

North Carolina Conference
The United Methodist Church
700 Waterfield Ridge Place
Garner, NC 27529

PRESORTED
FIRST CLASS MAIL
US POSTAGE
PAID
RALEIGH, NC
PERMIT #2483



By Belton Joyner, Jr.

bible+study

Based on the scripture lessons of Cokesbury's Adult Bible Study Series

out of the church those who do not agree with him!

The writer of the letter is not calling for making believe there are no differences; in fact, he says that when he comes to visit, he will point out the things Diotrophes has done wrong (verse 10). This is not a call to sweep differences under the rug; it is a call to show hospitality and welcome.

On this first Sunday of the month, many local churches will celebrate Holy Communion. Perhaps good questions are: "Who is missing from the Lord's Table? Why are they not here?" Are the empty places at the Table theological? Sociological? Ethnic? Language? Cultural? Generational? How does our congregation express the hospitality of the Table?

Showing hospitality is one way we are "coworkers with the truth" (verse 8). In this verse, the word translated "truth" is made up of two words: one meaning "not" and the other meaning "hidden or concealed." Truth is openness and welcoming. The very word "coworkers" (King James Version: "fellow-helpers") gives indication that Truth is a shared experience.

We are in this together...even if the ones with whom we are together are strangers (verse 5).

What Someone Else Has Said: Ralph C. Wood (*Literature and Theology*, Abingdon Press) has written: "Hospitality thus becomes an earthly analogy to the gospel itself. Just as we were once strangers and enemies whom God has patiently taken into his household (Romans 5:10), so must we be willing to offer hospitality to those who are alien and hostile to us."

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: "Welcoming God, restore Your image in us so that we with joy might welcome the stranger. Equip us with the openness of truth that gives us no place to hide behind status or position or recognition. In Jesus Christ we have seen the fullness of that truth..."

May 10, 2015
Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
"Gifts of the Spirit"

Have you ever been to a T-ball game? It is like a regular baseball game except there is no pitcher. The ball sits atop a tee about eye level. The batter can

certainly hit a ball that is just sitting there waiting to be struck. But, it does not always happen that way. Sometimes the batter misses the whole thing.

This T-ball image came to mind as I began looking at this week's text. How could one miss the ball on a text about spiritual gifts? How could one miss the ball on a text about saying "Jesus is Lord"? How could one miss the ball on a text about life in the Spirit? The ball is just sitting there and any one of us ought to be able to hit it. On closer look at the text, I see at least two places where I might miss the ball.

One of those places is 1 Corinthians 12:4: "varieties of gifts." The New Testament word translated "varieties" (or diversities or different) has its root in a word that means "contrast." God's gifts to us do not always look alike. Do you remember a perfume ad from years back—the perfume's name was Charley—that said this perfume was specially formulated so it had a different scent for each person—remember? Paul is saying that the Holy Spirit touches each of us, but the gifts

continued on page 2

Are You Ready for 2015 Annual Conference?

The 2015 North Carolina Annual Conference will be held at the Wilmington Convention Center in Wilmington, North Carolina, June 10-13, 2015. The theme for the quadrennium and focus of the Conference is a powerful image from Psalm 84, "Strength to Strength." Bishop Hope Morgan Ward will preside over the conference with the assistance of Conference Secretary Rev. Jerry Bryan and Conference Lay Leader Gary Locklear. For more information about the 2015 Annual Conference, visit: <http://nccumc.org/secretary/annual-conference/>



Let's Journey To...

Israel/Palestine

"Join others from the NC Conference on a Holy Land Pilgrimage! *Space is Limited*

Jan 9 - 19, 2016
with Dr. Tracy Radosevic
Jan 18 - 28, 2016
with Rev. Gary Allred
Feb 28 - Mar 9, 2016
with Rev. David Goehring
Mar 11 - 21, 2016
With Rev. Doug Gestwick

Alpha Christian TourS, Inc.



621 Macon Place
Raleigh, NC 27609
919-783-8714
919-783-8747 fax
Alphatours@gmail.com
www.Alphatours.com

An Alternative Way To Travel With Someone You Can Trust

vary, even contrast. As John Wesley wrote in his *Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament*: “Divers streams, but all from one fountain.”

Another place where I might miss the ball is 1 Corinthians 12:7: “demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person for the common good.” In our contemporary world, we tend to measure individualism as a higher value than community. Success is often depicted more as personal success rather than community success. Yet, Paul has challenged us to test the gifts given by the Spirit not so much by what “it does for me” but rather by “what it does for us.”

If I avoid the emphasis Paul is making in these two places, it just might be my over-stuffed ego at work. It is so tempting to think that others are lacking if they do not have the same gifts from God as I might have. It is so tempting to think that religion ought to be judged by how it affects me, not how it embraces the community.

Be careful when reading the Bible; the Spirit just might want to change you...or me.

What Someone Else Has Said: Leonard Sweet (*Me and We: God’s New Social Gospel*, Abingdon) wrote: “For Thomas Aquinas, the surest test of the Spirit is simple: Does it draw us closer together into unity?”

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “For the gifts given to all, thanks...”

May 17 2015
Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 “The Spirit Creates One Body”
I wonder if Paul studied anatomy and linguistics. Or maybe he went on the Internet and traced the root of the word *sōma*, the New Testa-

ment word we translate as “body.” Take a look at 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 27. Notice how Paul comes back over and over again to “body” as a metaphor for the Church.

According to the sources I checked, the Greek word *sōma* (body) comes from a word that means “make whole.” That is exactly what Paul is talking about when he calls the Church “the body of Christ.” In other words, diversity of body parts is the creation of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13). Not only would it be boring if all body parts were just alike, it would also be a broken body. The body works at its best only as all parts live out their roles: made whole.

Evidently, folks in the Corinthian church had been giving greater value to some spiritual gifts than to others. That division still shows its spirit in our day. One of my students in the Duke Course of Study told the class how she, serving as a hospital chaplain, was having rich and productive spiritual conversations with a seriously ill patient. The patient’s pastor insisted that the chaplain stop seeing the sick woman because the chaplain had not had the gifts of speaking in tongues.

Paul lists examples of “body parts” that have been given by God: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle-workers, healers, helpers, leaders, speakers in tongues, interpreters (1 Corinthians 12:28-30). (Paul offers other lists of such gifts in Romans 12:6-8 and Ephesians 4:11.) If I waste my time worrying that God did not give me a particular gift, I well might fail to use the gift God has given me. If I conclude that God has not given me spiritual

gifts, I have denied my baptism which brought me into the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Paul gets rather graphic in making sure that all parts of the body get included in what makes the body work (1 Corinthians 12:22---the necessity of excrement and sexual reproduction). He is not making a plea for turning the church into a nudist beach; but he is making clear that sometimes the most important gifts in the life of the Church are those gifts not readily seen.

What Someone Else Has Said: In *Models of the Church* (Doubleday and Company), Avery Dulles wrote: “There is something of a consensus today that the innermost reality of the Church—the most important constituent of its being—is the divine self-gift...a union or communion of (people) with one another through the grace of Christ.”

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Come, Holy Spirit, renew Your gifts and grant us the signs and reality of our unity in You...”

May 24, 2015
Texts: Acts 2:1-7, 12; 1 Corinthians 14:13-19 “Gift of Languages”
Perhaps I should try to find some obtuse theological term to say this, but let my normal way of talking do the job: “Today is a biggie!” In fact, today is a double-biggie. On the calendar of the Church, it is Pentecost Sunday. On the calendar of United Methodist memory, it is the day (May 24, 1738) of John Wesley’s “strangely-warmed heart” at Aldersgate Street.

Before the events reported in

Acts 2, Pentecost was one of the regular festivals of the scattered Jewish community. It celebrated God’s goodness in the summer harvest. The faithful were encouraged to come to Jerusalem for these feast days and many no doubt stayed the fifty days after Passover for the Pentecost traditions. That’s why there were folks from all over (Acts 2:5) who gathered for what they no doubt thought would be a routine Pentecost celebration.

It was anything but routine. Often I recall the account Bishop Hope Morgan Ward has given of a Pentecost Sunday in a church where she was pastor. There was to be a grand procession, children and youth carrying banners and flags and streamers in the bright red color of Pentecost. The group lined up for its stately and orderly march. Expectation filled the sanctuary as the opening peals of the processional hymn began. One child nudged another, who in turn teased another with the banner pole, while yet another youth accidentally (?) slapped a parishioner beside the head with a fluttering fabric. Soon, each child was enjoying the chaotic, but totally unexpected, delight of the walk down the aisle. It might not have been orderly, but it was very Pentecostal! God shows up in unexpected places in unexpected ways!

Chaos broke out in this room where the faithful gathered in Jerusalem. It was both a corporate, community experience (“wind filled the entire house”—Acts 2:2) and a personal engagement with the Spirit (“individual flames of fire alighting on each among them”---Acts 2:3). Isn’t that like our own spiritual experiences—to be both corporate

and personal? The mystery was not that no one understood what was being said; the mystery was that everyone did understand what was being said (Acts 2:4-6), each in the language of home.

Perhaps as the Church opens the door to new generations, we shall have to speak in a new language. May the Spirit so equip us!

What Someone Else Has Said: United Methodist campus minister at Duke, Jennifer Copeland, (*Feminine Registers*, Cascade Books) has said: “Words create a world and critiquing our conventional use of language offers a starting place to examine the transformational possibilities for the proclamation of God’s word.”

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “Blow fresh wind, O Spirit...”

May 31, 2015
Text: 1 Corinthians 13 “The Greatest Gift Is Love”
The study text for this week is so familiar that it sometimes rolls off our backs like so much shower water. Its warmth makes us feel good; it makes us a little cleaner, but the truth is that, before long, we shall need to shower again. If our grasp of love is so temporary, why does Paul say “love never fails”?

In fact, I am intrigued by the various way translators have rendered that verse (1 Corinthians 13:8a). The Common English Bible says “love never fails.” The New Revised Standard Version puts it this way: “love never ends.” The King James Version has: “love never faileth.” The New English Bible says: “love will never come to an end.” How about the Moffatt version: “love never disappears.” In *The Message*, Peterson says

“love never dies.” J. B. Phillips renders the verse: “love knows no limits to its endurance.” Clarence Jordan (*Cotton Patch Version*) paraphrases: “love never quits.” Living Bible has: “love goes on forever.” *Santa Biblia* has the Spanish for “love never ceases to exist.” *Bonnes Nouvelles Aujourd’Hui* gives this: “Love is eternal.”

Well, you get the idea. All of us—translators included—struggle to find the fullness of meaning in what Paul has written. However, don’t we see plenty of evidence that our best efforts at love have fallen short? Don’t we look no further than yesterday (or this morning) to find proof of how love has indeed come to an end?

This thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is placed here between Paul’s caution not to take so seriously some of the gifts seen in the Corinthian community: particularly speaking in tongues (14:2). These gifts pale in comparison to love. John Wesley says it this way: “As Starlight is lost in that of the midday sun, so our present knowledge in the light of eternity.”

“Love never fails” because in the ultimate scheme of things, God wins and God is love. The best we can do now is get a glimpse in a broken mirror (13:12), but in the coming fullness of God’s kingdom, “I will know completely in the same way that I have been completely known” (13:12). Jesus said to pray, “Thy kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.” Thanks be to God when we get a glimpse—a loving glimpse—of that undefeated love.

What Someone Else Has Said: In his book on the theology of Charles Wesley’s hymns (*Praising the God of Grace*, Abingdon Press), Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. has written: “While both love and

death may level all human distinctions, we affirm that love is always stronger than death. We base this conclusion on the triumph of God’s loving purpose in the resurrection of Jesus.”

Prayer
As you prepare this lesson, let your prayer begin: “For the gift

of love, we give You thanks. For the gift of Jesus Christ, we give You thanks. Move among us to make us more loving. Move among us to release the spirit of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray and for whose sake we live in love, praying as He taught us, ‘Our Father...’”



vip report

BIRTHS: Congratulations to Owen (Fairway: Apex 519 Campus) & Chambliss Barrow upon the birth of Edward “Ned”Bruce Barrow March 18.

Sarah Smith-Pitts (Gateway: Trinity, Fayetteville) and husband, Myron, joyfully announce the birth of daughter, Helen Ann Walker Pitts, on March 31.

DEATHS: BROWN, James C. P. (Fairway: retired) died March 15. Service was held March 22 at Southern Pines UMC.

HOOD, Jean (Capital: retired) died March 16. Service was held March 19 in Goldsboro.

BOWMAN, John (Capital: retired) died March 19. Service was held March 23 at Winstead UMC.

CRIBB George Franklin (Sound: retired) died March 27. Service was held at March 30 at Broad Creek UMC.

EVANS, Tommy (Corridor: clergy medical leave) died March 27. Service was held March 30 at in Mebane.

JACOBS, Phyllis (former Heritage & Rocky Mount District Lay Leader, and former member of NC Conference Board of Laity) died March 29. Service was held April 2 at St. Paul UMC, Rocky Mount.

SMITH, Charles C. (Sound: retired), died April 4. Service was held April 11, at Ann Street UMC, Beaufort.

LOPEZ, Hugo (Harbor: retired) died April 3. Service was held April 9 at Grace UMC, Wilmington.

Navigating the ever changing sea of media production can be a daunting task.

Let us be your guide.

We know these waters and can offer expert advice and production capability. Whether it's a convention, business meeting or event - we're here to help. We provide as much assistance as necessary to complete your project on time and to your satisfaction. Video support, large scale projectors, stage lighting, wireless microphones and audio support, web streaming, video promos, DVDs and remote video connections all are within your grasp. Come along side and set a new course for success. Call today!



919.859.1199 - www.mcrAV.com

MCR
Video
Productions

NCCUMC Annual Conference 2008-2014



Theatrical Production "Third Day" DVD



NCCUMC Studio Set Design



Projector and Screen Installation Governor Moorehead School



Community Colleges Convention - Raleigh Convention Center



Sound System Upgrade Mars Hill Baptist Church



Church Mice

Copyright Karl A. Zorowski



Every Day Grace magazine

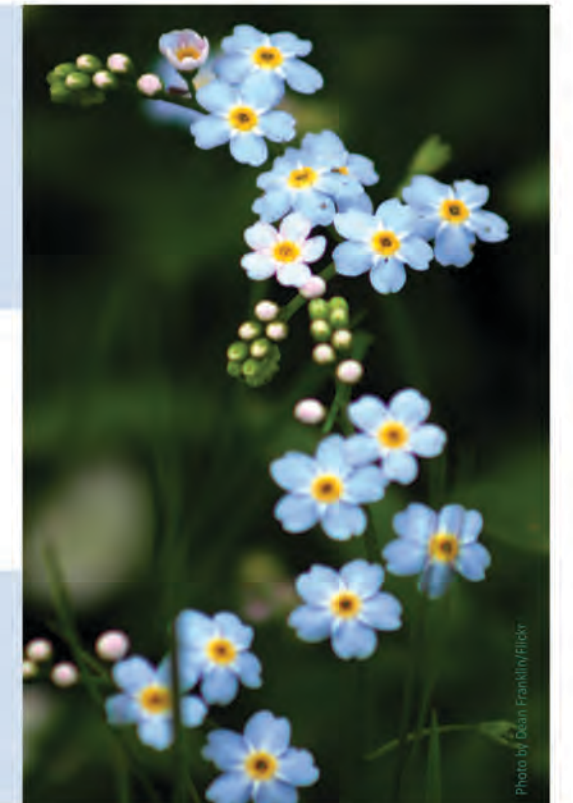
Discover the stories that unite us in our experiences of life, and remind us where there is story, there is grace. Topics we'll explore include health and healing, rural life, the modern family, urban life, aging, youth and so many more. To receive EDG magazine, email communications: communications@nccumc.org, with your full name and physical address.



Plant a Legacy through a Planned Gift to Benefit your Church

Spring is the perfect time to plant a legacy garden of "Forget Me Nots." A planned gift given in memory of a loved one lives on. The seeds of your gifts today will be remembered through the ministries they will fund tomorrow.

Contact your United Methodist Foundation. Let us help you plan your "Forget Me Not" legacy



United Methodist Foundation, Inc.

800-555-4718

www.umf-nc.org

Expand or build your church with a loan from UMDF.

We provide first-mortgage loans for building, expanding and renovating United Methodist churches and mission institutions.

- Loans starting at \$25,000
- Amortized up to 20 years

Call us at 1-800-862-8633.

www.umdevelopmentfund.org



CONNECTING THE CHURCH IN MISSION

