

# Family Ties

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SAINT PAUL

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• February 2017 •

## **I Corinthians 3:4-9** **For we are partners together working** **for God.** **Unity Sunday, January 29, 2017**

By Rev. Bill Englund & Rev. Saul Lu

The church that the Apostle Paul planted was not a well-behaved or perfect congregation. It had several excellent teachers and leaders, yet it struggled with many of the same problems facing churches today. The Corinthian church was an example of what ordinary churches look like: sinners saved by grace. Paul's letter is very personal and full of straight talk for a church working through some everyday as well as complicated problems.

Corinth was a relatively young city: less than 100 years old. Many different people had settled there: Greeks, Romans and Jews. It may have been the most famous city in the Roman Empire – second only to Rome itself. There were many popular athletic events and gladiator battles held there. It was a major center for pagan religions. In recent times, twelve temples have been discovered at Corinth. The Temple of Aphrodite, goddess of love employed at least 1,000 temple prostitutes who played a part in the pagan religious ceremonies.

The people of Corinth had the reputation in the ancient world as a badly behaved, hard drinking, sexually active bunch of people. When Paul arrived with the Good News of Jesus Christ and many of them became believers, they brought their reputations with them right into the church. Paul spent a year and a half with them as their pastor, going over the Message in detail, showing them how to live out this new life of salvation and holiness as a communi-

ty of believers. Then he went on his way to other towns and churches.



### **Servants who plant the seeds.**

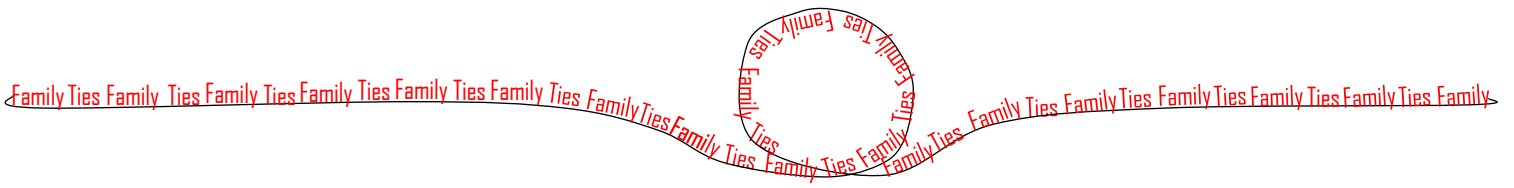
Sometime later, Paul received a report from one of the Corinthian families that while he had been away things had more or less fallen apart. Divisions had developed, morals were in disrepair, worship had slipped into selfish patterns of people grasping for the supernatural. He directs them gently how to work all the the glorious details of God's saving love into their love for one another.

Paul needed to communicate effectively with people from different backgrounds and cultures: people who spoke several different languages. Paul, himself, probably spoke three or four in his ministry: Greek, Latin, Hebrew and Aramaic. There were many forces at work in Corinth that were threatening to tear apart the new community.

### **READ I CORINTHIANS 3:4-9**

First Baptist Church is a congregation of several languages and cultures. I am proud of what we have done together. I believe that God has brought us together for a purpose: to be an example of what the love of God can do in a community.

The past two weeks I have preached from Isaiah. Isaiah used the term "Servant of the Lord". I said that I believed that this Servant of the Lord did not refer to an individual person but to the people of



Israel who together were to be a light to all the world. Last week we talked about the Civil Rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and his vision of the “Beloved Community.” God’s power and justice was displayed as people marched and protested nonviolently.

I believe First Baptist Church is called to become a “Beloved Community”: a group of people called together by God to demonstrate God’s community-creating power.

I would like to use the Apostle Paul’s words to the Corinthians and apply them to us here, today.

In verse five he says, “who is Apollos, who is Paul?” I would like to paraphrase this and say “who are Judson and Ko Tha Byu? Who are the other missionaries who came to Burma later and the early Karen pastors? Who are Pastor Saul and Pastor Bill?” All of them are simply God’s servants by whom you were led to believe. Each one doing what the Lord gave them to do. Judson and Ko Tha Byu planted the seeds. Those who came later watered the plants, but it was God who made the plants grow.”

Who could have imagined a Christian garden growing and flourishing in a Buddhist land? How could a persecuted, small minority of followers of Christ grow and grow when all around them people did not believe or understand? Who could have imagined Karen and American-born people coming together in the United States in a mutual transforming partnership?

“The ones who plant and the ones who water really do not matter. It is God who matters and makes the plants grow.” For you are all partners working together for God and First Baptist Church is God’s field.”

What is happening here is not a human accomplishment. This is a new thing that could only spring from the mind and heart of God. God, through Jesus Christ has brought us together. We recognize that we are brothers and sisters with Christ as the head. We are sisters and brothers even though we speak different languages and have come from different traditions. We look different from one another, we eat different food, we wear different clothing. But we are united in Christ. Even though we are

imperfect people who always seem to be leaning into sin, still it is Christ who unites us and allows us to become the Beloved Community.

As we stand and work together, Christ is able to be seen through us. In faith we believe that light of Christ enters the world through us. We become the Servant of the Lord and the world is awakened to the presence of God at work within us.

### SONG

We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord  
We are one in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord  
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored  
And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love  
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand  
We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand  
And together we’ll spread the news that God is in our land  
Any they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love  
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by Our love.

### *Unity Candle Lighting Liturgy*

*Event prepared by Sheila Ahlbrand*

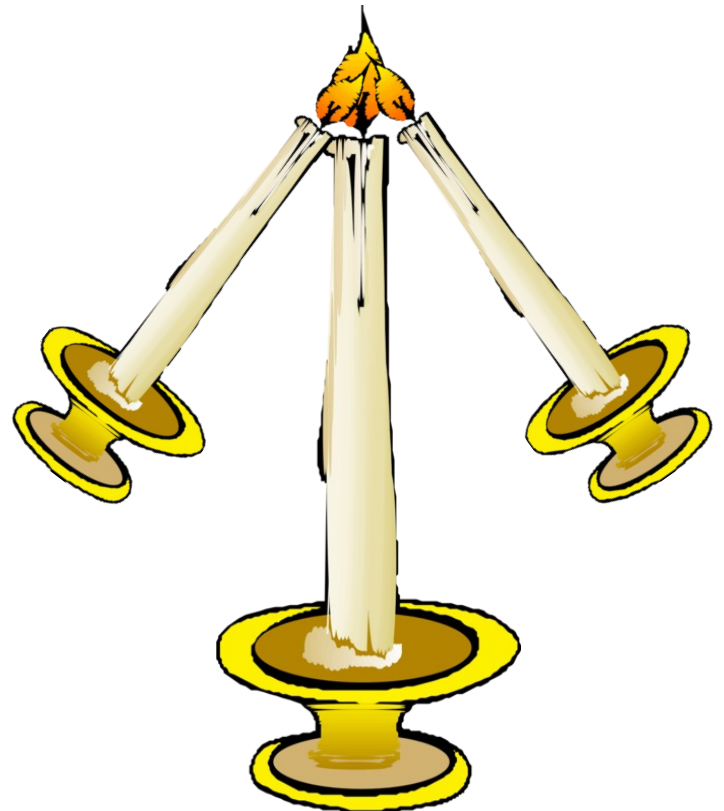
**Reader 1:** Today we come together to light a Unity candle symbolizing the commitment to Unity between First Baptist Church and First Baptist Church Karen.

**Reader 2:** We understand that both First Baptist Church and the Karen people have long histories, full of stories and traditions.

**Reader 1:** First Baptist’s history includes stories about Harriet Bishop and the many pastors who have served this church as well as the many groups who have worshipped together here. But it also includes stories of people who have attended this church, stories which can be found in photographs, plaques and even stained glass that are part of this church building. But these stories are also found in the hearts and minds of all those who remember them. The history of First Baptist Church is one of strangers taken in, of meals shared, and of God’s love both preached and practiced.

**Reader 2:** The history of the Karen people is very

ပျားဖူးတန်ခိုး(ကံ့ၵ). ဘျာထံဆိတၢ်အိၣ်ဖှိၣ်အတၢ်စံၣ်စိအံၤ, ပၣ်  
ယုၣ်ဒီးမိၢ်လုၢ်ဒိၣ်ပုၤဒိၣ်Harriet Bishop(ယဲရံၣ်ဘဲရီး)ဒီးတၢ်  
အိၣ်ဖှိၣ်သရၣ်သ့ၣ်တဖၣ်လၢအဟ့ၣ်လီၤတုၢ်အသးလၢသ  
ရိၣ်အံၤအဂီၢ်,ဒီးတကးဘၣ်ပၣ်ယုၣ်ဒီးကဂျၢ်ကီးဖုဒီးဒီးပုၤကိးဂၤ  
လၢအဘၢသကိးတၢ်ဖဲအံၤလၢပူၤကွံာ်မ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤဒီးခဲအံၤမ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤန့ၣ်  
လီၤ. ပကထံၣ်ဘၣ်ပုၤအါဂၤအတၢ်ဂီၤတဖၣ်လၢဘၣ်တၢ်ကျး  
လီၤလၢတၢ်န့ၣ်ကပၤမ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤ, လံာ်တၢ်ဟ့ၣ်ကနၤမ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤဘၣ်တၢ်ပၣ်  
ယုၣ်တုၢ်လံအံၤလၢလံာ်တၢ်စံၣ်စိၤတဲစိၤအပူၤမ့ၢ်ဂ့ၤန့ၣ်လီၤ. ပုၤ  
သ့တဖၣ်အံၤမ့ၢ်ပုၤသ့တဖၣ်လၢအဒူးအိၣ်ထီၣ်တၢ်တၢ်သ့ၣ်ထီၣ်  
အံၤဒီးဟ့ၣ်တုၢ်ပုၤသးလၢပကသ့ၣ်နီၣ်အဝဲသ့ၣ်ဖၣ်န့ၣ်လီၤ. ဘျာ  
ထံဆိတၢ်အိၣ်ဖှိၣ်အတၢ်စံၣ်စိအံၤပၣ်ဖျါထီၣ်တၢ်တူၢ်လီၢ်ပုၤတ  
ဂၤလၢလၢလၢအသးအိၣ်ယဲ, ဒီးတၢ်ဟ့ၣ်ခိလီၤနီၤလီၤလီၢ်သး  
ကစၢ်ယုၤတၢ်အဲၣ်တဖၣ်န့ၣ်လီၤ.



HAPPY BIRTH-  
DAY TO YOU  
WHO WERE  
BORN IN MARCH.  
WE WISH YOU  
A LONG LIFE .  
MAY YOUR DAY  
BRING YOU HAP-  
PINESS AND  
LIGHT.

Carol Ann Johnson	Earl Swanlund
Luchene Donazal	Mary Cisneros
Shirley Sweum	



ပါစာ၊ တာ်ဘျူးလါနဟ်ယုာ်ပုာ်လါပကစံးထီၣ်ပတြါဒီးမလါကပိ  
နါလီၤ. ဝံသးစူၤမါအါထီၣ်ပတၢ်နါပာ်လိာ်သးဒီးပတၢ်ရူၤလိာ်သးလါက  
စါအပူၤတက့ၢ်. အါမ့ၤ.

