



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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May 22, 2013

## The Joke's on Us

<sup>21</sup> So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection. <sup>23</sup> So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen <sup>25</sup> to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” <sup>26</sup> And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles. Acts 1:21-26 NRSV

This reading from Acts is actually an example of biblical humor. You may not have thought about it before, but there are a lot of funny stories in the bible. Stories intended to make us laugh, and also to think. Wherever scripture uses humor its purpose is to make us see ourselves in a new way; maybe to see ourselves more clearly.

Some of the humor in the bible is almost slapstick in nature; it provides an image of something that looks as silly as an old Three Stooges skit. Take for instance the story of David and Goliath. This is often portrayed as a very dramatic story where the young David faces down the Giant Goliath with a sling shot. And so it is. But there is humor too. Look at 1 Samuel 17:38:

<sup>38</sup> Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. <sup>39</sup> David strapped Saul’s sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. 1 Samuel 17:38-39.

Let that picture develop in your mind’s eye for a minute. Here is this boy, 13 or 14, fitted out with a heavy bronze helmet, probably slipping down over his eyes, a heavy coat of chain mail that probably falls below his knees or even to the ground, and a heavy sword that is almost certainly dragging on the ground. He is so weighed down he can’t move. I guarantee that the people who first told this story acted it out and looked for the people to laugh! Why? Because one of the lessons of the story of David is that it was the power of God that defeated Goliath, not the power of men. David prevailed despite his relative weakness because of his faith in God.

Another story meant to bring a smile to the reader’s lips is the beginning of the story of Moses. Exodus Chapter 1. Pharaoh, the ruler of all the known world, one of the God’s of Egypt, orders the Hebrew midwives to kill all the male babies because he fears that the Hebrews are going to grow in numbers until they overwhelm Egypt. What could be funny about that? But look what happens next.

<sup>15</sup> *The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, <sup>16</sup> “When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.” <sup>17</sup> But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. <sup>18</sup> So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this, and allowed the boys to live?” <sup>19</sup> The midwives said to Pharaoh, “Because the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women; for they are vigorous and give birth before the midwife comes to them.” Exodus 1:15-19*

Get this picture in your mind. The Ruler of Egypt, the man believed to be a living God, orders these two women to kill the male children as soon as they are born. Instead, the midwives let the boys live. And, when confronted by Pharaoh, they tell him that the Hebrew women are not like the Egyptian women. The Hebrew women are popping those babies out so fast the midwives can't even get to them before the birth. Think about it. Pharaoh was the ruler of the known world. A God. But the story shows him to be so ignorant about the everyday world that two peasant women were able to fool him by a tale that any common person would know is nonsense. The humor invites us to question our sense of awe about people in power. To remind ourselves that those in power are just men and women and just as fallible as anyone else.

Humor is used throughout the bible to help us laugh at ourselves and to look more closely at how God works in the world.

Which brings me to the text from Acts cited above. The Disciples want to pick a replacement Disciple for Judas. This text at the beginning of Acts is the opening line in a joke that runs throughout Acts. Turn to the first chapter of acts, beginning at verse 21:

<sup>21</sup> *So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, <sup>22</sup> beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.” <sup>23</sup> So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias. <sup>24</sup> Then they prayed and said, “Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two **you have chosen** <sup>25</sup> to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” <sup>26</sup> And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.*

The Twelve Disciples handpicked by Jesus are now eleven because Judas betrayed Jesus and is now dead. The Disciples decide that **God** should choose a successor. Now remember, Jesus chose the first twelve without any help from the sidelines. Jesus decided who should be picked the first time around.

But the eleven Disciples decided that the successor should have “credentials.” It could only be someone among the Disciples who had been with them from the Baptism of Jesus by John to the Ascension, and all the time in between. And they came up with two male candidates. Note that there were almost certainly women who qualified under their criteria, but no women were proposed. Having held the equivalent of the Iowa caucus to come up with their candidates they pray to God that God show them which of these two qualified candidates “YOU”, God, have chosen to be the twelfth disciple. And they cast lots or pull names out of a hat, and Matthias is chosen.

And that is the last time you hear of Matthias anywhere in scripture.

So, what is funny about that? A bible question. There IS a disciple we are told in Acts who was selected by Jesus. Who was it?

If you said Paul, you are correct. Paul. The least qualified, in fact the most unqualified person you could imagine. He had never been a Disciple of Jesus. He was a persecutor of Christians. But it was that person that God wanted as the twelfth Disciple, not Matthias. The Disciples gave God two candidates to choose from and God instead chose from among all the peoples of the world. Are we meant to laugh at the Disciples presumption? You bet. Are we also meant to see in ourselves our own prejudices and assumptions? You bet. We can be as blind and presumptuous as the Disciples in our judgments about people.

I said this idea of the disciples choosing people to be leaders is a running joke in Acts. A little later in Acts, the Disciples worry that there aren't enough people cleaning the tables and serving food and looking after others. Consider this text from Acts 6:

*"It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. <sup>3</sup> Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, <sup>4</sup> while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word."* Acts 6:2-4 NRSV

The Disciples think they are too good for the work of waiting on tables. Jesus has told them they MUST be servants, but the lesson had not sunk in. They think they need to pray and preach, not wait on tables. So they select seven people to do that work that they think is unimportant. Two of those seven are Stephen and Phillip. God immediately turns around and calls Stephen and Phillip to be the first evangelists of the Church. The waiters and busboys becoming the true spiritual leaders of the Church. Are we supposed to laugh at that? Yes. Are we supposed to stop and think that maybe we act just like the Disciples from time to time, believing ourselves too important for some jobs? Absolutely.

Still later in Acts, Peter is told by the Holy Spirit to go to the home of a Roman Centurion, one Cornelius. A Roman Centurion. One of the hated oppressors of Israel. But Cornelius also becomes a leader in the church.

So, where is the Gospel to take away from these lessons? I think it's this:

1. **Don't assume that you know the mind of God.** That was the mistake of the Disciples when they selected a twelfth Disciple. We do act in ways that we believe, based on our faith, God would want us to act. But that doesn't mean that we know the mind of God.
2. **Be careful when you make judgments about others.** Sometimes the person you believe to be most outside of God's Grace is the person whom God has chosen to touch your life. That was the case with Paul.
3. **Be careful judging who is in, and who is outside of, God's grace.** God's goal is the salvation of the world. Salvation is God's gift, not something we in the Church control.

**Finally, dare to laugh at yourself.** Scripture seeks to make us laugh at ourselves because often, once we laugh at ourselves, we can see ourselves for who we really are. We are a people in need of the love, and grace, of God.

## **Companions in Christ Class to Start On Sunday Mornings**

**Sunday's at 10:00: "Companions in Christ"** - Starting Sunday, May 26, there will be a new Small Group discussion getting started. We will be 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.*



### **Prayers For Moore, Oklahoma Bishop W.T. McAlilly**

Monday afternoon two elementary schools were damaged by tornados that swept through Oklahoma. Please be in prayer for those in harm's way. As of this post, over 90 persons have been found dead as rescue workers continue to search for children between the ages of 5 and 8 and others injured by the storm. If you wish to respond, first pray, then consider a gift to UMCOR. In due time, disaster response teams will be needed. As we learn through UMCOR the needs and ways to respond, we will share that information with you.

Peace,  
Bishop Bill McAlilly

### **It's Official**

On May 15<sup>th</sup> I received a letter from the Rev. Willie Burchfield confirming that I am reappointed to Trinity UMC for the coming year. The Staff Parish Committee had asked that I be reappointed and I had asked to be reappointed. I am pleased that the Bishop and the Cabinet concurred.

### **Graceworks' Fuel Bag Program**

As I have mentioned a number of times from the pulpit, around 250,000 children go to bed hungry in Tennessee some part of every week. That figure has grown over the years. Their families are what is called "food insecure." There is rarely enough nourishing food in the home to be certain of providing for the needs of the children. Some of those children live right here in Williamson County.

Graceworks ministry has a program to provide food for children in need to take home over the weekends. These "Fuel Bags" provide nutritious food that the child can eat without preparation or with minimal preparation. The Children's Sunday school class is organizing Trinity UMC's support of this program. We need the following contributions:

## Graceworks Fuel Bags

Please pick up a few items when you are at the grocery store to include in the fuel bags:

Boxed Milk  
Raisins/Fruit Snacks  
Peanut  
Butter Crackers  
Cheese Crackers  
Cereal Cups  
Pudding Cups  
Microwaveable Meat Meals  
Easy Mac  
Tuna & Crackers

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.

## **Bishop McAlilly Promotes a 40 Day Period of Prayer Leading Up to Annual Conference**

### 40 Day Walk



Daily devotionals of **The 40 Day Walk With God** will post each morning on the Bishop's Blog during our season of intentional prayer. If you would like to Follow the Bishop's Blog during this time, posts will be delivered to your INBOX daily – enjoy them each morning on the device of your choice!

To download a copy to your computer for reading or printing, please follow the instructions below:

1. [CLICK HERE](#) to download .PDF file (you may “right click” and “save as” to your desktop or destination of choice)

- 1a. **NEW:** If you're here to download the Children's prayer guide, [CLICK HERE](#) to download (.PDF)
- 2. The cover image below also provides a link for download
- 3. NOTE: The .PDF prayer guide is 84 pages, please allow ample time for downloading depending on your connection speed

### **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

**May 26, 2013: You Cannot Yet Bear Them:** Before he was crucified Christ told the Disciples that they had much more to learn but that Christ was leaving that teaching to the Holy Spirit because the Disciples could not yet bear to hear the truth. What about us? My texts are Romans 5:1-5 and John 16:12-15.

**June 2, 2013: A Different Gospel:** Paul was tasked with the problem of proclaiming the Gospel to a world that had never heard of Christians. But he wasn't the only Christian engaged in proclaiming the gospel. Some offer a "different Gospel." My texts are Luke 7:1-10 and Galatians 1:1-12.

## Worship Leaders Schedule

**May 26<sup>th</sup>**

Liturgist: **Rachel Newman**

Greeters: **Sam Richardson and Marty Bauguess**

Ushers: **Rodger and Cherry Klein**

**June 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Liturgist: **Marty Bauguess**

Greeters: **Rodger and Cherry Klein**

Ushers: **Sam Richardson and Larry Eastwood**

## 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 10:00. Faith development is part of our discipleship commitment.

**Wednesday, May 22, 7:00pm** Choir Rehearsal

The **61<sup>st</sup> AVE. UMC** is in need of men's clothing. When you clean your closets, please consider donating men's items of clothing to a worthy cause. Bring clothes to the church and they will be taken to 61<sup>st</sup> AVE. UMC.

The dates for our church to prepare and serve dinner at **61<sup>st</sup> Street** are as follows: **August 17, and November 16**. We will also be participating at the Christmas Toy Store, dates TBD.

## May Birthdays

Tommy Cotton, Sam Richardson, Jim Winton