



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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“Tell It To The Hand”

⁷ This is what he showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸ And the LORD said to me, “Amos, what do you see?” And I said, “A plumb line.” Then the Lord said,

“See, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass them by;

⁹ the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

¹⁰ Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹ For thus Amos has said,

‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.’ ”

¹² And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; ¹³ but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

¹⁴ Then Amos answered Amaziah, “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, ¹⁵ and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’ Amos 7:7-14

“Tell it to the hand” is a slang phrase from the 1990s. Quite popular for a while, it has all but fallen out of use. It is a way of saying, “Shut up. I don’t want to hear what you’re saying.” The picture it evokes is one of a hand turned palm out in another’s face. While the slang may have gone out of style, the sentiment is as old as humanity. In the passage quoted above the prophet Amos, a citizen of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, has been prophesying in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He is told, by a high priest of Israel, to “Tell it to the hand.”

The Book of Amos, maybe more than any other in the bible, speaks to a culture that looks very much like the culture of the United States in the twenty-first century. Israel was a land with two classes of people: the Rich and the Poor. Moreover, the practices of the Rich in Israel were insuring that the Rich would get richer

and the Poor would get poorer. The Book of Amos is rich with images that convey what is wrong with Israel and what God thinks about it. Consider this section:

⁶ *Thus says the LORD:
For three transgressions of Israel,
and for four, I will not revoke the punishment;
because they sell the righteous for silver,
and the needy for a pair of sandals—*
⁷ *they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth,
and push the afflicted out of the way;
father and son go in to the same girl,
so that my holy name is profaned;*
⁸ *they lay themselves down beside every altar
on garments taken in pledge;
and in the house of their God they drink
wine bought with fines they imposed. Amos 2:6-8*

People who could not pay their debts, possibly created by usurious loans, are being bought and sold for a pittance: the price of a pair of sandals. The Poor are not only being ignored by the Rich, they are being abused, possibly kicked while trying to beg (*they who trample the head of the poor into the dust of the earth.*) Not only are fathers and sons engaging in the ritual prostitution that was central to the worship of the Canaanite fertility Gods, but they are lying down on garments taken in pledge (from the poor) while drinking wine purchased with unfair fines that they have imposed on the Poor.

Amos has several passages where he portrays the idle rich. One that I have never been able to form into a sermon involves the “Cows of Bashan:”

*Hear this word, you cows of Bashan
who are on Mount Samaria,
who oppress the poor, who crush the needy,
who say to their husbands, “Bring something to drink!” Amos 4:1-3*

The ‘cows’ are apparently the wives of the rich who benefit from the oppression of the poor. Amos evokes an image of them lounging around and demanding that their husbands serve them. Even though they do not participate directly in the oppression, in Amos’ eyes they are guilty because they benefit from the oppression. Later he condemns those who, in the midst of the poverty being experienced by many, indulge themselves with grand parties:

⁴ *Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,
and lounge on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the stall;*
⁵ *who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,
and like David improvise on instruments of music;*
⁶ *who drink wine from bowls,
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!*
⁷ *Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,*

and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away. Amos 6:4-7

Amos pictures God placing a divine plumb line among the people, not to ascertain if a wall is built correctly, but to determine how far out of line the people are from living righteous lives. But this is a message the King of Israel doesn't want to hear. His chief priest tells Amos to go proclaim his visions in Judah and not in Israel. In effect, he tells Amos to "tell it to the hand." Amos's response is to declare that he is God's messenger and he will preach to the people God has directed.

I suspect that we too would like to tell Amos to "Tell it the hand." Although our society is not in the extreme straights of ancient Israel, it is not popular these days to speak up for the poor. What was once considered Christian charity and concern seems to be looked at as a huge mistake; a case of the rich being taken advantage of by the poor. There is much truth in proverbs 14:20: *The poor are disliked even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends.*

I encourage you to take some time to read prayerfully through the Book of Amos. The vivid imagery makes it a very accessible book. And, when you do, look for the quote that Martin Luther King used from Amos:

*But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.*

With those words, Amos provides an image of the Kingdom of God.

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.

You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with the wicked to act as a malicious witness. ² You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing; when you bear witness in a lawsuit, you shall not side with the majority so as to pervert justice; ³ nor shall you be partial to the poor in a lawsuit.

⁴ When you come upon your enemy's ox or donkey going astray, you shall bring it back.

⁵ When you see the donkey of one who hates you lying under its burden and you would hold back from setting it free, you must help to set it free.

⁶ You shall not pervert the justice due to your poor in their lawsuits. ⁷ Keep far from a false charge, and do not kill the innocent and those in the right, for I will not acquit the guilty. ⁸ You shall take no bribe, for a bribe blinds the officials, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.

⁹ You shall not oppress a resident alien; you know the heart of an alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. Exodus 23:1-9

The Law of Israel, the Law the people understood was given to them by God, demanded justice for everyone. Rich or poor, citizen or alien, all were to be treated fairly. Moreover, that law imposed burdens that modern law does not. Look at verses 4 and 5 above. If you come upon **your enemy's** livestock running free,

you had a duty to take them back. If you found your enemy's animal falling under the burden it was carrying, you had to come to the assistance **of the animal** and then, pursuant to verse 4, take it back to your enemy. Everything that perverted the legal system, bribes, bias based upon social position or wealth, false charges, false testimony or simply "siding with the majority" when you are not convinced that the majority are right is condemned. Centuries after the Exodus, speaking to a people who had never known slavery, the Law reminded the people that once they were aliens in the land of Egypt and so they knew the heart of the alien. God might tell us that once we were immigrants to this nation, seeking a better life, and so we know the heart of an immigrant.

¹⁰ And the crowds asked [John the Baptizer] ..., "What then should we do?" ¹¹ In reply he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise."

¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, "Teacher, what should we do?" ¹³ He said to them, "Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you." ¹⁴ Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what should we do?" He said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages." Luke 3:10-14

John the Baptizer is quizzed on the conduct expected by God of one who has repented their sin. He too proclaims that the call of God is to act with mercy and righteousness toward all people. Share your blessings with those in need and do not swear falsely. Do not use your power to take what isn't yours or to threaten the innocent.

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

July 14, 2013: View From the Ditch: When we read stories, even those in the bible, we tend to associate ourselves with those people who act in an exemplary manner. We want to see ourselves as the "good guy." Yet, when Jesus told a story he sometimes tried to make the crowd see themselves as something less than perfect. My texts are Colossians 1:1-14 Luke 10:25-37.

July 21st: Sermon: Famine of God's Word: Imagine the concern, maybe even fear, you would feel if you lost possession of your house, your car, your bank accounts. That is a nightmare that some know very well. Now consider a world where you are assured that all your material possessions are safe, but you will never again hear the Word of God, the Gospel. Which causes you more concern? My texts are Luke 10:38–42 and Amos 8:1–12.

Worship Leaders Schedule

July 14

Tom Moore, **Liturgist**

Tommy Cotton & Ross Crutcher, **Ushers**

Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Greeters**

July 21

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**

Announcements

Sunday School Adult Classes: There are two adult Sunday School classes to choose from. One meets at 9:45 in the Fellowship hall and the other meets in the classroom next to the Nursery at 9:45. Faith development is part of our discipleship commitment.

An Adult Sunday School Class, “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! *Nanette Noffsinger*

Ministry with 61st Ave. UMC. The last two dates for our church to prepare and serve dinner at **61st Ave UMC this year** are **August 17, and November 16.** We will also be participating at the 61st Ave UMC Christmas Toy Store, dates TBD.

Choir Members will meet **Saturday, July 13** from **9am – 12pm** in the choir room.

July Birthdays

Nanette Crowell, Mac McAfee, Leslie Eastwood, Shirley Kirk, Linda Robinson, Renita Hartssock.