



The Methodist Messenger
NOVEMBER 2017



Whiteville United Methodist Church
902 Pinckney Street
Whiteville, NC 28472
910.642.3376
wumc@whitevilleumc.org

Sunday School - 9:00 a.m.
Sunday Worship Service - 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday Communion Service - 6:30 p.m.

THINKING ABOUT IDENTITY POLITICS AND IDEOLOGY

I identify as a natural-born sinner. My sins have been (and are being and will be) forgiven by God's astonishing love -- through faith in, and baptism into, Jesus Christ, once crucified and now risen. That is the achievement of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit -- not mine. In addition, my identity is shaped -- I trust, hope, and pray -- by Christ's Church, particularly that part called The United Methodist Church. I believe this basic identity -- as a humble, United Methodist Christian, who happens to live in the United States in 2017 -- gives this pastor some freedom (if not the necessary insight!) to comment on some of the social agitations surrounding identity in our time and place.

Let it be declared, at the outset, that this pastor believes American society and American institutions are not only generally good, but also imperfect. Generally good, but flawed. Our society and our institutions have made great strides toward eliminating various forms of injustice and discrimination -- that are immoral -- against all people, including non-whites, women, LGBTQI+ persons, and many others. That is as it should be. American society and institutions are more or less open to such reform, and they provide processes through which such reform can be achieved. Again, good but imperfect. Our society and its many institutions have not created the Kingdom of God on this world -- nor will they.

In the last 50-60 years, as non-whites, women, and LGBTQI+ people have organized and advocated to advance their rights in American society, they have increasingly employed identity politics and identity ideologies in their struggle to achieve their goals. That is fine. They are Americans living under the Constitution of the United States. As Americans, we believe they have "unalienable rights" (The Declaration of Independence) from God -- including "freedom of speech" and freedom "peaceably to assemble" (Amendment I, Constitution of the United States) to speak and to act in ways they think best to present their case to the general society. Again, that is well and good.

In recent months and years, race-based, gender-based, and sexuality-based groups -- on the left and the right -- have flooded the public square across the United States. Uncommon levels of fanaticism (which involves an unwillingness to listen to others), shrill and coarse speech that degrades others, attempts to silence the speech of some, and occasional incidents of violence and vandalism have at times been displayed. You know the list. The 2016 presidential campaign. Demonstrations in Washington, DC. Berkeley, CA. Charlottesville, VA. Confederate monuments being destroyed or removed. National Football League (NFL) players taking a knee. Efforts within The United Methodist Church to revise traditional Christian teaching on human sexuality. And on and on.

What should we think about all the churning in American society and institutions caused by identity politics and identity ideologies?

SOME PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER

In the statements that follow, this pastor will propose some principles that might help us negotiate the waves kicked up by the identity politics and ideologies of our time.

1. When identity politics challenges an institution -- be it a town council, a divinity school, a university, a state legislature, a corporation, a denomination, or the United States Congress -- the leaders of that institution have the responsibility to remember their institution's mission, restate that mission for the benefit of the public served, and defend it. If the leaders of an institution do not stand up for their institution's mission, who will?
2. When identity politics challenges an institution, the leaders of that institution should not be intimidated. They should not react to challenges out of fear or panic. They should not cave in to bullying. Ever. They should calmly call their institution to remember, and be renewed in, its mission -- that is, its reason for being.
3. When identity politics challenges an institution, its leaders should direct the challenge to their institution's established due processes that consider proposals for change. Working through established processes, proposals for change, reasonably and persuasively presented, should be heard, debated, and approved or disapproved in an orderly way.

4. The rule of law -- at the federal level, at the state level, at the local level, and in America's non-governmental institutions (including the churches) -- is always to be respected. Civil disobedience respects the rule of law by accepting a just penalty for breaking the law.

5. The rule of law is never final or absolute. It always allows for people to attempt to correct or amend standing laws that were established earlier by due process.

6. Freedom of speech must be protected for all -- even if the speech is clearly off base and from the "fever swamps" -- in American society. The Constitution of the United States demands as much.

7. It is not the American way, nor the Christian way, to try to silence those on the other side of the aisle. Americans do not have a right to be protected from speech we do not want to hear. Nor do Americans have a right to be insulated from what will make us uncomfortable.

8. Violence, physical violence against people, is always against the law. It is always immoral. Commentators must always call out violence committed both by those on the right and those on the left -- that is, violence perpetrated by the neo-Nazis and violence committed by Antifa. Too often, observers are quick to express disapproval of only right-wing violence; thereby they wrongly believe there are "no enemies on the left" (Alexander Kerensky). That is false and hypocritical. There are enemies of humanity on the left who commit acts of violence, and they must be held accountable, legally and morally -- just as those on the right must be held accountable.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Sometimes it appears that identity politics and identity ideologies are making a "long march through the institutions" (Rudi Dutschke) of American society. It can be of great concern to see this taking place. However, we, as Americans and as Christians, have seen such convulsions before.

American institutions, including the churches, are up to the challenges before them. Such challenges, if wisely responded to, can lead our institutions to recalling, and recommitting to, their founding missions. And challenges can encourage our institutions to reform where reform is needed.

It could be said that, as United Methodist Christians living in the United States in 2017, ours is an adventuresome time and place. All of us should pay attention to what is going on around us. We should stay engaged and informed. Be faithful to Christ and His Church, first and last, in all our societal and institutional callings and involvements. Have civil conversations about these matters, with others. Serve the common good. Use the reason and other gifts God has given us. And never seek to win through smugness, arrogance, or intimidation. Do all of this, until Christ comes in glory and this world is then, finally and fully, perfected.

In Christ,
Pastor Paul

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

October has been a very busy month for Whiteville United Methodist Women. Representatives attended the annual North Carolina Conference of UMW at Methodist University on Saturday, October 7. We also attended the Harbor District annual UMW meeting at Hampstead United Methodist Church on Saturday, October 21 where we were recognized as a Mission Today Unit. Officers for 1918 were elected at our local meeting in October.

Now we look forward to our next regular local meeting on November 6 at 6:30 p.m. in the Church Parlor. JoAnne Biser has the devotion, and hostess will be Debbie Sellars. Debbie Conway has the program and the ladies will be making "Christmas Remembrances" for our shut-ins.

All ladies are invited and encouraged to attend all our UMW meetings. The programs are involving, educational, and the Christian fellowship is excellent.

- Dixie Batten, President

YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

We have been preparing for the upcoming holidays and invite all youth of our church to attend our weekly meetings in the Fellowship Hall at 6:15 p.m. on Wednesdays. Our many activities include preparing, shopping and packing Christmas shoeboxes; practicing for our Christmas performance; and cleaning the youth house. Please pray for us as we plan our year - for spiritual growth, fellowship, mission work and education. Thank you for all your continued support!

- Heather LaMora

UNITED METHODIST MEN

Methodist Men will be meeting for dinner at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 2nd at Dale's Seafood in Lake Waccamaw for good food and fellowship. Please join us and invite a guest.

- Brad Crowell, President

WORSHIP COMMITTEE

It's hard to believe that November is right around the corner and with it comes several important worship services. Sunday, November 5th, is All Saints Sunday. Rev. Bill Cottingham, a retired United Methodist pastor who lives in Wilmington, will preach the sermon during our Service of Worship. Also, the Community Thanksgiving Worship Service, will be held this year at First Presbyterian Church on Sunday, November 19th, at 6:00 pm. Please mark your calendars for these special services.

The Worship Committee will meet Thursday, November 9th, at 5:00 pm in the Pastor's Study. Plans will be made during this meeting for our Hanging of the Greens service which will take place on December 3rd, as well as for other services during the Christmas season.

- Betty Gray, Chair

BOOT CAMP ADDRESS FOR NICHOLAS BELL

Nicholas' address is as follows. It must be written exactly like this:

PUT NICHOLAS BELL 117
CO F 2ND BN 54TH INFANTRY 198TH INFANTRY
BRIGADE
9240 TREADWELL DRIVE
Fort Benning GA 31905-4931

OUTREACH COMMITTEE

We had a wonderfully successful Rise Against Hunger event on September 30 here at our church. About 85 people came out and helped package over 20,000 meals! We met our fundraising goal and then some! The Outreach Committee would like to thank First Presbyterian Church for their large turnout along with a sizeable contribution as well as Lake Waccamaw United Methodist Church for their contribution and participation. Whiteville Rotary Club also participated and contributed. The Scouts were a great help as always. Besides our congregation and those mentioned above, we received financial assistance from Beaverdam Baptist Church and Grace Episcopal Church. Thank you all for your help with this.

We would like to congratulate Mary (Zigbuo) Mantor on her recent marriage to Patrick Mantor in December 2016. Mary is one of the missionaries our church assists with financial support. She serves in Liberia at Ganta Hospital. Please keep Mary and all of the missionaries in your prayers.

The United Methodist response to the devastating 2017 hurricane season is getting a boost through new grants from the United Methodist Committee on Relief.

During their Oct. 12-14 meeting, directors of the denomination's Board of Global Ministries and UMCOR approved more than \$7 million in grants for hurricane and other disaster-relief work and \$1.86 million for global health projects.

UMCOR already had received some \$15 million from donors in recent months to respond to U.S. disasters. Full-page ads in the Wall Street Journal and New York Times have highlighted the denomination's commitment to disaster relief and the fact that 100 percent of all donations go directly to relief efforts.

Please keep the victims of these terrible floods in your prayers, especially Puerto Rico.

- Vickie Pait, Chairperson

SINGING CHRISTMAS TREE

Snyder Memorial Baptist Church
Fayetteville, NC

December 1 (Friday)

We will leave Church parking lot at 5:30 p.m.

Call Church Office to sign up
(tickets are limited)

Please bring canned goods for admission.

LEADING PRAYER

Lay Servant Ministries Advanced Course

Wrightsboro United Methodist Church
3300 N. Kerr Avenue
Wilmington, NC

November 18, Saturday
9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Cost: \$25.00

Textbook: Let the Whole Church Say Amen
(L.H. Stookey)

Please register at
www.harbordistrict.org/advanced-leading-prayer/.

COMMUNITY THANKSGIVING SERVICE
OF WORSHIP

First Presbyterian Church
511 N. Thompson Street
Whiteville, NC

November 19, Sunday
6:00 p.m.

Attend and give thanks to God
with people from the many churches of
Columbus County and Whiteville!



If you would like to order a poinsettia in honor or memory of someone special, please place this form along with your payment in the collection plate or bring it to the Church Office. The cost of poinsettias is **\$12.00 each**. If using a check please indicate "Poinsettia" in the memo. The deadline for ordering your poinsettia is Sunday, December 3.

(Please print clearly)

In Honor of:

In Memory of:

Name: _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____



Whiteville United
Methodist Church
902 Pinckney Street
Whiteville, NC 28472

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WHITEVILLE, NC

Mission Statement of Whiteville United Methodist Church

As people of the body of Christ, we will gather for and be strengthened by Word and Sacraments, participate in loving fellowship, grow in discipleship, and serve our community and the world in Christ's name.

The Service of Worship is broadcast on WTXY 1540 AM from 10:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. on Sundays. Also it is available online at www.wtxy1540.com: **click on "Click to Listen Live" under "United Methodist Church of Whiteville"** at 10:00 a.m. to hear the complete audio of the service.

Mrs. Kathy Graham, Administrative Assistant

Mr. Layton Dowless, Custodian

Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday

9:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon and 1:00 - 4:00 p.m.

Office (910) 642-3376

wumc@whitevilleumc.org

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Rev. Paul T. Stallsworth, Pastor