



Lewistown-Trinity United Methodist Church

P.O. Box 134, 8088 CR 54

Lewistown, OH 43333

937-686-8355; www.LTUMC.com

Rev. Debra Ketcham – 614-580-2382 (Cell)

Greetings in the name of the Lord! Lent begins on Wed, Feb. 17th! I invite you to think about what you will give up or do differently for God this year for Lent – from now through Easter. Make it a sacrifice, not something easy. You could turn off your social media, read the Bible and pray one hour or more each day, be still and listen for God to speak for 20 minutes or more with a cleared mind. Stop shopping for items other than food, give up secular radio stations and listen to your preferred style of Christian music, eliminate all fried foods from your diet – junk food, fries, chicken strips, donuts, and more. You could stop watching certain TV shows or movies that don't reflect Christ in this world. Turn off the TV earlier. Get a good night's rest. Eat healthier and intentionally exercise so you can serve the Lord more fully. Give up tobacco products, alcohol, gossip, complaining, or any other harmful vices. Deliver Meals on Wheels or find a new way to serve in the community. Start calling and connecting with our community of faith. Please make your choice or choices more giving up gum or chocolate. Consider your sacrifice so you can focus more fully on being Christ to a hurting world.

Our scriptures for this week were: Apostleship: Acts 13:1-5; Romans 1:5 & 1st Corinthians 12:28 & Ephesians 4:11-12; Evangelism: Luke 19:1-10 & Acts 8:26-40 & Ephesians 4:11; Teaching: Mark 1:21-22 & Acts 18:24-26 & Romans 12:7 & 1st Cor. 12:28-31 & 2nd Timothy 2:1-2; Encouragement/Exhortation: Acts 15:30-32 & Romans 12:6-8.

Acts 13:1-5 begins by listing the prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch. These are the leaders of the church who are empowered by the Holy Spirit to make God's will clear to the fellowship of believers. They were from a variety of places, cultures, and social positions. There's a black man from North Africa, a boyhood friend of Herod Antipas, and Saul a Pharisee educated by the renowned Gamaliel, plus many others.

While the congregation was worshiping and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart Barnabas & Saul for the work for which I have called them." After the church laid hands on them and prayed, the Holy Spirit sent the two off to proclaim the Gospel message and numerous faith communities were born. In Romans 1, Paul writes, "Through the Lord Jesus Christ, and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to bring faith to the Gentiles (the non-Jews).

Apostleship is the ability to start and oversee the development of new churches focusing on new and creative ways to bring new people to Christ. Those with this gift are like the Circuit Riders of the early Methodist Church. Those with the gift of apostleship are led by the Spirit to share the Gospel with those who have never heard it. They adapt their ways, take risks, and persevere, doing whatever it takes, to reach unbelievers. The apostleship spiritual gift in today's world would be those spiritually gifted to begin 'New Church Starts.'

Ginghamsburg Church was founded by a Methodist circuit rider in 1863 in the village of Ginghamsburg, Ohio, and it was part of a four-church circuit for a part-time preacher. Then, beginning in the 1920's, students, from what is now called '*United Theological Seminary*' in Dayton, served as student pastors. In 1979, the first full-time pastor was appointed to Ginghamsburg church, when the church averaged approximately 90 people. Rev. Mike Slaughter's mission for the church was to "win the lost and set the oppressed free." Mike has the gift of apostleship.

As the church grew, it still wanted to reach more people. The church became an early adapter of ministry via the Internet and has one of the largest church internet ministries in the world. In the late 1990s Ginghamsburg shifted into using video, onscreen graphics, creative lighting, and other audio-visual elements, in worship services, to create a multisensory worship experience to reach a new generation. They continue spreading God's word through *The Avenue* which includes a coffee shop, stage area for concerts, classrooms, basketball courts, batting cage, fitness center and game loft for hundreds of teens from the Dayton area.

In 2008, The Fort McKinley UMC became part of Ginghamsburg Church. Previously Fort McKinley was a separate United Methodist congregation, in an economically challenged urban neighborhood in Dayton, with approximately 40 people in attendance. Before the Pandemic, they grew to over 400 in worship and has become the largest African-American United Methodist church in the state of Ohio. Creatively, a new church start was planted within an existing church. Ginghamsburg continues to train up and be invited to send out local pastors to infuse the church's DNA into struggling churches - - that focuses on making more new disciples for Jesus.

Our next spiritual gift focus is not about starting churches, but changing hearts and minds. Jesus came to evangelize, to save the lost and this gift is portrayed in Acts 8:26-40, when the Holy Spirit created an encounter between Philip and a court official to Queen Candace, who was in charge of her treasury.

The Egyptian was reading a portion of Isaiah 53 which speaks of a future when all will enjoy the blessings of God, when God gathers all the outcasts of Israel, which includes the foreigners

and this eunuch. As a eunuch, he was excluded from full Jewish participation, meaning he could only enter the outer courts of the Temple. Yet in his devotion to God, he still made that once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Jerusalem.

As the man read, Philip asked if he understood the prophecy. It was the text of God's plan for salvation, which has shaped our core beliefs about Jesus' death. After Philip shared the Gospel message, the eunuch believed in Jesus and was baptized. Then both were led by the Spirit to evangelize wherever the Spirit led them.

One modern day evangelist I enjoy is Joyce Meyers. She doesn't pastor a church; she evangelizes to large and small groups of people. Her desire is to change hearts, minds, and lives for Jesus. She wants believers to bring their friends to her events so she can get unbelievers convinced and enthused, and become believers of Jesus Christ. She also gets believers unstuck so they can move along their faith journey.

Once a group of people believe and come together, the spiritually gifted teachers strengthen the fellowship. In Acts 18:24-28, we find Apollos. Remember him from the 2nd week in January on the Baptism of our Lord? He was the one who was baptized for the forgiveness of sin, but he had never heard of being baptized in the name of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit. Apollos knew the scriptures well, however without the Spirit's power he is unable to interpret the scriptures in a way the people could understand.

So after his first day of proclaiming the message of Jesus in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila, husband and wife, invite him to their home to further instruct the learned Apollos. These teachers instructed Apollos so he could more fully understand the message of Christ, so he could bring many more to Christ. After that, he did.

In 2nd Timothy 2, we find Paul is passing on his authority to Timothy, whom he taught. Timothy is given the responsibility and authority to teach others in a way so that they will be able to teach others, who will teach others, and so on. If it wasn't for teachers of the faith, you may not be with us today. They are vital for the spiritual growth in a church community.

Teachers have a divine gift to understand the scriptures, a text or event, and then clearly explain it to others, so believers can apply it to the work of God. This understanding usually isn't given divinely. Teachers work hard to prepare, with extended times of study and reflection. Their teachings also challenge their listeners to do what the scriptures say, and inspire others to greater obedience to God's word.

In Paul's letters to the faith communities he planted and those he intended to visit, Paul offered various instructions, directives, and encouragement, sometimes called exhortation.

He exhorted, he encouraged the believers to be faithful in the midst of hard work, tragedy, and in situations that seemed hopeless or never ending. We've all had tragic, hopeless, or never-ending situations.

We each know how essential it is to have someone with the spiritual gift of encouragement to come to your side. When you are distraught, they strengthen and encourage you. They not only comfort you, but will gently challenge you to trust in God's promises, step out or move forward in faith, as they continue to walk alongside you. They are trustworthy and keep your confidences. Encouragers are encouraged themselves when they see others grow in faith, maturity, skills, and service to Christ.

So, for five weeks, we have learned about the spiritual gifts Jesus exhibited in his ministry, which have been given to believers over the millenniums beginning on the Day of Pentecost (50 days after Jesus was raised from the dead). These gifts have been given to disciples, in differing levels, for differing purposes, as the Holy Spirit chooses, to make the Gospel of Jesus Christ real in people's lives, to change hearts, minds, and souls to the Lord, so that the body of Christ, the church, will be built up, so as to make Jesus real to non-believers. Each believer receives at least one, and as we use them, we are given more.

So which spiritual gift or gifts has the Holy Spirit poured out upon you? Is it speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, intercession, prophecy, faith, knowledge, administration, leadership, discernment, shepherding, mercy, hospitality, healing, giving, helps, or maybe God has performed a miracle through you? Or have you realized you have one of this week's gifts -apostleship, evangelism, teaching, or encouragement?

If you have no idea, ask someone in our church, they may be able to help. Maybe you haven't discovered your gift because you haven't taken, or been given the opportunity to serve in a variety of ways in the church – so pray for ways to step out and serve. God has gifted each person, in some way, to build up the church, for this time, for this place. If you're interested in learning more, let me know. It's probably time to offer a 6 – 8 week Network Spiritual Gifts class again.

Paul began his letter to the Ephesians with, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in Him . . . in love, he knew he would adopt us as children, through Jesus, to bring him much joy and pleasure." God is waiting for you to use your gifts to build up this church, for His honor and glory. Amen.

Have a blessed and safe week! Pastor Debbie