.*

*Ps 22:24 CEV*

Psalm 22 begins with the familiar cry, *My God, my God, why have you deserted me?* The Gospels record these as some of the last words of Christ on the cross. Yet the Psalm goes on to affirm that God does not abandon us and is not punishing the poor and helpless. One of the blasphemes of Christianity is the assertion that God is punishing the poor with their poverty.

*<sup>20</sup> Jesus looked at his disciples and said:  
God will bless you people  
who are poor.*

*His kingdom belongs to you!*

*<sup>21</sup> God will bless  
you hungry people.*

*You will have plenty  
to eat!*

*God will bless you people  
who are crying.*

*You will laugh!*

*<sup>22</sup> God will bless you when others hate you and won't have anything to do with you. God will bless you when people insult you and say cruel things about you, all because you are a follower of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup> Long ago your own people did these same things to the prophets. So when this happens to you, be happy and jump for joy! You will have a great reward in heaven. Luke 6:20-23*

Luke's version of the beatitudes reiterates the theology of Psalm 22. Luke says that the poor, the hungry, the oppressed are not cursed by God but will be blessed by God. Those of us with means are invited to be a part of that blessing.

## **Bible Study**

For the last two years I have led a bible study on Thursday mornings. We have recently begun a study of the Book of Psalms. There is room for as many as would like to participate. Please call me if you have questions or simply come and be a part of our study. We meet from 10:00 to 11:30 on Thursday mornings.

I believe that the study of scriptures with other Christians is an essential part of our journey as Disciples. If you would like to be a part of a bible study at another time, during the day or evening, please contact me. If we can interest four or five people in gathering at a particular time I would be glad to lead another study.

## 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

**December 22<sup>nd</sup> : A Different Kind of Christmas: Jesus' Wish List.** What gift do you give to the Son of God? My texts are Matthew 25:31-45 and 1 John 4:7-21.

**December 29<sup>th</sup> : A Different Kind of Christmas: By A Different Road.** A New Year is About to Begin. New Years is a common time to reflect upon where we have been and where we are going. What new roads are you contemplating traveling? My texts are Amos 5:21-24 and Matt. 2:2-12, 6:21.

## Worship Leaders Schedule

### December 22

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Sam Richardson & Marty Bauguess, **Greeters**

Tom & Julia Moore, **Ushers**

**December 29**

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**

Richard & Dawn Stevens, **Ushers**

**Announcements**

Our **Christmas Eve Service** will take place **December 24 at 4:30 PM**. This will be a candlelight service that is a beloved yearly event.

The next newsletter will be published the week of January 5, 2014.

**December Birthdays**

**Pam Jones, Dorise LeCates, Hal Newman, Rachel Newman**

**Happy Birthday!**