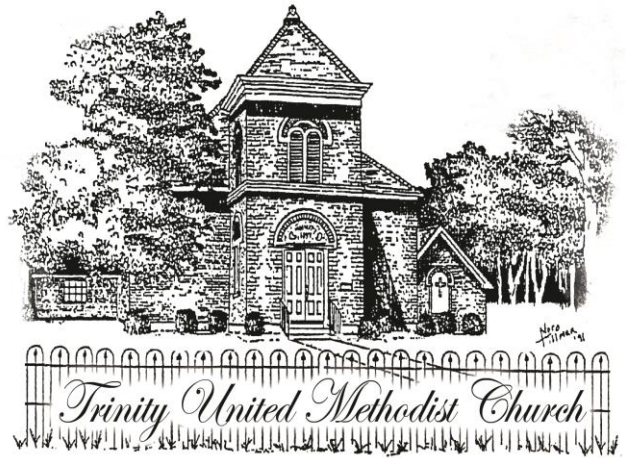




# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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## An Eye for An Eye

<sup>23</sup> *If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, <sup>24</sup> eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, <sup>25</sup> burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. Exodus 21:23-25 NRSV*

<sup>38</sup> *“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; <sup>40</sup> and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; <sup>41</sup> and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. <sup>42</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. Matthew 5:38-42 NRSV*

A death row inmate in Mississippi barely avoid execution this week when the Mississippi Supreme Court ruled that DNA testing should go forward. This was a reversal of a prior ruling denying DNA testing even though no physical evidence connected the black defendant to the crime of killing two white college students. It was only after the FBI acknowledged that its expert offered invalid scientific opinions concerning some hair found at the scene that the Mississippi Supreme Court relented and stayed the execution. In another story, the State of Maryland just this month ended the practice of Capital Punishment. That leaves 32 States, including Tennessee, and the Federal Government that allows the Death Penalty. According to the Death Penalty Information Center, Tennessee has executed 6 persons since 1974 when the Death Penalty was re-enacted. There are currently 87 condemned prisoners. The State has also released 2 prisoners since 1974 who were proven to have been wrongly convicted.

The bible, as happens from time to time, can be used to support or oppose Capital Punishment. There are texts in addition to those included above, including this one from Genesis. God, speaking to Noah after the flood says:

<sup>5</sup> *For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life.*

<sup>6</sup> *Whoever sheds the blood of a human,  
by a human shall that person's blood be shed;  
for in his own image*

*God made humankind. Genesis 9:5-6*

That seems to be an unambiguous statement. It could be read to mean that we should allow God to take the life, but I don't think such a reading is fair to the text. There is no doubt that the People of Israel, and many other people in different times and places, believed that the taking of a life called for the forfeit of a life.

Based upon the text from the Sermon on the Mount quoted from Matthew it would seem that Jesus opposed the Death Penalty. Indeed, even from the cross Jesus offered a prayer for those who took his life:

<sup>34</sup> *Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." Luke 23:34 NRSV*

The "eye for an eye" law was originally imposed upon the people during their nomadic trek. It was meant to supplant the law of vendetta, blood feuds where whole families might be wiped out in retaliation for the crime of one of its members. Jesus told the people that the time for such a law had passed.

So, what is the response of a Christian to the death penalty? I can only answer for myself that I am opposed to it as both a lawyer and a Christian. You see, in order to have the ability to impose the death penalty we have to accept that some number of innocent lives will be taken. For me that is too high a cost.

My law license is on inactive status but I remain an attorney and an officer of the Courts of Tennessee and the Courts of the United States. Although I never practiced criminal law, I have a great deal of experience with our civil justice system which, in the final analysis, is essentially the system used to determine guilt in criminal cases. The system does not determine innocence, since all are presumed innocent. When someone is tried for a crime the system determines if, beyond a reasonable doubt, they are guilty "*as a matter of law.*" As we have seen many times around the nation, the system is far from infallible. Sometimes people are wrongfully convicted and it is no easy matter to get the earlier conviction set aside. That determination that you are guilty "as a matter of law" carries great weight.

When I was practicing law I would explain to clients that the civil justice system, if pressed to try a case before a Judge or Jury, would provide a result 100% of the time. Hopefully that result would comport with law and the facts, but there were no guarantees. Sometimes the result is influenced by simple error, sometimes by malice or malfeasance and sometimes by outright stupidity. This is true for both Civil and Criminal Courts. All an accused criminal is promised is a result reached, hopefully, with great care and in accordance with law and fact. That result may be wrong. This is why so many civil and criminal cases are settled short of trial.

I believe that our criminal justice system is one of the best and fairest in the world. Nevertheless, we know that it will sometimes make mistakes. People have spent decades in prison for crimes they did not commit. We are equally certain that some number of people executed in this nation have been wrongfully murdered by the State for crimes they did not commit because we have discovered people sentenced to life in prison for murder but later exonerated. It stands to reason that some unknown number of those executed over the years have not been guilty. If someone is wrongfully given life imprisonment, there is the possibility of correcting the mistake despite the huge injustice involved with locking someone away for a crime he did not commit. Once we have taken a life, the mistake can never be rectified.

I would be less than honest if I did not admit that there are people that I thought should be executed. The Boston Bombers come to mind. And, if one of my family members was the victim of murder or some other heinous crime, I think I would probably want those responsible killed even though I also believe that is wrong. But I can state that if, in order to have my revenge, it is necessary to kill some number of innocent people then the matter takes on a different light. And I am certain that is the price of having the death penalty. The Justice system is a human creation and it is far from perfect. It will make mistakes. It is not reliable enough to determine questions of life and death.

A fundamental underpinning of Christianity is belief in Justice and Righteousness. There are over 600 verses in scripture that use one or the other of those terms, often both. Time and again in scripture God is

depicted proclaiming that the people are to live just and righteous lives. It matters how we deal with one another. That concept is at the core of all that Jesus taught. No matter how much due process is attached to the act, there is nothing of justice and righteousness associated with executing someone for a crime they did not commit. Consider that, by the standards of the day, Jesus was given as much, or more, “due process” as most whom experienced the Roman Judicial System.

In closing, consider one more scripture, one of my personal favorites:

*<sup>8</sup> He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8*

Peace.

## **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.

## **Our New Baptismal Font**

On Sunday April 21<sup>st</sup> we consecrated our new Baptismal Font with the Liturgy for Reaffirmation of our Baptismal Vows. Purchase of the Font, utilizing memorial funds, was approved by the Administrative Council back in January. Rodger Kline shepherded the project as the Font itself was custom built for the Church by the same Amish craftsmen who made our new Altar Table and Lectern.

There are many symbols of our faith in the sanctuary. There is the Cross, representing the sacrifice of Christ. The Lectern represents the written word of God as contained in scriptures. The pulpit is a symbol of the living Word of God proclaimed in the world. The Altar Table reminds us that we are a people of the Table, constantly called back to the Table to receive the grace of God through the Lord's Supper. And the Baptismal font reminds us of our Baptism; reminds us that we have been adopted by God and have committed to live our lives as the Body of Christ. Whenever you look upon the Baptismal Font in the Sanctuary, remember your baptism and be thankful.

## **Thanks to the Trinity UMW for its Support of the Bishop's Cedar Crest Scholarship Fund**

A few weeks ago the Bishop put out a request for support for children who could not afford to attend one of the Cedar Crest Summer Camps. When it last met the Trinity UMW voted to provide two \$300 scholarships for children of the Conference. *"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."* Matthew 19:14

## **Worship Leadership**

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**. Those who have been serving in those capacities will soon receive a proposed schedule through the summer months.

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.

## **Program Council Meeting In May**

There will be a meeting of the Program Council Wednesday, May 15<sup>th</sup> at 5:30. Light snacks will be provided. Please make every effort to attend.

# 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 12, 2013: Watch Where You Are Going;** When our children are learning to walk we tell them not to look down at their feet but to watch where they are going. Consider that, as Christians, we cannot see where we are going if we are looking up. My texts are Luke 24:44–53 and Acts 1:1–11.

**May 19, 2013: Children of the Father:** It is common to say words to the effect, “we are created by God.” But Paul seeks to deepen that understanding, insisting that we are Children of the Father. My texts are John 14:8–17 and Romans 8:14–17.

### **Worship Leaders Schedule**

**May 5**

Julia Moore, *Liturgist*  
 Rodger & Cherry Klein, *Ushers*  
 Betty & Herb Haynes, *Greeters*  
 Mike Rohrig, *Counter*

### **Announcements**

**Sundays at 10:00:** The topic for discussion this Sunday (May 5) will be, “**What Happens One Minute After We die?**”

This group meets in the Sunday School Classroom. All are welcome to enjoy fellowship with your church family and deepen your spiritual connection with God. **Nanette Crowell** leads this study and will be happy to answer any questions you might have.

**Sunday school starts at 9:45am** in the Fellowship Hall.

**Wednesday, April 24, 7:00pm** Choir Rehearsal

The **61<sup>st</sup> 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> UMC.

The dates for our church to prepare and serve dinner at **61<sup>st</sup> Street** are as follows: **May 18, August 17, and November**

**16.** We will also be participating at the Christmas Toy Store, dates TBD.

### **April Birthdays**

Mary Coleman, Houston Hartsock, Colette Keyser, Jo Oliphant, Betty Whitefield