



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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December 4, 2013

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 NRSV

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 he 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

Advent Study and Sermon Series A Different Kind of Christmas

Beginning December 1st I'll be leading an Advent study called "A Different Kind of Christmas." We'll 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 Last Minute Toy Store and Graceworks

Trinity UMC works in the ministries of 61st Avenue UMC in Nashville. One of the principal ministries of 61st Ave UMC is its Last Minute Toy store. This “store” provides gifts for children whose families could not otherwise afford to provide gifts. Several thousand Children in Nashville are assisted every year.

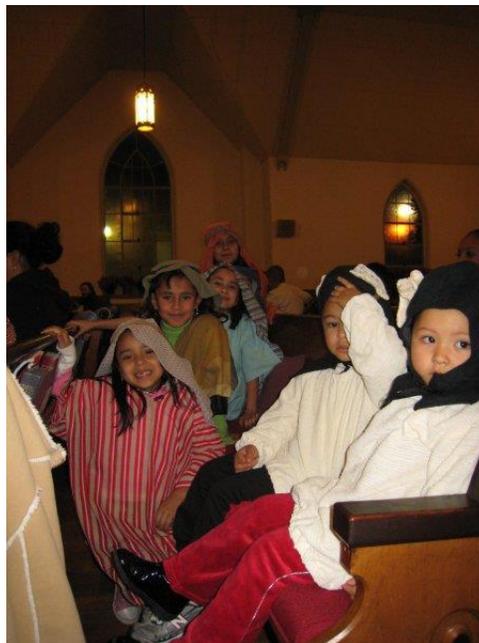
On December 18th Trinity UMC will host the meal for the workers at the Last Minute Toy Store. If you would like to help with that ministry, please contact Charles Wilson. The Toy store will need volunteers from December 18th through December 21st from 11:30 AM through 5:00 PM. If you would like to work in the ministry itself, or have questions about the ministry, please contact Rev. Meaker.

Graceworks here in Williamson County also has ministries directed toward helping those in need to experience a joyous Christmas. Trinity UMC will once again work with Graceworks to help provide a Christmas for families in need and to help with their “Christmas Manger,” which also helps provide gifts to people who otherwise would be unable to afford them. Graceworks manger will be December 16th from 4:30 to 9:30 PM. Please contact Nanette Noffsinger if you wish to participate in the manger.

What Is An Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant?

If you have not heard of it yet, We are planning an Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant for Sunday, December 15th . But what is an unrehearsed Christmas Pageant?

The typical Church Christmas Pageant is a telling of the Christmas story by our children by means of a play. Usually there are about three weeks worth of chaotic rehearsals which require young children to memorize lines and where they are supposed to be during the play. The result is often quite jumbled with children showing up in the wrong places at the wrong times and forgetting their lines. None of that usually matters much to the parents and families because they simply came to see their own child anyway.





The Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant produces much the same result without all the angst associated with rehearsals and trying to get young children to memorize a script. The children dress up as Shepherds, Sheep, Stars, Angels and Wise Persons. There is a narrator to tell the story, supported by congregational singing of Christmas Carols. Everyone enjoys participating in the program (there are opportunities for adults to dress up as well) and then we break the annual Chili supper in the Fellowship Hall. We will also provide an opportunity for children and adults to make an offering of canned food or money to support the food pantry at GraceWorks.

The pictures here will give you some idea of what is involved in the way of costumes. Julia Moore and Jeanne Rybolt are coordinating this event but will need help from as many members of the church as are willing to help to get costumes together and otherwise organize the event. Please prayerfully consider being a part of this ministry this Advent.

A Note from Julia Moore and Jeanne Rybolt

As we prepare for the Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant we could use some help collecting the following:

Plain sheets/fabric – to make animal costumes and shepherd tunics

Thick yarn for donkey's tails and manes
Robes for the shepherds and innkeepers
Head coverings – scarves, possibly towels, etc
Crowns or something to make them from for the wise peeps
Tinsel for halos and angel adornments
Props (gifts from the wise peeps, staffs, very small flashlights)
Cording/rope to hold head coverings on heads and/or close those robes
Animal costumes (a stretch but thought we'd ask)
Headbands suitable for holding halos
Tulle (I'm dreaming of making at least one camel costume)
Elastic
Velcro
OLD plain light colored t-shirts in various sizes (we'll probably cut them up a bit to make child sized tunics)
Some kind of hanging rod set up
LOTS of prayers

Thanks for your help

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.

*⁵ The LORD tests honest people,
but despises those
who are cruel
and love violence.*

...

*⁷ The LORD always does right
and wants justice done.
Everyone who does right
will see his face. Psalm 11:5,7 CEV*

Many Christians speak of God's love, and that is indeed a central part of our faith. However, scripture speaks extensively about God's desire for Justice in all things and God's abhorrence of violence and cruelty.

*⁷ God blesses those people
who are merciful.
They will be treated
with mercy!*

⁸ God blesses those people

*whose hearts are pure.
They will see him!
9God blesses those people
who make peace.
They will be called
his children!
10God blesses those people
who are treated badly
for doing right.
They belong to the kingdom
of heaven. Matthew 5:7-10*

God's focus on peace and mercy is also central to the teachings of Jesus in the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Matthew.

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 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 8th: A Different Kind of Christmas. Giving Up On Perfect. So often we seek perfection in what we do. This can be a special problem at Christmas as we seek to have the "perfect" holiday experience. Yet, when we look at scripture we find that God seems willing to work with us even though we are less than perfect. My texts are Jeremiah 1:4-10 and Luke 1:26-34.

December 15th: A Different Kind of Christmas. Scandalous Love. One of the most difficult books of the Old Testament is Hosea. It contains many statements that seem to demean women and has texts that could potentially be used to justify abuse of women. However, it also has one of the boldest proclamations of the nature of God's love contained anywhere in the Bible. My texts are Hosea 1:2-3, Hosea 3:1 and Romans 3:23-24.

Worship Leaders Schedule

December 8

Elaine Rohrig, **Liturgist**

Donnie & Renita Hartsock, **Greeters**

Marty Bauguess & Herb Haynes, **Ushers**

December 15

Rodger Klein, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Donnie & Renita Hartsock, **Ushers**

Announcements

Ho Ho Ho Ladies,

You better watch out,
 you better not cry
 better not pout
 I'm telling you why-

Mrs. Santa is hosting the United Methodist Women's Ornament Exchange and holiday buffet (\$10.00 donation) at **Elaine Rohrig's on 1552 Timber Ridge Drive, in Brentwood. The event will be held on Tuesday, Dec.10th at 6:00 p.m. R.S.V.P. 810 - 9923 or eannchat@aol.com by 12/1/13**

Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night.

As mentioned earlier in the letter, please mark your calendars for **Sunday, December 15 at 4:00 PM**. The “**Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant**” will take place and we are all participants! Following the pageant, we will enjoy **singing carols, eating chili and enjoying fellowship**.

You will want to mark your calendar for the **Christmas Cantata, “Canticle of Joy”** which will be presented by the choir and orchestra. This event will take place **Sunday, December 22 at 4:00 PM**.

You are also invited to a reception following the cantata at 5:00 PM. The ladies of the church will provide refreshments for the reception. A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board to list what you plan to bring. Thank you for your participation!

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.

December Birthdays

Pam Jones, Dorise LeCates, Hal Newman, Rachel Newman

Happy Birthday!