

The Tower

First Congregational
United Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin

LXVI

June 7 & 14, 2009

No. 22

Biblical Ambiguity Doesn't Diminish Authority

I used a quotation from this article during the opening of worship on Sunday, and several people mentioned it or asked about it; so I am reprinting the entire article. It is by Marilyn McEntyre and it appeared on May 15, 2009, on the God's Politics blog, which is sponsored by Sojourners magazine. McEntyre is the author of Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies: Stewardship of Language in a Culture of Lies. (Eerdmans, 2009)

~Curt Anderson

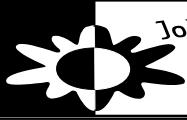
A student once asked me whether in my opinion Mark Twain actually said that the coldest winter he ever spent was a summer in San Francisco. Taken aback for a moment, I replied, of course, that it wasn't a matter of opinion: he either said it or he didn't, and there were reliable ways of finding out which. (In fact, he did.) If, on the other hand, she'd asked me whether I thought Twain was exaggerating (as was his wont) for dramatic effect or giving an accurate weather report, I would have offered an instant and confident opinion, being an enthusiastic reader of that rascal who, like Huck, "tole the truth, mostly."

Exaggeration was his stock in trade, and, for him, a way to deliver truths that urgently needed to be told, making them palatable with a generous serving of laughter. The incident reminded me of how important it is to distinguish, in our scriptural and theological debates, between matters of opinion (remembering that not all opinions are equally informed) and matters of fact (which are at least theoretically subject to historical verification or rational validation or scientific proof). Not all facts can be proven, not all opinions are worthy of consideration, and scientific method is not the final arbiter of factuality, but to consider the basis on which we accept as right, true, or useful what we find in the morning newspaper and, most importantly, in scripture, is an indispensable criterion of responsible reading.

At the same time, God meets us in our uncertainties. God meets the physicist in the exhilarating indeterminacies of field theory and string theory and chaos theory, and in the wave that is also a particle. God meets the poet in the pun that opens two paths to two truths and the image that evokes conflicting associations. [God meets] the doctor in the moment of discernment about what this particular body might respond to. At the end of our certainties, the Spirit waits with guidance good for this occasion, this instance, this circumstance, not necessarily transferable to next time.

And to acknowledge ambiguity in scripture in no way diminishes its authority. Indeed, its ambiguity and paradox are necessary instruments of truth: Truth will not let us limit or diminish the complexity of what comes from the hand of a transcendent God. Ambiguity is not vagueness, but rather a form of precision. Plurality of interpretive possibilities is not the same as rampant relativism. Criteria of validity always apply, and always entail some understanding of the contexts and purposes of both writer and reader.

Within the broad embrace of the church, under the bright wings of the Spirit who breathes life into the conversation that takes place among the faithful, right reading of sacred texts is not necessarily uniform reading. To read faithfully is to read prayerfully, not necessarily consistently. "Love changes," Wendell Berry writes, "and in change is true." In its way, this claim applies as much to our love lives with God as to the long love between spouses, the focus of Berry's poem.



Join Us for

MORNING SERVICE

Sunday Morning, June 7, 2009
Worship at 10am in the Sanctuary
Scripture Reading: Psalm 29

It is a little unusual to use the Psalm lectionary as the preaching text. We usually tend more towards the Prophets or the Gospels. However, this week's lectionary suggestion of Psalm 29 offers some interesting insights about the relationship between God and God's people. The Psalm begins with a vivid description of God's awesome power but ends with the prayer that God will give strength to God's people. The challenge for us is to understand how we receive and use God's strength in our relationships with people and with the natural world.

Jesus teaches us that real strength is in compassion. But sometimes it is hard for us as individual Christians to have the courage to act compassionately. That is why we need the companionship of others to help find that courage. That is why we need the Church.

This Sunday we will honor our long time members. These are the people that have been our wise and trusted guides in responding to the Holy Spirit and building a compassionate community at 1609 University Avenue.

Thanks be to God.

Sunday Morning, June 14, 2009
Worship at 10am in the Sanctuary
Scripture Reading: Mark 4:26-34

The reading from Mark includes two of the many parables that Jesus told. Both of the parables are ways to help us understand what the Kingdom of God is like. The first compares the kingdom to a farmer planting, then going on about life, and then harvesting the crop. The second is using the mustard seed as an example of something that begins small, but yet becomes a large plant. And finally, at the end we hear that parables are told so people can understand, but that afterward he thoroughly explained them to the disciples.

As we read parables, there are many things for us to consider. How do these parables speak to us today? Are we the people or the disciples? How do we gain insight into the parables?

Sustainable Travel to Worship Recap

Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's sustainable travel to worship month in May! Approximately 80 individuals participated on at least one Sunday.

We took 280 car-limited trips over the five Sundays in May, reducing by about 583 pounds our carbon dioxide emissions, and reducing car miles traveled by about 700. That's the distance from Madison to Bismarck, ND!

Imagine how we could improve our stewardship of God's creation if everyone committed to taking the next step in increasing their sustainable travel to worship and other places. Many from our faith community have committed to do this, year-round. Will you join them?

~Sarah, Erin, and Melissa Baumann, and Sue Jones

As the Summer Begins

For many, summer brings a change of pace, and perhaps less frequent attendance in church due to vacations and other activities. But please don't forget to keep your pledge up-to-date. The expenses of the church do not take a holiday! An easy way to keep your pledge current is by electronic funds transfer. If you would like to use this method, just contact our financial secretary Anne Reynolds at 233-9751 or areynolds@firstcongmadison.org. Or simply mail a check to the church office. Thank you and have a nice summer.

~ A Message from the Board of Stewardship

MUSIC 🎵 NOTES

Summer Singers

Summer Singers will sing in worship on Sunday, June 14. All interested singers, middle-school age and older are invited to participate. We will meet at 9:00am in the Sanctuary to learn a simple introit and anthem to sing during worship that morning. If you have any questions, please contact Don DeBruin.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sympathies

Our Sympathies are with the family of JoAnn Lampman. JoAnn died Sunday, May 31. A celebration of life will be announced later.

Rain Barrel Workshop

Join us on Sunday June 28th at 9:00am in the Chapel for an environmental stewardship presentation on water conservation issues and Sustain Dane's Rain Reserve rain barrel program. Sustain Dane's rain barrel system is an innovative way to harvest rainwater - it was designed by local community members with the environment and sustainability in mind. Dane County is home to some of the most precious freshwater lakes, streams, and marshes in the state, and preserving these water resources is vital for ensuring a high quality of life now and in the future. Please join us for this opportunity to learn about local stewardship opportunities and protecting God's creation. Bagels, coffee and juice will be provided. Rain barrels will be available for purchase - for information about them visit <http://rainfordane.org/>

~Board of Community Life

Community Meals at Luke House

Community Meals days are held on the first Thursday of each month. Please label the food you bring in as "Community Meals," include your name, and leave it in the Pink Kitchen by 10:00am Thursday. Put perishables in the refrigerator (Spanish rice must be completely thawed before it is brought to church). Servers are asked to be at Luke House by 10:45am. Please call Sally Haveman at 238-6596 to volunteer, or if you have questions.

Women's Book Study

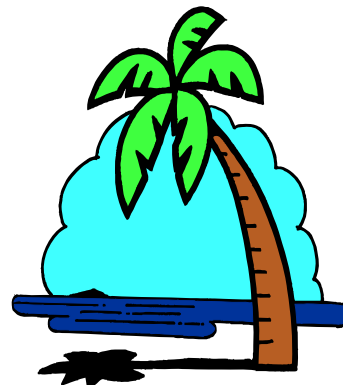
Women! Mark your calendars now to attend a morning of coffee (or juice), treats, and conversation after reading *My Stroke of Insight* by Jill Bolte Taylor. Jill Bolte Taylor was a 37-year-old Harvard-trained and published brain scientist when a blood vessel exploded in her brain. Jill shares with us her recommendations for recovery and the insight she gained into the unique functions of the right and left halves of her brain. "I believe the more time we spend running our deep inner peace circuitry, then the more peace we will project into the world, and ultimately the more peace we will have on the planet."

The class will meet on Saturday mornings from 8:00-9:30am on June 6, 20, July 11, and 25 in the Student Lounge and will be facilitated by Eldonna Hazen. Books are available in the office for \$12. Please let Eldonna know if you plan to attend.

Long-term Member Luncheon

Please join the Board of Community Life for an after-worship potluck on Sunday, June 7, to celebrate First Congregational UCC's members of 50 years or more. BCL will provide brunch egg dishes and drinks; we ask members to bring a dish to pass. We hope you can join us!!

CHILDREN & YOUTH



Soakin' Up The Son!

Summer Children's Musical ~ *Surf, Sand and the Son* are the key ingredients to this year's Summer Children's Musical. Learning to follow the lessons and examples of Jesus and living God's unshakable truth is the mission of this *island-themed* musical experience. Presented in Worship on **Sunday, June 21**

Summer Sunday School

We still have quite a few openings for Summer Sunday School teachers. We need two adults for each Sunday we offer Class. If interested, please contact Jeff Rabe at the Church Office.

All-Church Outdoor Weekend

Mirror Lake State Park

Group Campsite 304

June 12-14, 2009

Camping not for you? Join the group on Saturday, June 13 at 3:30pm for PICNIC AT THE

BEACH! It's only an hour drive to Mirror Lake, so if you can't make the whole weekend, join us for a Saturday picnic and stay for vespers at 7:00pm by the campfire. Contact Melissa Bauman at 698-2645 or mbaumann@fs.fed.us



Church Calendar

June 7 - June 21, 2009

Sunday, June 7

10:00am Sunday Worship ~ Sanctuary
 10:15am Wee Worship
 11:30am Long-term Member Lunch ~ DR
 2:00pm Salek Studio Piano Recital ~ Sanctuary

Monday, June 8

8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 9

12:00pm Bible Conversations ~ SL
 5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
 6:45pm Piano Tech Guild ~ FR
 6:45pm Boy Scouts ~ DR, YR
 7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

Wednesday, June 10

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
 10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS
 10:30am Volunteer Tea ~ SL

Thursday, June 11

8:00pm AA ~ Room 302a

Friday, June 12

All-Church Camping Mirror Lake

Saturday, June 13

All-Church Camping Mirror Lake

Sunday, June 14

All-Church Camping Mirror Lake
 9:00am Summer Singers ~ Sanctuary
 10:00am Sunday Worship ~ Sanctuary

Monday, June 15

12 noon *Tower* deadline
 6:00pm Executive Council ~ FR
 6:00pm Summer Musical Rehear. ~ DR
 8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 16

12:00pm Bible Conversations ~ SL
 2:00pm Oakwood Worship
 5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
 6:00pm Summer Musical Rehear. ~ DR
 7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

Wednesday, June 17

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
 10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS
 6:00pm Summer Musical Rehear. ~ DR

Thursday, June 18

6:00pm Summer Musical Rehear. ~ DR
 8:00pm AA ~ Room 302a

Friday, June 19

5:30pm Davis/Vasudevan
 Wedding Rehearsal ~ Sanctuary

Saturday, June 20

8:00am Women's Book Study ~ SL
 9:00am Summer Musical Rehear. ~ DR
 3:00pm Davis/Vasudevan
 Wedding ~ Sanctuary

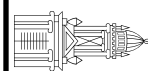
Sunday, June 21

9:00am Summer Musical ~ DR
 10:00am Sunday Worship ~ DR
 3:00pm Sara Wilcox Ordination ~ Sanctuary

BBQ ~ Mid High Bible Study
 Big K ~ Big Kitchen
 BOUNCE ~ Mid High Youth Group

DR ~ Dining Room
 FR ~ Fellowship Room
 GAS ~ Sr. High Bible Study
 LRC ~ Learning Resource Center

MS ~ Minister's Study
 SAGE ~ Sr. High Youth Group
 SL ~ Student Lounge
 SR ~ Salad Room
 YR ~ Youth Room



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1609 University Avenue
 608-233-9751 (phone)

Madison, Wisconsin 53726
 608-233-7180 (fax)

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Sunday worship attendance on
 May 24, 2009 was 114.
 May 31, 2009 was 198.

Staff:

Curt Anderson, Senior Minister
 Eldonna Hazen, Associate Minister
 Jerry Hancock, Director of Prison Ministry Project
 Donald J. DeBruin, Director of Music Ministries
 Jeff Rabe, Director of Christian Education for
 Children & Youth
 Bill Tackett, Building Manager
 Lauren Nagle, Secretary
 Anne Reynolds, Bookkeeper

Office Hours: 8am-noon, 1:00pm-3:30pm, Monday -
 Thursday; 8am-noon Friday.

Phone: 608-233-9751

Fax: 608-233-7180

E-mail: office@firstcongmadison.org

Web Page: www.firstcongmadison.org

IN CASE OF EMERGENCIES: Curt Anderson's home phone is 836-1321, Eldonna Hazen's phone is 241-8117, Jerry Hancock's phone is 658-6630.

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID
 MADISON, WI
 PERMIT NO. 1395

JUNE 2009

Monday, June 1

10:30am Spiritual Direction ~ SL
12 noon Tower deadline
5:30pm Stewardship ~ SL
7:00pm All Boards ~ Chapel
8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 2

12:00pm Bible Conversations ~ SL
5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
6:30pm Special Needs Comm. ~ SL
6:45pm Boy Scouts ~ DR, YR
7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

Wednesday, June 3

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS

Thursday, June 4

Community Meals Day

8:00pm AA ~ Room 302a

Friday, June 5

No Activities Scheduled

Saturday, June 6

8:00am Women's Book Study ~ SL
10:30am Casserole Assembly BCL ~ Big K

Sunday, June 7

10:00am Sunday Worship ~ Sanctuary
10:15am Wee Worship
11:30am Long-term Member Luncheon ~ DR
2:00pm Salek Studio Piano Recital ~ Sanctuary

Monday, June 8

8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 9

12:00pm Bible Conversations ~ SL
5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
6:45pm Piano Tech Guild ~ FR
6:45pm Boy Scouts ~ DR, YR
7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

Wednesday, June 10

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS
10:30am Volunteer Tea ~ SL

Thursday, June 11

8:00pm AA ~ Room 302a

Friday, June 12

All-Church Camping Mirror Lake

Saturday, June 13

All-Church Camping Mirror Lake

Sunday, June 14

All-Church Camping Mirror Lake
9:00am Summer Singers ~ Sanctuary
10:00am Sunday Worship ~ Sanctuary

Monday, June 15

12 noon Tower deadline
6:00pm Executive Council ~ FR
6:00pm Summer Musical Rehearsal ~ DR
8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 16

12:00pm Bible Conversations ~ SL
2:00pm Oakwood Worship
5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
6:00pm Summer Musical Rehearsal ~ DR
7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

Wednesday, June 17

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS
6:00pm Summer Musical Rehearsal ~ DR

Thursday, June 18

6:00pm Summer Musical Rehearsal ~ DR
8:00pm AA ~ Room 302a

Friday, June 19

5:30pm Davis/Vasudevan Wedding Rehearsal

Saturday, June 20

8:00am Women's Book Study ~ SL
9:00am Summer Musical Rehearsal ~ DR
3:00pm Davis/Vasudevan Wedding

Sunday, June 21

9:00am Summer Musical ~ DR
10:00am Sunday Worship ~ DR
3:00pm Sara Wilcox Ordination ~ Sanctuary

Monday, June 22

7:00pm Adult Education ~ SL
8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 23

12:00pm Bible Conversations ~ SL
5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

Wednesday, June 24

9:30am Worship Planning ~ MS
10:30am Staff Meeting ~ MS

Thursday, June 25

8:00pm AA ~ Room 302a

Friday, June 26

No Activities Scheduled

Saturday, June 27

No Activities Scheduled

Sunday, June 28

9:00am Summer Singers ~ Sanctuary
9:00am Rain Barrel Workshop ~ Chapel
10:00am Sunday Worship ~ Sanctuary

Monday, June 29

12 noon Tower deadline
8:00pm SA ~ Room 302a

Tuesday, June 30

5:30pm NA ~ Room 302a
7:00pm NA ~ Room 302a

GREETERS

First Sunday Team:

Dana Chabot (even-numbered months), Hub and Todd Pinkerton (odd-numbered months), Joyce and Leilani Robertson-Hoyt

Second Sunday Team:

Mary Beckman, Jane Deyo, Fannie Hicklin, Alison Rice (even-numbered months), Austen Wygocki

Third Sunday Team:

Jim Allen, Kathy Gansner, Sue Jones, Steve Lerdahl, Judy Whipple

Fourth Sunday Team:

Mary Ellen Gerloff, Karen Gussert, Irene Ilgen, Ann Maffet, Betta Owens

Substitutes & Fifth Sunday:

JoAnn Ashley, Sam Boeke, Beth Cannestra, Robin Craig, Nikki Ditchman, John Ehlke, Annette Ellstrom, David Ewing, Dean Guerdet, Sarah Kissel, Audrey Marquardt, Mark Rzchowski, Kathi Sell, Jackye Thomas, Mark Thomas, Jody Varney

USHERS

First Sunday Team:

Jane Deyo, Cathy Easter, Katharine Gansner, Vicki Lovely, Janet Pugh

Second Sunday Team:

Bob Burns, Kristin Davis, Jeanne Marshall, Janet Schrieber

Third Sunday Team:

Elizabeth Armstrong, Dorothy Brown, Ellsworth Brown, Ed Hasselkus, Tom Rickner, Samantha Rickner, Carol Toussaint

Fourth Sunday Team:

Katrina Dwinell, Katharine Gansner, Mary Metz

Fifth Sunday Team:

Katrina Dwinell, George Elder, Josh Feyen

Subs:

Sam Boeke, Robin Craig, John Ehlke, David Ewing, Jill Larson, Liz Michaels, Mark Rzchowski, Chris Sbonik, Greg Ullstrom

OFFICE HOSTS

First Sunday: Fannie Hicklin

Second Sunday: Barb Williams

Third Sunday: Barb Williams

Fourth Sunday: Fannie Hicklin

Fifth Sunday & Sub: Janet Schrieber

SOUND SYSTEM

First Sunday: Rob Hetzel

Second Sunday: Mark Rzchowski

Third Sunday : Gary Pine

Fourth Sunday: Bob Burns

Fifth Sunday: Tom Pugh

BIRTHDAYS

Those celebrating 90+ birthdays are in listed in bold.

- 1st Erica Moeser, Britta Nordberg, Jeffrey Vierstra
2nd Maxwell Michael Wittenwyler
3rd Jerry Hancock, Sarah Maxwell, Kerstin Marie Willman
4th Richard Askey, Marques Bovre, Larry Davis, David Fraser, Jennifer Tishler
5th Mary Schar, Christina Schoenwetter
6th Herb Heneman, Jody Varney
7th Susan Fischer
8th Diana Shaw
9th Madeline Archer, Jessica Bowman, **June Forsyth**, Clare Gromoll, Paige Brianna McKenzie
11th Abigail Leigh Pierson
12th Sean Hadfield, Amanda Merrill, Camille Merrill, Drew Thomas
13th Jenny Armstrong, Linda Luebke-Jones, Audrey Vargas
14th Norma Lee Beale, Margaret Bogue, Linda Briesemeister, Elsa Statz
15th Rich Arnesen, Wm. Pharis Horton
17th Emma Robinson, George Seyfarth
18th Marcia Olson
19th Sarah Mattison Buhl, Dorothy Heffernan, Don Last
20th Olivia Jazmyn Tupta, Anna Wilcox
22nd Barbara Arnold, Claire Gibbons, Steven Vargas
23rd Lance Bentley, Beth Cannestra, Kyle Cook, **Mary Erickson**, Shirley Jane Kaub, Riley Patton
24th Hank Whipple
25th Bob Gentile, Dean Guerdet, Corey Mackey
26th Amanda Mackey
27th Karin Kalish, Emma Larson, Lennie Rufinus, John Stofflet

