



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



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Understanding the New Testament The Book of Acts Part 1: Pentecost and Jerusalem

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. ² And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³ Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴ All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. Acts 2:1-4 NRSV

⁴³ Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All who believed were together and had all things in common; ⁴⁵ they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. Acts 2:43-47 NRSV

⁷ When they had made the prisoners stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" ⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, ¹⁰ let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. Acts 4:7-11 NRSV

³ Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Acts 9:3-4

As noted previously, The Gospel of Luke is a two volume work. The first volume is the story of Jesus' birth, life, teachings, death and resurrection. The second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, tells the story of the early years of the Church and the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem and into the greater Roman Empire. For reasons that will be discussed, the Book of Acts is sometimes referred to as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit.

Acts opens immediately after the resurrection appearances described in the Gospel of Luke. By the end of the tenth verse of Acts Jesus has ascended and the Apostles are on their own. They have been told to wait in Jerusalem to be baptized by the Holy Spirit.

Acts describes the “birth” of the church as the Day of Pentecost. The Disciples, gathered together in a room in Jerusalem, are suddenly surrounded by wind and something like fire. Each receives the Holy Spirit and begins speaking the gospel in the many languages in use in the Roman Empire. The effect is that each hears the Gospel in his own language, an image that remains powerful today. Note that there is another account of the church receiving the Holy Spirit. In the Gospel of John Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit onto the disciples before he ascends into Heaven. John 20:19-23.

A subtle theme in the Book of Acts is that the Church is not a creation of people but a creation of God through the Holy Spirit. At several points, the Apostles and disciples seek to guide the Church only to be overridden by the acts of the Holy Spirit. For instance, one of the first things to take place in the book of Acts is the selection of an Apostle to replace Judas. Acts 1:12-26. Nowhere has Jesus told the Apostles that they must replace Judas. This is something they came up with themselves. They first develop selection criteria (it must be a man who had been with the group from the time of the Baptism of John through the resurrection). Having identified two potential candidates, they decide to have God choose between the two of them by casting lots. Matthias is selected as the new twelfth apostle. That is the last time Matthias is mentioned in scripture. As will be seen, God had another candidate in mind: the persecutor of the Church, Saul of Tarsus.

Likewise, the Apostles later determine that some members of the church are widows of members from outside Jerusalem (Hellenists). They first determine that they, the Apostles, should not waste their time waiting on tables when they have serious praying and studying to do. They therefore select seven “deacons” to serve the community; wait on tables and look after the widows. Two of the seven selected, Stephen and Phillip, empowered by the Holy Spirit, become the first evangelists of the church.

The Church gets its start in Jerusalem through the preaching and teaching of the Apostles. However, this immediately brings them into conflict with the Jewish authorities. Peter and John are arrested and brought before the Temple Council for preaching the gospel. They are released with the warning to stop preaching about Jesus. This is a pattern repeated several times. One of those arrested is Stephen. Stephen becomes the first Christian martyr, stoned to death for preaching the Gospel.

The persecution of Christians in Jerusalem caused some to flee the city. One of these was Phillip who fled to Samaria. It was here that Phillip became an evangelist spreading the Gospel to non-Jews. The church was moving outward from Jerusalem. With the help of the Spirit Phillip continued preaching the Gospel throughout Judea.

It was at this point that Saul of Tarsus had his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. Saul had been present at the stoning of Stephen and, we are told, held the coats of those who did the stoning. He asked for, and received, the right to pursue Christians wherever he found them. While on the road to Damascus he has a vision of the risen Jesus that strikes him blind. By the time he recovers his sight, with the help of the Holy Spirit, he has repented and is prepared to spread the gospel himself.

Next Week: The Book of Acts: the Journeys of Paul.

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.

2 ¹⁻³ *One day, Ruth said to Naomi, "Let me see if I can find someone who will let me pick up the grain left in the fields by the harvest workers."*
Naomi answered, "Go ahead, my daughter." So right away, Ruth went out to pick up grain in a field owned by Boaz. He was a relative of Naomi's husband Elimelech, as well as a rich and important man.
Ruth 2:1-3 CEV

We have already seen that the people of Israel were admonished not to glean their fields while harvesting, but to leave grain in the fields that the poor could gather for themselves. Leviticus 23:22. In the story of Ruth, this law enabled Ruth to gather food for herself and her widowed mother-in-law, Naomi.

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*

One of the most difficult tasks in Christianity is separating the concept of Christian love from affection. Jesus highlights the problem here when he points out that even tax collectors (people despised in the rest of the community) have friends that they like. It is not hard for anyone to care about their friends. But, caring about what happens to your enemies is much more difficult. Christian love, then, is tied to concepts of welfare for others, not affection for others. You might despise someone yet still be concerned if they are hungry and homeless.

Graceworks' Ministries

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 are 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:

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. If you would rather not shop for these goods yourself, you could make a check payable to the church and earmarked for the Fuel Bag program. That money will be used to purchase food to be given to Graceworks.

Graceworks has on-going needs in their ministries to the community. In particular, at the present time, the following items are in short supply:

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|--------------------|---------------------|
| 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. Thank you 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.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

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|-----------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 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

September 22nd Sermon: How Honest Are We? I often tell new pastors I am mentoring that "Ministry is messy." Frankly, biblical teaching doesn't get any messier than the parable of the Dishonest Manager. My texts are 1 Timothy 2:1-7 and Luke 16:1-13.

September 29th Sermon: Good or Bad, Rich or Poor? What is the obligation of the rich toward the poor? What about the "underserving poor," those who are the authors of their misery? These are the questions raised in the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. My texts are 1 Timothy 6:6-19 and Luke 16:19-31.

Worship Leaders Schedule

September 22

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**

Linda Robinson & Pat Moran, **Greeters**

Donnie & Renita Hartsock, **Ushers**

September 29

Donnie Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Greeters**

Charles Wilson & Herb Haynes, **Ushers**

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 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!

We are updating the church directory with names, current addresses, telephone numbers (home and mobile) and email addresses. **Please speak to Judy Richardson or call her at 615-595-4833. Also, her email address is Richardson824@msn.com.** We want to include all members in our directory so please use any of the options above as soon as possible.

All current and prospective choir members are encouraged to attend an event scheduled for **Saturday, September 21**. Please plan to spend the morning (**8:30 – 12:00**). The choir will participate in team building as well as planning for the meaningful season ahead

If you are a member of any committee, you are a member of the **Program Council**. The next meeting of this group is planned for **Wednesday, September 18 at 5:30 PM**. This will be an important meeting to accomplish planning of events and occasions for our church in 2014. All committee members are urged to attend.

Ministry with 61st Ave. UMC. The remaining date to serve and worship this year is **November 16**.

Exciting News: A gospel sing is being planned for **Thursday, October 17 at 6:00 PM**. Further details will be provided closer to the event.

Mark your calendars for Sunday, October 13. This is **Worship Leadership Sunday**. Following the service, **Worship Leadership Volunteer Training** will take place from 12:00 – 1:00. **All persons who participate as Worship Leaders, Ushers, Greeters, Liturgists, Acolytes, etc.** are encouraged to attend this training. Further details will be provided closer to this event.

ATTENTION Finance Committee Members:

The following are future Finance Committee meeting dates:

October 19, 2013 – Review 3rd Quarter Financial Results

January 18, 2014 – Review 4th Quarter & 2013 Financial Results

Choir Rehearsal: Rehearsal is scheduled for **September 18 at 7:00 PM**.

Men's Group: The men are looking forward to a **golf outing September 23** and will be hosting the **Pancake Breakfast October 12**. Details related to these events will be provided as the time draws nigh.

September Birthdays

Millie Fly, Elva Beard, Joann Harper, Jessica Bauguess, Wanda Folds, GL Jones, Bill LeCates

Happy Birthday to each of you!