



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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Understanding the New Testament The Pastoral Letters: 1&2 Timothy and Titus

*⁵ For there is one God;
there is also one mediator between God and humankind,
Christ Jesus, himself human,
⁶ who gave himself a ransom for all
—this was attested at the right time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the
truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. 1 Timothy 2:5-7 NRSV*

First and Second Timothy and Titus are often referred to as “The Pastoral Letters.” For the most part, the letters written by Paul and the letters written by imitators of Paul are directed to congregations. These three letters are, in form, letters from Paul to two of his pastors: Timothy and Titus.

There is almost unanimous agreement among scholars that these letters were not written by Paul, although most scholars do think they were all written by the same person. As elaborated upon below, these letters describe a Church that is developing a formal organization and seeking to keep itself together despite forces that would tend to pull it apart. The Greek used in the letters reflects a vocabulary used in the middle to late Second Century (150-200 CE) and its references to the “false teaching” being spread describes Gnosticism as it developed in the middle to late Second Century. Gnosticism, as it developed, emphasized complex mythologies and genealogies to support its theology. It also emphasized living an ascetic life. That is the type of teaching that the Pastorals warn against. See 1 Tim 1:4; 4:1-5; 6:1-5

The emphasis of the Pastorals is to insure that the teaching of the Church is not subverted and that the Church not be perceived in the community as a danger to public order. I tend to think of these letters as instructions to keep faithful but not to “rock the boat.” Controversial behavior is to be avoided so people don’t get the wrong impression of Christians. This emphasis is clearly seen at the beginning of Chapter 2 of 1st Timothy:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. 1 Tim 2:1-2 NRSV

Similar is Titus 3:1-2:

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, ² to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone.

In 1 Corinthians Paul wrote of the danger to the Church posed by earthly powers and principalities. The writer of the Pastorals is focused upon the Church leading a “quiet and peaceful life.”

This focus on a quiet and peaceful life shows up in the writer’s description of the qualifications for leaders in the Church; Bishops and Deacons (there is also a reference to the Council of Elders.) This is another indication that these letters were written after Paul’s time. The Church has grown to such an extent that it has started to develop an organization. Some refer to this early church as the “proto-Orthodox” Church that eventually became the Roman Catholic Church. Bishops and Deacons must be men, married only once and persons who, among other things, “*must be above reproach, ... temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. 1 Tim 3:2-3 NRSV.*” In other words, choose as leaders those who will be respected within the Church **and** in the outside community as well. Don’t pick the trouble-makers and extremists to lead your Church.

This emphasis on conforming to the customs of the surrounding society is also evident in what the writer has to say about women and slaves. Women are to remain silent, cannot be teachers and should submit to men as was expected in Roman society. They cannot be leaders of the church. Contrast this to the references in Romans 16 where Paul describes many women leaders of the Church including one he describes as an “Apostle.” Further evidence that this letter was not written by Paul is this statement about women and salvation:

¹⁵ *Yet she will be **saved through childbearing**, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty. 1 Timothy 2:15*

This statement flies in the face of everything the authentic letters of Paul say about salvation being based upon faith alone. Consider, for instance, these statements from Romans:

¹⁶ *For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation **to everyone who has faith**, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, “The one who is righteous will live by faith.” Romans 1:16-17 NRSV*

And

²⁸ *For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law. Romans 3:28*

Similar affirmations of salvation through faith are to be found throughout the authentic letters of Paul.

Another example of avoiding controversial conduct is the statements concerning slaves. Slaves were a central part of the economy of the Roman Empire and there was constant fear of the potential for slave rebellions. By encouraging that slaves be obedient to their masters the Church was discouraging conduct that might lead to persecution of the Church.

Having been quite critical of the Pastorals, it’s fair to ask if I find the Gospel in these letters. In fact I do. Their emphasis upon right teaching and paying attention to doctrine is essential to our lives as the Body of

Christ. We are not a social service organization but are rather a creation of God meant to serve in the world. If we pervert our doctrine or fail to teach our beliefs, we lose our way. That said, I am saddened by the harm done by these letters to the work of women in the church.

Next week: the Letter to Philemon

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.

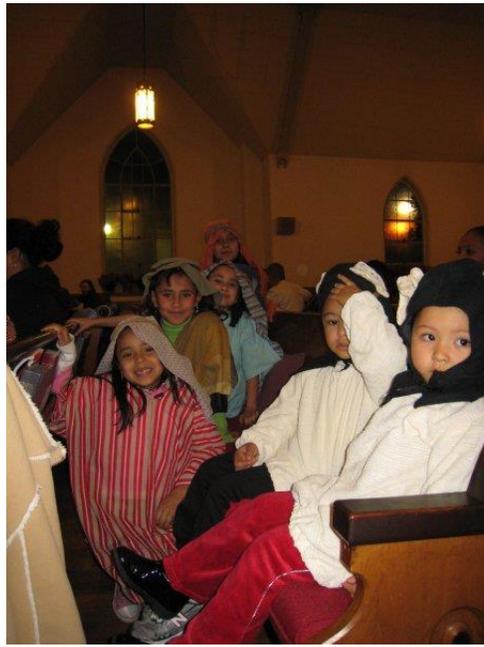
On December 18th Trinity UMC will host the meal for the workers at the Last Minute Toy Store. If you would like to help with that ministry, please contact Charles Wilson. If you would like to work in the ministry itself, or have questions about the ministry, please contact Rev. Meaker.

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. Watch for more information about these opportunities in the coming weeks.

What Is An Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant?

If you have not heard of it yet, We are planning an Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant for Sunday, December 8th . 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 for punch and cookies. 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.

16 *I have never cheated widows
or others in need,*
 17 *and I have always shared
my food with orphans.*
 18 *Since the time I was young,
I have cared for orphans
and helped widows.*
 19 *I provided clothes for the poor,*
 20 *and I was praised
for supplying woolen garments
to keep them warm.*
 21 *If I have ever raised my arm
to threaten an orphan
when the power was mine,*
 22 *I hope that arm will fall
from its socket.*
 23 *I could not have been abusive;
I was terrified at the thought
that God might punish me.*
 24 *I have never trusted
the power of wealth,*
 25 *or taken pride in owning
many possessions.*
Job 34:16-25 CEV

As Job defends himself against the accusations of his friends he describes the traits of a righteous man in his society. Care for the poor, the widow (who had no one to care for her) and the orphan are central to a righteous life.

⁴³ *You have heard people say, "Love your neighbors and hate your enemies."* ⁴⁴ *But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you.* ⁴⁵ *Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both good and bad people. And he sends rain for the ones who do right and for the ones who do wrong.* ⁴⁶ *If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for that? Even tax collectors love their friends.* ⁴⁷ *If you greet only your friends, what's so great about that? Don't even unbelievers do that?* ⁴⁸ *But you must always act like your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:43-48 CEV*

Christian love and concern is not about affection. It is about welfare. Good things happen to bad people as well as good people. Bad things happen to bad people as well as good people. God cares for us all. Our response to the people around us is not supposed to be based upon our perceptions of their worth but rather on their need. I can hate someone. That is not a good thing and it will harm me as well. But, even though I hate someone I can care about their welfare. That is Christian love. What happens to other people is supposed to matter to us.

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

November 24th: Do We Know What We Are Doing Yet? Christ is reported to have said from the Cross, "Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." It's been 2000 years. Do we have things worked out yet? My texts are Jeremiah 23:1-6 and Luke 23:33-43.

December 1st: A Different Kind of Christmas. Expect a Miracle. Something extraordinary happened with the Birth of Christ. A miracle. Is it possible for us to experience a miracle this year? My texts are Isaiah 7:14 and Luke 4:18-21.

Worship Leaders Schedule

November 24

Donnie Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Linda Robinson & Pat Moran, **Greeters**

Sam Richardson & Tommy Cotton, **Ushers**

December 1

Rachel Newman, **Liturgist**

Tommy & Jo Cotton, **Greeters**

Mike & Elaine Rohrig, **Ushers**

Announcements

You will want to participate in the “**Hanging of the Greens**” **Saturday, Nov. 30 at 9:00 AM.** This will be a great time of fellowship as we prepare the church for this Advent Season.

All are invited to an Advent Study entitled "A Different Kind of Christmas" beginning Sunday, December 1st in the Fellowship Hall. We are very excited to have our pastor, Dennis Meaker, as leader of this 5 week study. Lessons will complement and support Advent sermon topics including "Expect a Miracle", "Giving Up on Perfect", "Scandalous Love", "Jesus' Wish List" and "By a Different Road". **Fellowship and learning begin at 9:45.** See you there!

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 describe 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.

November Birthdays

Cheryl Wilson, Betty Haynes, Brooks Crowell, Ross Crutcher

Happy Birthday!