



The LUMinary

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Pastoral Letter

September 2021

Inconvenient Truths of the Bible: On Other Faiths

With the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001 fast approaching, I thought it only prudent to examine what the Bible has to say about other faiths. Coming of age in post-9/11 America and devoting myself to the study of other religions has given me a unique perspective on the need for reconciliation between Christians and people of other faiths. However, this article isn't meant to be an exposition of my opinions on the matter, it is an examination of what the Scriptures have to say about it. If you're curious to know more about what I think, please feel free to ask me.

In Scripture, we find an interesting dichotomy. On the one hand, we find passages and commandments like: "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3) or "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

On the other hand, we have several examples of Jesus himself interacting with people of other faiths. In Luke 17:11-19, Jesus healed 10 lepers and the only one who returned to Jesus to thank him, and praise God was a Samaritan—a less than second-class Jew. In Luke 7:1-10, a Roman centurion—a Gentile—came to Jesus seeking the healing of his servant and the servant was healed on account of his master's faith. In Matthew 15:21-28, we find another encounter with a person of another faith, this time a Syro-Phoenician—a Greek Gentile—who intercedes on behalf of her demon-possessed daughter. We find yet another example in the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan, found in Luke 10:25-37.

These final two examples are poignant ones. In the parable of the Good Samaritan we find the Great Commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,' and 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Luke 10:27) In Jesus' own exposition of this commandment, he unequivocally portrays the Samaritan—a person of another, lesser faith—as the neighbor we are called to love as self. In the healing of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, we find a Gentile mother who wins Jesus over in an argument. Jesus argued it was not right to take the children's bread—the healing and teaching he had come to give to the Jews—and toss it to the dogs—the Gentiles. But the woman said, "Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master's table." (Matthew 15:27) Meaning that even the Gentiles were worthy to eat the crumbs from the table and reap the benefits of their master.

Jesus never failed to relate himself to people of other faiths in his life and ministry. Furthermore, he never failed to extend God's grace to the religious outsiders of his time. In John 10:1-21 we find the parable of the Good Shepherd in which Jesus offers us this line, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me [...] I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." (John 10:14-16) Some scholars take this to mean that Jesus, as the Good Shepherd, has incorporated people of other faiths into God's salvation story.

I believe this reality rings true from the very roots of our religious movement, as we recently discovered in our explorations of the Genesis saga. Abraham and his descendants were the founders of not only the Jewish faith and thereby the Christian faith, but also of Islam. Abraham fathered two sons and, just as God promised, their families each formed great “nations.” Ishmael and his descendants became the founders of Islam and Isaac’s offspring founded the Jewish faith. As Muslims have maintained from the beginning, these three world religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—hold a special relationship to one another. We each find our origins in Abraham and God’s covenant with his descendants. We are all People of the Book—fruits of God’s covenant promise to Abraham,

Although there is so much more to say, I will close with these final words from Jesus to his disciples before his betrayal and crucifixion, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-25) Jesus’ final commandment was for us to follow his example and love one another as he loved. Jesus’ love extended beyond his inner circle and encompassed all of God’s creation, and our love should do the same. So next time you encounter someone of another faith, try to get to know them and love them as Christ would have.

Many Blessings,

Pastor Tiffany

Pastor Tiffany is still visiting folks upon request. If you would like a visit, please call the church office or parsonage and she would be delighted to make arrangements to visit you at your home, on your porch/patio/pontoon, or at the church, whatever is most comfortable for you!

UPCOMING EVENTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

As we continue our sermon series, we will be working our way through a worship and preaching series that will take us all the way through the book of Genesis. This book tells the story of the beginning of God’s creation and of God’s chosen people. We will cover a few chapters each week. Here is a snapshot of where we are headed in the month ahead, in the event that you would like to follow along or read ahead:

September 5	Genesis 24-25:6	Isaac’s Marriage	Pastor Tiffany
September 12	Genesis 25:7-26:35	The Deceitfulness of Jacob and Isaac	
September 19	Genesis 27-28	Stairway to Heaven	
September 26	Genesis 29-30	Jacob’s Rocky Marriages	
October 3	Genesis 31-33	The Reconciliation of Jacob and Esau	

Warning: Genesis is full of beautiful blessings, promises, and examples of God’s grace extended to creation and humanity; however, it also has its darker side. In the firm believe that all scripture is God inspired and good for teaching, we will not be shying away from these darker sides of Genesis.

IMPORTANT DATES:

SPRC Meeting with DS—6:30 pm Tuesday, September 7, 2021

Charge Conference—via Zoom Monday, October 25, 2021 at 7:00 pm

Choir will resume on September 12. Rehearsals are Sundays at 9:00 am. Everyone is welcome!

Handbell Choir will be resuming soon. Watch for details.

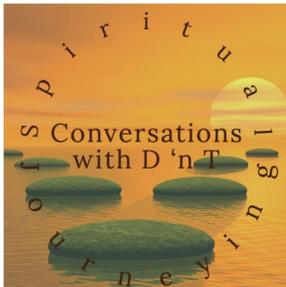
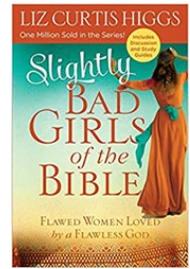
IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE TRUSTEES:

As was noted in the report last month, there was hail damage to the roof, gutters, and siding of the church and parsonage. Our insurance will cover much of the cost. That work will begin soon. Please be cautious as you see the work progressing. There is other work that needs to be done, so your monetary donations are still greatly appreciated.

DISCOVERING MORE ABOUT GOD AND GROW IN FAITH:

Slightly Bad Girls of the Bible study is beginning in early September. This study will take an in-depth look at the female characters found in Genesis—from Sarah and Hagar to Rachel and Leah.

Please register your interest in this study, by putting your name down on the signup sheet in the narthex or by emailing the church office, so that we are sure to have enough books for everyone.



Diana Carpenter and Pastor Tiffany have launched a new podcast series entitled “Conversations with D n’ T: Spiritual Journeying” in which we will strive to enhance people’s understanding of God and church, as we walk our spiritual journeys. Through this series we hope to ask and answer some of the tough questions about God, faith, church, and so much more, so that we can all become more comfortable asking these questions and enhance our spiritual journeys in the process. You can find these podcasts on our facebook page, website, and (coming soon!) YouTube or by clicking on the link provided. <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1785279>



Thank you to all those who donated school supplies. They were taken to the elementary school on August 16th to be distributed to children who may not have been able to have new supplies.



We had fun waving to the children (and adults) on their way to school on August 19th.



SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, Dec. 11. **CLASSICAL BELLS** will return to LUMC. Tickets will be on sale soon!



SERVICE AND MISSION OPPORTUNITIES:

ENGAGEMENT UPDATE: Our Church continues to strive to meet our EngageMI 2021 Learn, Act, and Give goals. We have taken some steps toward our Act goals by providing the breakfast and welcome kits for the carnival workers at this year's carnival and by stepping up to manage the funds for the Money4Meals program! This month, we would like to focus our Giving efforts on the national project we selected along with the two projects we highlighted within our Conference. If you would like to make a contribution to one of those projects (listed below) or to our general ministry shares you may do so through your preferred giving method.

STEP 1: Michigan Conference Ministry Shares	
We managed to pay our 2020 Conference Ministry Shares in full, despite the pandemic and we are so proud of you all for helping make that possible! Our goal is to do just that again in 2021. Our church has been asked to raise \$14,760, this is a decrease of over \$2,000 compared to last year, so we are confident we can reach that goal!	Funds paid to date: \$5,769.00
STEP 2: Michigan Projects	
United Methodist Community House —has been a venerable, trusted resource in Grand Rapids, MI, providing expansive services for everyone from infants to senior citizens in a warm, inclusive, multi-cultural atmosphere since 1902. It was originally founded by the United Methodist Women.	Funds raised to date: \$50.00
http://www.umchousegr.org/about/	
Wesley Woods Bathhouse Replacement —funds donated to this project will fund the replacement of the 50+ year old bathhouse at Wesley Woods United Methodist Camp in Dowling, MI. Completion of this project will serve over 500 children and youth who attend Wesley Woods each Summer.	Funds raised to date: \$200.00
https://umcamping.org/camps/wesley-woods/about/	
STEP 3: National Projects	
National Justice for Our Neighbors (NJFON) —supports and empowers a coalition of 20 JFON sites around the country that work to welcome immigrants and refugees by providing legal assistance that aspiring residents need but cannot afford or access. Through JFON's attorneys, they help immigrants understand their choices and navigate the complexities of the legal system. Through their extensive volunteer corps, they are able to create a welcoming community that honors immigrants as fellow human beings.	Funds raised to date: \$50.00
https://njfon.org/about-us/	
STEP 4: International Projects	
Heifer International Living Gifts —This is a project we have supported before and look forward to supporting again! Heifer International works with communities to end hunger and poverty by promoting sustainable farming practices.	Funds raised to date: \$83.00
https://www.heifer.org/our-work/index.html	
Haitian Assets for Peace International —a grassroots organization that empowers people, promotes health and wellness, delivers skilled training, brings technology and creates economic opportunities to grow personal and community assets for families to thrive not only survive. Their integrated approach harnesses the natural synergy between health, education, and economic development to create momentum for change.	Funds Raised to date: \$50.00
https://www.haitianassets.org/	
Water for Life —constructing wells to provide clean water and toilets to improve living standard in communities across Liberia.	Funds raised to date: \$55.00
https://advance.umcmmission.org/p-394-water-for-life.aspx	
STEP 5: Methodist Mission Personal	
Delbert and Sandra Groves , who have served in Zambia since 2000. Through their work at the New Life Center there, they have offered numerous outreach ministries, facilitated greater access to health education as well as the development of a learning and computer lab, and established PET (Personal Energy Transportation) Zambia which works to develop mobility devices that empower the handicapped by providing greater freedom of movement.	Funds raised to date: \$70.00
STEP 6: United Methodist Committee on Relief Special Project	
Finally, the EngageMI program encourages us to go above and beyond our regular UMCOR Sunday Special Offering to extend continued support to the United Methodist Committee on Relief's work around the world. This year, we have committed to sending all funds designated for UMCOR that you do not allocate for a specific project or disaster response to U.S Disaster Relief .	Funds raised to date: \$ 200.00



WIN – WIN – WIN!
DONATE TOWARD A MEAL
for a
FOOD-INSECURE PERSON OR FAMILY
and
SUPPORT A LOCAL BUSINESS

Everyone likes to eat out once in awhile but not everyone can afford it. Our restaurants are coming back from the pandemic. Money for Meals puts people in need at their tables and money in their registers.

You feel the joy of passing kindness forward!

Participating Businesses:

Ayven Grace

Tammy's Bakery & Cafe

PDP's

The Dairy Den

Firefly Ridge

Thus far, \$549.00 has been raised by community members and members of our congregation to provide free meals to members of our community who need it! Please spread the word about this wonderful program to those who may wish to give, but more importantly to those who might be in need of a much-deserved meal out.

The Laingsburg Area Food Bank continues to operate out of the building and continues to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable members of our community. If you know someone in our community who is in need, please refer them to the Food Bank. It is open Mondays 1:00-3:00 pm and Thursdays 6:00-8:00 pm.



We are resuming our monthly donations of personal care items to the Food Bank. We will collect donations on the first Sunday of each month. Please consider bringing the following items:

Laundry Detergent

Bar Soap

Toilet Paper

Dish Soap

Paper Towels

Cleaning Liquids

Deodorant

Toothpaste

Shampoo