

## A Message from Pastor Luke

*You are to be holy to me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.      **Leviticus 20:26***

*He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.*

**Acts 10:11-12**

Continuing with our exploration of community, I suppose we should get one of the larger questions out of the way first. Who's in and who's out? It's a question we're all used to asking ourselves and our groups from our earliest days. Whether on the playground, filling committees, or sending out wedding invitations, oftentimes we're forced to choose who to play with, who to lead us, and with whom we break bread. It's a natural occurrence, one that seems to be just as much related to biology as it is theology, and yet we have a fascinating drama unfolding throughout scripture over this idea of what it means to be a people.

In Leviticus we find all manner of laws to help the newly liberated Israelites navigate the harsh realities of the desert. How we dress, who we associate with, what we eat, when we physically distance ourselves from each other, how we wash our hands and our bodies, etc. etc. And in the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter in the 26<sup>th</sup> verse I believe we find something interesting. The priest writes, "you are to be holy to me, because I am holy, and I've set you apart from the other nations and claimed you as my own." Now, I'm paraphrasing here, but what we're seeing here is God, very intentionally, creating boundaries between two groups of people: the Israelites, and everyone else. So if we were to just go by this verse then it seems as if we can be completely justified in separating ourselves out by culture, the ways we dress, how we pray, what we eat, etc. However, not only is that a poor reading of this text, but we also don't read the bible in isolation from itself or our larger world.refinishing the ceiling before we've patched the leaky roof (if you'll accept the metaphor).

In the 10<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Acts we find Peter, one of the apostles, taking the noon hour one day to go pray. He instantly becomes filled with hunger, and as the scripture says, he, "goes into a trance".



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In this trance he sees a vision of a sheet filled with all manner of animals that are not supposed to be eaten by Jews (return to the passage in Leviticus, right before that we get some dietary laws). Now, Pete is hungry, there's a whole host of animals descending that would probably be delicious if bbq'd, and what's more he hears the voice of the Lord say, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat." But Peter, being the good Israelite that he is, protests a total of three times until God finally says, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." Now this is astonishing, because in many ways it would seem that thousands of years worth of ritual, tradition, and law are being upended by God. Yet, I'm not sure that's the case and I'm convinced something different is going on here.

When Jesus is being dedicated in the temple as a young boy in Luke chapter 2, there was a righteous man named Simeon who spoke a prophecy over the boy, "... my eyes have seen your salvation / which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples / a light for revelation to the gentiles / and for glory to your people Israel." What we forget, I believe, is that the chief aim of God is to draw his children back to him. Now, I'm well aware of passages later in the epistles making distinctions between different types of "children", but when I say children I mean all those who have the breath of life within them, those who were knit together by God in their mother's wombs, and those who can trace their lineage back to Adam, son of God (Luke 3:38, by the way). So by children, I mean all peoples, Jew, Gentile, and Christian alike. When God is separating his people out in Leviticus it isn't to sunder their relationship with the other peoples and tribes around them, rather it was more than likely to make them an example of what holiness might look like, what a good life might be. This is the same thing that is happening in the Gospels, except it is taken to it's conclusion that all people might be made holy, that all nations might be able to bear the light of Christ, and that all of us might be redeemed back into the fold of God. Remember, Israel wasn't perfect from the beginning, nor throughout its history, and neither are we, but we all must be reformed into the image of God.

So back to the question. Who's in and who's out? Well, there are certainly nuances in daily life and the cultural contexts of our own communities. Not everyone gets along, we see that even within the Church, but in many ways that doesn't matter. Because the ideal, that shining example that God is beckoning us towards is that all people might be welcomed into the family of God, that all people may sidle up to the table and break bread with one another, and that any boundaries within or around the Church wouldn't be boundaries that prevent people from becoming holy. This isn't easy, it's not the natural tendency of humans to just let anyone and everyone in, but that is a vision of the Kingdom of God, and there's healing, and power, and hope within it. But more on that later; for now may the Grace of the All-welcoming Christ be with you, now and forever. Amen.



# AUGUST 2020



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
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2 *Communion* Coffee Fellowship 10:00am UTC Sunday Worship 11:00am UTC	3	4	5 <b>Giving Wednesday</b> Biscuits & Gravy at UMC Weekly Prayer 5:00 pm	6	7 Bible study 6:00pm	8
9 Coffee Fellowship 10:00am UTC Sunday Worship 11:00am UTC	10	11	12 <b>Giving Wednesday</b> UTC Board Meeting 6:30pm Weekly Prayer 5:00 pm	13 Food Pantry	14 Bible study 6:00pm	15
16 Coffee Fellowship 10:00am UTC Sunday Worship 11:00am UTC	17	18	19 <b>Giving Wednesday</b> Weekly Prayer 5:00 pm	20	21 Bible study 6:00pm	22
23 Coffee Fellowship 10:00am UTC Sunday Worship 11:00am UTC	24 ICC Meeting	25	26 <b>Giving Wednesday</b> Weekly Prayer 5:00 pm	27 Food Pantry (UTC & UMC)	28 Bible study 6:00pm	29
30 Coffee Fellowship 10:00am UTC Sunday Worship 11:00am UTC	31					

**Giving Wednesday Schedule:** Drop off at UTC on Sundays or UMC Wednesdays 8:00am-4:00pm

**August 5th-** bacon, salad dressing (miracle whip) small jars please, cereal, canned vegetables

**August 12th-** bacon, salad dressing (miracle whip) small jars please, canned fruit, instant potatoes, gravy mix

**August 19th-** bacon, salad dressing (miracle whip) small jars please, peanut butter, jelly, cereal

**August 26th-** bacon, salad dressing (miracle whip) small jars please, macaroni & chesse, canned meat: chicken, tuna, turkey, roast beef, spam and potted ham

**August 5th- FREE Biscuits and Gravy curb side pick up at UMC!**



**UTC Board Meeting Wednesday, August 12th 6:30pm**

# Announcements

**Weekly Prayer every Wednesday  
5:00pm on Facebook.**



**Bible Study starting Friday, July  
10th 6:00pm on Facebook.**



*Prayer requests:* Anna Weber, Zayne Osborne, John Ferguson, Jim England, Carol Barrett, Ron Brumley, Jack Meek, Gail and Donna Woods, Gene Kirk, Sally Brumley, Levi Lucas, Sherrill Lowman Bryant, Mike Zahn, baby Arthur Zahn, Reggie Koop, Dillion Light, Kim Hilgenberg, Karen Borrego, Linda Hendrickson, Dorothy Woltemath, Taylor Holliman

If you have any announcements to include in the Lamp, please email [utchurch@msn.com](mailto:utchurch@msn.com) or call/text Becca Spiegel at 660-253-3982 at least one week before the end of the month to be included in the following month's newsletter.

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