



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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## “Words with Staying Power”

<sup>26</sup> He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground... Mark 4:26

<sup>31</sup> It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Mark 4:31

“What shall I compare the kingdom of God to? <sup>21</sup> It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.” Luke 13:20-21

<sup>44</sup> “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field. Matthew 13:44

etc...

We as the Church are supposed to live in the Kingdom of God. A place that scripture describes as the here and now. But if the Kingdom of God is here and now, why can't we find it?

The Gospels contain a number of Kingdom of God parables. Statements that begin, The Kingdom of God is like...

But then it gets murky. Listening to Jesus' Kingdom of God parables is sort of like listening to snatches of dialogue on the television as you channel surf, and then trying to piece them together into a story. Think about it. The Kingdom of God is like a man who buys a pearl, or the Kingdom of God is like a woman who has lost a coin, or a farmer sowing seeds. The Kingdom of God is like a King throwing a party or like the seed of a plant. It makes the head swim.

Take the first scripture quoted. The Kingdom of God is like seed scattered over the ground and then forgotten; untended by anyone. But the seed grows anyway and yields a great harvest. Or the Kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed. The smallest seed that nevertheless grows into a great shrub that birds can build nests under. What are we to do with these images? Why the ambiguity?

Not everything in scripture is parables of course. Scripture does have some pretty specific instructions. Statements that are unambiguous. There's the Big Ten, for instance. Not much ambiguity there. Worship only God, not idols, possessions or nations. Don't kill. Don't steal. Don't betray your spouse. Don't lie. You

know, all those unambiguous statements that we often don't pay much attention to but that we want to post on the walls of Courthouses and schools.

Scripture is also pretty unambiguous when it comes to treatment of the poor. While there are a few proverbs that speak against laziness, the bible has no theology of the undeserving poor. If someone needs help, you should help them to the extent you can. After all, says scripture, everything you have comes from God in the first place. If you are blessed, you are called to share your blessings.

And Jesus was pretty unambiguous when he said to love one another and love your enemies. He even told a parable where someone is helped by their worst enemy. The last person from whom they would ever expect to receive help.

There are a lot of things in scripture that are very unambiguous. Things that people have always, nevertheless, had trouble latching onto. Unambiguous instructions from a God who is like a parent speaking to disrespectful children. What God says goes in one ear and out the other. Sort of like a television playing in the background that no one is really listening to. And maybe that is the best explanation for Jesus' use of parables. Jesus hoped to make us stop and think. Jesus wants us to stop and scratch our heads. Jesus wants us to say, "Huh?" To say, "What in the world did he mean by that?" Jesus wants us to think.

The Kingdom of God is like seed scattered on the ground that grows of itself. Something that doesn't need to be tended, that will grow up from the Earth and ultimately be harvested. Who did the scattering and who will do the harvesting? Jesus doesn't tell us. Jesus invites us to think that out for ourselves. Maybe it's God who did the planting and is just sitting back to see what will grow. If that is the case, will God harvest everything that grows? Jesus doesn't say. What do you think? When will the harvest take place? Again, Jesus doesn't say but he does say that when the harvest comes, it will be quick. And, if we are called to live in the Kingdom of God does this mean we are also part of the growing Kingdom of God? Do we both live in the Kingdom and are part of the Kingdom? Jesus just doesn't say. We are invited to ponder what it all means.

The parable is designed to get caught in your mind. You can decide to ignore one of the Big Ten but, try as you might, your mind will keep coming back to a parable. You keep asking yourself, "What did Jesus mean by that?"

I especially like the mustard seed parable. It appears in Matthew and Luke as well. I like this parable because the mustard plant was sort of like First Century Kudzu. The plant that insisted on growing everywhere, even if you didn't want it. I guess it was those tiny seeds. They get picked up by the wind and they go everywhere. So the Kingdom of heaven is like a weed that you can't stamp out. Is that what Jesus meant to imply? I don't know. But I think differently about the Kingdom of heaven if I think of it like a blight of Kudzu; something that just keeps growing back no matter how hard people try and to pull it out or burn it out. Jesus makes me think. Jesus makes me think about the nature of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus wanted us to be constantly thinking about what God's Kingdom should be like. God won't fashion it for us. God has chosen to give us free will. We choose how we live. But we CAN ask ourselves what we think God would want. If God did away with free will and made us puppets, what sort of world would God create? How would we act toward one another?

The Gospel, the Good News, is that God so loved the world that God became flesh and walked among us. God showed us how to live and encouraged us to use our minds. To think about how we live. To think about what the Kingdom of God could be. Too often we fail miserably when it comes to living in the Kingdom

of God. But, if we are to be the Church, we must make ourselves see our failures as well as our successes. To rejoice in the good and face up to the ugliness we create. Dare to imagine and work to create a Kingdom where we, and the rest of the world, can live in peace.

## **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).

*15 Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. <sup>2</sup> And this is the manner of the remission: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because the Lord's remission has been proclaimed. Deut 15:1-2*

This is a curious law. The seventh year is called the Sabbatical year or the year of Jubilee. Some scholars doubt that the law was ever applied universally, although it is likely that those who were scrupulous about observing the law did follow it. Every seven years, the debtor was to be given a fresh start. Likewise slaves were to be freed after six years of servitude. This might be compared with efforts to change the bankruptcy laws to make it more difficult to make a fresh start after financial failure.

*<sup>16</sup> When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:*

*<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,*

*<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Luke 4:16-19*

In the passage above, Jesus is preaching for the first time. He has come to his hometown. The "year of the Lord's favor" would be the Sabbatical year; a time for forgiving debts and releasing slaves. Jesus has come to proclaim that the Kingdom of God he is announcing has arrived. A time of new beginnings, of fresh starts. See Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1-2. His hometown crowd tried to throw him off a cliff. Even two thousand years ago, the message wasn't a popular one.

## **"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 unnamed 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  
Larry Eastwood  
Leslie Eastwood

Sarah Jordan  
Mac McAfee  
Rachel Newman

Kenneth Stevens  
Patricia Stevens  
Sam Richardson

Judy Richardson  
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

**July 21<sup>st</sup>: 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.

**July 28<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: Are you Now or Have You Ever Been a Christian?** Read the Lord's prayer before Sunday. Really listen to the words. Pray it aloud and consider what you are asking from God. Some might call it un-American. My texts are Colossians 2:6–15 and Luke 11:1–13.

## Worship Leaders Schedule

### July 21

Marty Bauguess, **Liturgist**  
Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**  
Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Greeters**

### July 28

Charles Wilson, **Liturgist**  
Sam Richardson & Tommy Cotton, **Ushers**  
Betty & Herb Haynes, **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 next 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! *Nanette Noffsinger*

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

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

**Men's Group:** The Men's group will meet at church **Saturday, July 27 at 8:30 AM.** All men are invited for food, fellowship and discussion of coming events.

## July Birthdays

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