



# WITNESS

Only God can make a tree. So said the poet, and it remains true today. Oh, humans have advanced science so we can work with the stuff of life as never before, manipulating genes and such. In that sense, I guess, humans can “make” a tree. But, in reality, we are just working with the stuff of life. God stuff. Divine Play-Doh as it were. And, let’s face it. A tree made by human effort and technology will always be a pale copy of what God makes. Only God can make a tree. Only God can make life.

And only God can make disciples.

Let’s start with the scope of the commandment. “Go . . . make disciples of all nations.” All nations. The world, in other words. God’s plan is not just for the United States. God’s plan is not just for the western nations. God’s plan is not just for the traditionally Christian nations. The scope of God’s plan is best heard in the well-known Scripture of John 3:16: “For God so loved *the world* that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” God’s plan of salvation is for the world. Any other goal is too small for God.

You see this goal acted out in Acts 26:19-29. Paul is appearing before the king, Herod Agrippa. Agrippa is a king over Israel because the Romans allow him to be king. His role is to help keep the peace in Palestine. Paul is brought before him in chains—a prisoner. Picture this: Agrippa dressed in his best, surrounded by his court. Paul is likely dirty, smelly, and hasn’t been eating well. I’ve seen the prison at Herod’s

palace in Caesarea in Israel, and it’s basically a hole in the ground. Paul has spent weeks or months in this hole and is brought before someone who can free him. So what does Paul do? He starts preaching. He says, “I wish everyone within the sound of my voice could be like me except for the chains I wear.” Paul burns to share the gospel with the world.

Too often, the church sets a goal much smaller than the world. Go into any Christian bookstore, and you will find advice on church growth that speaks in terms of spreading the gospel as if we were selling toothpaste.

We are told to think in terms of “target audiences.” We want to attract the people who look and think as we do. We are told to think in terms of making the church “seeker friendly.” Some churches do that by removing the cross from the church. Taking away those signs that point to the mystery of God. Some try to offer music with a good beat and catchy lyrics.

Is there anything wrong with catchy music? No. Anything wrong with being seeker friendly? No. The problem is in how we use these gimmicks to shape who we want to reach. We want to pick who comes to the church instead of letting God bring to us those whom God chooses.

How would you feel about the apostle Paul coming into the sanctuary, smelly from the prison, maybe in chains? It would still be Paul, but not the sort of “disciple” we were expecting. How welcome could you make such a person?



Christ's goal is making disciples of all the nations. Of the world. For us, looking out on the small part of the world beyond these doors, that means welcoming every person God brings to us. Some of the people who come through those doors will be just like us. Some will not. But all are part of God's world, and we are called to do our best to welcome them as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Are there people who won't let us welcome them? Yes. Are there people who resist the call of God in their lives? Yes. Will we fail to welcome some people? Undoubtedly. We are sinners ourselves, after all. But, keep in mind God's goal. God's goal is the salvation of the world. We are to be here for everyone who comes.

Just as God's goal is to make disciples of all nations, we need to keep in mind who makes disciples. God makes disciples. Only God can make a tree. Only God can make a disciple.

Too often, the church falls into the trap of treating the church like a secret society. We'll bring people into membership, we say, once we've taught them how to be disciples. Taught them the secret passwords, the doctrines of the church. Taught them the liturgies of the church. We act as if we have the inside track with God and we decide who gets to be in and who doesn't.

It doesn't work that way. We instead start by acknowledging God is working every day of our lives to make *us* disciples. We haven't arrived. God is still working on us. John Wesley called that "sanctifying grace"—the work God does on our lives once we have confessed our faith

in Christ. We too often forget the grace of God also reached into our lives to call us to God. God called us to be disciples.

God may have called us though the lives of other disciples, but it was God doing the calling. Just as God called us, God calls others. We aren't the gatekeepers of heaven. We don't get to decide who is—or isn't—a disciple. God makes disciples; we don't.

An old saying goes, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one." We are the sermon people see. God uses that sermon to make disciples of us and others. God calls us to live as disciples, to live in relationship with God and to let God work in our lives. When you allow God to do that, God puts you next to those people that God is also working on. God uses you to reach into the lives of other people.

Incidentally, while you are doing that, God is using those same people to reach into your life. When we talk about disciple-making, we are talking about being a part of God's work in this world. God uses us to make disciples by the way we live. In the process, God continues to make disciples of us. God makes disciples using the living word of our lives.

"Go . . . make disciples of all nations." As you go through your day, carry in your heart the truth that God intends just that. Every nation. Every person. The world. The person you consider most unsuitable to be a disciple is likely the person God is reaching for through your life. Always remember: We don't make disciples of ourselves or of others. God makes disciples.

—**Rev. Dennis Meaker**

## Wednesday Night Opportunities Start August 5!

Need a midweek pickup? Energy, a Wednesday evening program for adults and children (including a community meal), begins the first Wednesday in August. Here's the agenda:

- 6-7 p.m.—Community meal
- 7-8 p.m.—Program
- 8-8:15 p.m.—Closing prayer and singing

We have exciting programs planned for all ages:

- Spark** - play, sing, act - for kids
- Alternative** - chat, lead, inspire - for youth
- Renew** - discuss, support, believe - for adults
- Create** - make a joyful noise - adult choir

For more information or to volunteer to help with programs or to bring food, please contact Angela or Sherry.

## Sunday School

Every Sunday, we offer Sunday school from 9:30 to 10:15 a.m.:

- Spanish-language class for adults, Gothard Room.
- Media class for youth and adults, Memorial Hall, led by Crys Zinkiewicz. We are studying the New Testament with "Good God Theater."
- Childcare for ages 3 and younger in the nursery.
- Younger children meet in the classroom next to the nursery.
- Older children meet in the room behind the choir room.

## Spanish-Language Adult Class:

The class just completed a study on the Trinity. They have now begun a study on United Methodist membership vows.

## Fifth Sunday All-Church Sunday School:

Sunday, **Aug. 30**, is time for our traditional All-Church Sunday School. We begin with breakfast at 9:30; then have a time of learning in the form of a jeopardy game. This month's theme is "Back to School." Older children, youth, and

adults have all successfully been parts of teams. It's a time of fun, fellowship, and learning for everyone. Don't sleep in Aug. 30. Get up and come to Sunday school!

## New Sunday School Class Scheduled for September:

Sherry will lead a new adult Sunday school class beginning the first of September on the book of Colossians. This is a six-week class. Sherry will write the curriculum and film part of the class as an integral part of her commissioning process. Please consider being a part of this experience. You will find more information and a signup sheet for the class in the bulletin beginning in August.

## Joys

Notice our attendance figures. Thanks to all who've made it a priority to be at Sunday school and worship this past month.

Phil and Connie Schmutz give thanks that he has now recovered from the MRSA virus.

It is a joy to see pictures of church families popping up on the bulletin board. Take time to learn names and faces—and if your picture isn't there, give a photo to Angela Flanagan.

The participation of our college students who have been home over the summer months has been a joy.

## Transportation to Church

Do you need a ride to church—or know someone who does? Nat Roache has offered to provide transportation on Sunday mornings to anyone who might not otherwise be able to get to church. Contact the church office, 297-3216, if you or someone you know needs help getting to Sunday worship.

## July Attendance

June 28: Sunday School: 26; Worship: 79  
 July 5: Sunday School: 22; Worship 58  
 July 19: Sunday School: 19; Worship 78  
 July 12: Sunday School: 20; Worship 70

### Prayer Concerns

- Joan Berg, Barbara Dunlap-Berg's mother
- Tom Brucker's mother
- Mary Ellen Carney, Helen Dozier's daughter
- Albert E. Curtis, Mabel Jackson's friend
- Danny and Angela Flanagan—many members of their extended families are in ill health.
- David Norton, sympathy for the loss of his aunt, June Brindley
- Louise Gafford, in hospice care
- David Garlick, Doreen Rodger's brother
- Robert Hendrickson, Dot Hendrickson's son
- Mabel Allene Jackson
- Jeff Larue
- Dorothy Lish
- Beth Luton (sister of Diane Luton Blum) died July 27. Be in prayer for Diane and family.
- Mary McKnight—recovering from a stroke.
- Sean Michael Mevis
- Jeanne Moses
- Gregory Mundy, Glenna Osborn's friend
- Susan Rodgers for the loss of her mother, Doreen
- Helen Sellers
- Mitzi Stafford and family for the loss of her grandmother
- Pam Stout (sister of Julia Hedgepath) died July 24. Memorial contributions may be made to Sumner Hospice, 510 E. Main St, Gallatin, TN 37066. Be in prayer for Julia and family.
- The Velazco-White Family—sympathy
- Annie Laura Wells, Angela Flanagan's grandmother
- Maria Mercedes friend who's baby is blind
- Our community

### Childcare Helpers

We provide childcare for children under age 7 during worship. Childcare helpers during worship for the month of August are:

**August 2** – Arthur Bachus

**August 9** – Amy Lipschutz

**August 16** – Rebecca Rutledge

**August 23** – Sherry Cothran Woolsey

### August 30 – Danny Flanagan

Our caregiver for children is Alicia Hickman. She is a wonderful caregiver. However, some Sundays we have more children than she can manage. The additional help keeps our children safe. If you would like to volunteer for a ministry that gives great joy, contact Angela Flanagan. She'll be glad to put you into the childcare rotation.

### Food-Assistance Program

We continue to serve hot meals to 50+ people every Thursday at 5:30 p.m. Volunteer teams helping regularly include Hands On Nashville, East Serves (Vanderbilt dorm group), Sigma Chi—Vanderbilt, Randy Horick and Grace Renshaw, and many church members, friends and associates.

The food pantry provides supplemental food assistance to many families and individuals in the Nashville area as needed during the week. Many of Nashville's homeless citizens get sack lunches from us.

Thankfully, we recently received a very large donation of goods for the pantry, through an anonymous grant given to Second Harvest Food Bank. Our pantry received more than 1,600 pounds of food.

We always need heat-and-eat meals, soups, nonperishable meat and protein products, crackers and chips, drinks, canned fruits and vegetables, pasta and rice, and other quality food and hygiene goods.

### August Calendar Notes

#### Every **Sunday**:

Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.

Worship, 10:30 a.m.

Youth, 5:30 p.m., Blakemore UMC

#### Every **Wednesday** Starting Aug. 5:

Wednesday Night Energy 6 – 8:15 p.m.

#### Every **Thursday**: Church Supper, 5:30 p.m.

Every **Tuesday** and **Friday**: AA, Memorial Hall, 8 p.m.

#### Meetings and Events

Sunday, **Aug. 2** - Love Feast following worship

Tuesday, **Aug. 18** - Church Council Meeting, 6:30 p.m., Gothard Room

### Church Classifieds Board

Come check out the new Church Classifieds bulletin board in the narthex next to the collection bins! On this board, you can post gently used items that might be of use to someone else. For example, that old vacuum cleaner in your basement works fine but you have a new vacuum and never use this old one. Well, you can post the item on the board, and that might be just what someone else needs! Remember: one person's junk is another person's treasure. Please write a brief description of the item (preferably with a photo) and your name and phone number, then someone who needs that item can contact you. The reverse is also true. If you are looking for a particular item, you can post that on the "needs" side of the board. Perhaps someone can meet that need! This is just one more tool to connect members of our faith community. What a great way to be in ministry with one another!

Do you have a good paperback book that you've read and would be willing for others to read? Bring in your books and place them on the designated area near the board. Others who are looking for books can take, read, and return—or pass along to others.

### Youth News

With the departure of Nate Sawyer, our youth program is in transition. Please note these opportunities:

**Sunday Morning** Sunday School – Youth and adult class in Memorial Hall.

**Sunday Night** Youth Group – WNUMC youth are still included in the Sunday night

program and special youth events at Blakemore UMC. Sunday night Youth meetings are from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. and include supper, recreation, study and fellowship.

**Wednesday Night** Energy - Youth are invited to be part of the new Wednesday night program, Energy. There will be a specific class for youth of all ages each Wednesday night.



**Julio Feliciano** takes part in a photo shoot for curriculum resources for The United Methodist Church.

Thanks, Julio, for serving the larger church in this way.

### Birthdays in August

4 Ann Cover                      5 Rachel Lee  
9 Karen Wright

### Birthdays in September

5 Beth Chatham                6 Bo Hoskins  
11 Cadence Cobb            12 Nicole Lee  
18 Erin Meaker                20 A.J. Cobb  
25 Leah Cover                 30 Grace Renshaw

### Super-Special Shut-ins

Helen Dozier is looking forward to her upcoming birthday. She will be 90. Her daughter, Mary Ellen Carney, is doing better. Previously, she had to sleep sitting in a chair; now she can sleep in her bed.

Louise Gafford is improving remarkably. She is more active and sits up part of the day. She may be taken off hospice care.

Mabel Alleen Jackson is grieving over the death of her only living sibling who died recently in an accident.

Mary McWright is recovering from a stroke. During our last visit, her son Don said she had made excellent progress in a very short time. She is in West Meade Place, a rehabilitation facility near St. Henry's Church in West Meade.

Helen Sellers wishes the church well and says she is praying for us.

As Helen is praying for us, let us remember her and our other shut-ins in our prayers. Our shut-ins would really appreciate telephone calls and cards.

—Bill and Cherrie Hall

## Good God Theater

**Now Showing at a Sunday School Class Near You!**



**If you had been lame all your life, wouldn't you want to kick up your heels when you got healed? That Jesus fellow had the same effect on a lot of folks!**

OK, so you won't find **Larry the Lame Guy** in your Bible concordance, but Ted & Company will introduce us to the exuberance the nameless lame man Jesus healed must have felt! And that's not all!

Also, this month **Peter** will get a lesson of his own about what's an OK menu; **Philip** will discover an unlikely new disciple, and the **Jerusalem Council** will wrestle with what's legal, what's fair, and what's good news!

**Paul**, on the other hand, just about comes to blows with his cellmate. Some exciting times ahead!

All this is happening in *Good God Theater*, Sunday mornings, in Memorial Hall. Showtime is 9:30. Youth and adults are welcome! Join us for a fresh and fun look at the truth of the Bible.