



Heart Beat Newsletter

Zion United Methodist Church
Loving God, Loving People, Serving the World

August, 2022

Pastor Carol's Comments

In our new sermon series, we'll be exploring common sayings and learning whether they are "Bible or Not." This is also a question to ask about the new drama series, "The Chosen."

This dramatization of the story of Jesus and his followers is available for streaming from various sources for free (although the producers ask for contributions). I've found it very entertaining and thought-provoking. The writing, acting, and production are all top-notch. Jesus' message is pretty faithfully portrayed. But, there's a problem, and it's a big one: ***the story lines are almost entirely fictional.***

For example, Matthew appears to be autistic. The man Jesus heals at the Pool of Bethesda is a disciple's brother. Mary Magdalene's a drunk and a prostitute (neither are supported in Scripture) and is assaulted by a Roman soldier. Most of the story lines, like these, are entirely imaginary.

God has given us the gift of imagination, and I myself like to use our imaginations to place us in the stories of Scripture. This helps us to think about how the people around Jesus (or before, in the Old Testament) might have felt and thought about their experiences. It helps us to think about how we would respond in their place, and how to respond today.

But the imaginary needs to be clearly identified, and the problem with "The Chosen" is that there's no clarity about what's Bible and what's not. Even a viewer who is well-acquainted with the Bible may be challenged to sort out what is the "gospel truth" and what is fiction.

"The Chosen" is entertaining, and it can lead us to ask important questions, like "Why is Mary cast as a prostitute, and how has that shaped the Christian view of women? How can a disability lead someone to a particular role in life? How are we the same or different from the very real people who followed Jesus?" These are good questions to ask. But, we need to be very clear about what scenarios are imagined, even as they lead us to wonder "what if?"

So, go ahead. Enjoy "The Chosen" (or any other Bible-themed show or book). Just use your "spidey-sense" while doing so. Check your Bible or ask your pastor about whether it's "Bible or Not." Then, let the stories challenge you to think in new ways about Jesus, his message, and his followers, as you seek to follow him today.

News Around Zion

Merry Christmas (in July)!

Thanks to a number of elves at Zion, we had a merry Christmas in July. Annette and Jack Petree decorated the sanctuary with stars, greenery, and ornaments. Annette also created what we might call a "Cross-mas" tree, which helps us remember that Jesus' birth in the manger began his journey to the cross.



Louella provided the beautiful (and always delicious!) Christmas cookies.



Thanks to Denise and the Mission Committee, we were able to provide badly-needed items for the homeless patrons of the Marketplace for All People at St. Paul's UMC in downtown Toledo. Items under the tree included socks and underwear, including new and gently-used bras. (All items at the Marketplace are free to the users.)

You can learn more about St. Paul's Marketplace at <https://www.facebook.com/stpaulsmarket> or stpaulsumctoledo.com/page/mission-outreach.

Thanks to all who made our Christmas in July a merry one—for us and for others.

"Body and Soul" Tuesdays

We're continuing to meet the needs of both bodies and souls with our Bible Study from 2:30-3:30 on Food Pantry days. It's not too late to join in our current study of the Lord's Prayer. Please let Pastor Carol know if you have any suggestions for upcoming studies.



“Directions” Update

Our focus has been primarily on how to increase usage of the Food Pantry. Annette has contacted doctors’ offices in the area, and most have been eager to have information to give their patients. She is expanding her calls to other health professionals like dentists, eye doctors, and chiropractors. Amy is contacting gas stations, and Cassie is contacting the Village to see if they would make info available.

Pastor Carol met with Fire Chief Josh Hartbarger, who is working on hunger issues as part of his graduate work in Public Health. He is eager to partner with us. The first step is that his units will carry Food Pantry flyers with them in their vehicles. If they have reason to believe that food insecurity is a problem where they make a call, they will provide information about the Pantry. Pastor Carol has sent him the flyer, and the department will make copies as needed.

If we decide to try taking the Food Pantry “on the road,” there is a possibility that the WFD would be able to provide some basic health checks at the same time. Chief Hartbarger provided Pastor Carol with contact information at several locations he thought would likely have food needs.

Several of our young volunteers have come to us to do court-mandated community service. We decided to actively seek out these young people. Brenda is contacting diversion programs and the juvenile courts to let them know that we have service hours available. We believe this will be both a help to our Food Pantry crew and also provide meaningful work in a loving environment for these young people.

All are encouraged to participate as we seek ways in which Zion can better serve the community, grow in discipleship, and invite others into a relationship with Jesus.

Freedom School

Zion sent a crew of three to Freedom School at Monroe St. UMC in Toledo on Thursday, 7/21. Denise, Louella, and Amy sat with the children at lunch for conversation and help as needed.

Denise shared a heart-warming story about the little boy she sat with. He was all alone, so she joined him at his table. “I just asked him all the usual questions,” she said, like ‘How old are you?’ and ‘What do you like best about Freedom School?’” (Recess, of course!) Their conversation continued until lunch was over. Afterwards, one of the teachers told Denise that her new friend was extremely shy and rarely spoke to anyone. Clearly, the Spirit was at work!

The primary focus of Freedom School is reading, but other local partners offer activities like gardening, singing, dancing, acting, and more. Students also learn about how to be good members of their communities and making responsible decisions. Free healthy breakfasts and lunches are served each day.

Freedom School is a nation-wide program that helps to break the “cradle to prison pipeline” for at-risk children by helping them to be academically successful. Studies show that last year, across the country, 84% of Freedom School scholars maintained or improved their reading skills. 87% of parents saw increased confidence in their children.

Bible or Not?

It’s not too late to vote for the sayings you would like to hear about in our “Bible or Not” sermon series. Grab a copy of the “Bible or Not Quiz” (available in the narthex) and circle up to six sayings you’d like to learn about. Place your quiz in the basket or offering plate. The most popular choices will form the basis for upcoming sermons. First up: “God works in mysterious ways” and “God helps those who help themselves.” What do you think: are they Bible or not?

Church Information

Pastor Carol Williams-Young
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Worship at 10:25 a.m.
Sunday School at 9:00 a.m.

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Website:
<http://www.zionumcwhitehouse.org>

Upcoming Events

Sundays after worship: “Directions” meetings
(as needed)

Tue., 8/2, 2:30-3:30, Bible Study: The Lord’s Prayer
4-6 p.m., Food Pantry

Wed., 8/10, 6:00 p.m., Church Council meeting
All are welcome to attend.

Tue., 8/16, 2:30-3:30, Bible Study: The Lord’s Prayer
4-6 p.m., Food Pantry