

CLERGY

Connection

HOLSTON CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
WWW.HOLSTON.ORG

“What They Didn’t Teach Me in Seminary But Should Have”

Reflections from the field ... It has been ten years since I sat in a seminary classroom. I thoroughly enjoyed my seminary experience and I am grateful for the tools and direction that seminary provided. However, there were a few things that I wish I could say that I learned but didn't.

If someone would have told me of the basic business skills that are needed as a

pastor, I may have just chuckled to myself not really giving it a second thought. However, there are a number of business skills that are needed as a pastor. Many churches have active Trustees and Property committees but knowing what is taking place with property, a heating system, a loan, or a bank transaction is part of the pastor's responsibility in being the pastor. I don't remember such course offerings in the seminary catalog.

Stewardship is one area that I don't remember seminary covering in depth. Sure, we talked a great deal about the theology of money, economic empowerment and poverty. However, what I hoped to learn (and need to know) are the nuts and bolts of stewardship in the local church. Some topics I wish were addressed in the classroom but were not: developing a missional budget, how to preach sermons on stewardship, teaching plans that show stewardship is a part of discipleship. The matter of stewardship in a church has impact on so many areas. It is hard to pastor effectively if one doesn't have a grasp.

In our changing society the local

church is being called upon more and more to be engaged with people who have needs such as housing, food, transportation and medical assistance. More and more, churches are being intentional about partnering with groups and agencies to make strides in

servicing people. The effort of meeting needs in a community cannot be done by the church alone but much can be

done in a cooperative relationship. I wish in seminary we would have spent some time talking about learning the community in which you live—discovering who is your neighborhood. For example, lessons in how to interpret demographics would have helped. I wish we had talked about ways to enter into dialogue with groups and agencies as one means of engaging the congregation in discipleship.

In the last couple of years I have become more acquainted with the process of vision casting and long-range planning. Sure, the classroom talked about the necessity of vision and its theology. The role of pastor is one who articulates vision. He or she is often the catalyst to get the ball rolling in encouraging a congregation to look into the future. If vision casting/long range planning is so central to the life of a church then seminary should be the spring board by which ministers dive into the topic.

Seminary can't teach a person everything needed for service in ministry. Much of what shapes and forms clergy is what is learned and

experienced in its practice. But maybe by bridging the gap between what we learn in the classroom and needs discovered in every day practice of ministry, we are equipped to serve better and more faithfully and with greater authenticity.

*James Bennington
is pastor of Grove
UMC, Radford, VA*



*“...there were a few things
that I wish I could say
that I learned but didn't.”*

The Clergy Connection

is a quarterly communication produced and written by the Clergy of Holston Conference for the purposes of deepening relationships, encouraging spiritual growth, increasing awareness of challenging opportunities, imparting useful information, stimulating theological exploration, providing a forum for honest expression and sharing the joys of creative ministries.

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The Clergy Connection exists to call clergy to deeper covenant with God through Christ and to call clergy to live in covenant with each other.

Who Was In The Crowd?

If you're wearing a cross when you go to see "The Passion of the Christ," take a look at it when you leave the theater. You will probably notice that it's lost much of its luster — quite possibly for good.

For Christianity, that's probably a good thing. The cross should have never shined so brightly to begin with — for it was covered with the blood of the Savior. The cross was the executioner's tool of cruelty and shame. As one pastor told me, it is only because of time and culture that we Christians are not walking around with little electric chairs around our neck.

Isn't it the irony of ironies that it took an icon of Hollywood to remind us of that?

The buildup to the nationwide premiere promised that the film would offer a realistic look at what Jesus suffered in the last 12 hours of his life on earth. Evangelicals hope that unbelievers will find their hearts turning, while pastors in lukewarm churches hope believers will find their hearts burning.

It would seem the film fulfilled the promise of realism: "The Passion" details a familiar portion of the greatest story ever told, but it's definitely in a league of its own when it comes to depicting Christ's suffering. Placed beside such classics as "The Greatest Story Ever Told," "Jesus of



Photo: Courtesy of "The Passion of the Christ"

Nazareth," "King of Kings" and, most certainly, "Jesus Christ Superstar," the others appear passion-less. Christians who are drawn cinematically into the scourging and beating of Jesus may no longer hear the Holy Communion pronouncements of "This is my body ... This is my blood" with the same ears again.

No, "The Passion of the Christ" is not for the faint of heart nor weak of stomach, but then neither were the last 12 hours of Jesus' life. If you have ever heard a medical description of what the Messiah experienced in terms of physical torture, you are somewhat prepared for the visuals. However, the written and spoken word pale in comparison to the sights and sounds of Roman torture. If you have ever taken part in a worship service where someone — perhaps even you — hammered a nail into a wooden cross ... well, this time you experience the sight and sound of metal piercing flesh, not just metal and wood.

The film, which is rated "R" for violence, is not for young children. However, there is a part of me that believes anyone who is prepared to make a commitment to Christ should see the film, regardless of age. It would do all believers well to consider the price paid by Christ before counting the cost of discipleship.

Crowd, continued on page 8

With The Fellowship

SYMPATHY

Our love and sympathy are extended to:

Ray Deese upon the death of his wife, Catherine, who was serving the Watauga Point-St. Paul Charge in the Johnson City District;

Mark and Jennifer Mangum upon the death of their son, Jonathan; Mark, who was serving the Asbury-Mt. Wesley Charge in the Johnson City District, is a member of the Florida Conference and is now serving in Pennsylvania.

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." PSALM 46:1

APPOINTMENT CHANGES

Bishop Ray Chamberlain announces the following changes in appointments:

Interim appointments:

John Manney, Rheatown UMC, Johnson City District (2-1-04)

John Bardsley, Valley View UMC, Johnson City District (3-7-04)

Mack Houston, Watauga Point, Johnson City District (2-22-04)

Ray McDougle, St. Paul Elizabethton, Johnson City District (2-22-04)

Sam Neeley, Asbury-Mt. Wesley, Johnson City District (1-25-04)

Other appointments:

Ray Deese, Incapacity Leave, Johnson City District (11-30-03)

Mark Fleenor, Suspension, February 2 through March 8, 2004; Voluntary Leave of Absence, March 8, 2004, Kingsport District

David Hodge, Incapacity Leave, Cleveland District (11-17-03)

Peggy L. Meade, Chaplain of Middle Tennessee Correctional Complex in Nashville, Abingdon District (1-13-04)

John Lindsay, Marble City UMC, Knoxville District (3-1-04)

Multiplying Your Talents: Continuing Education for Ministry

The Bishop and Cabinet have charged the Wesley Institute Board with *providing quality continuing education for Holston pastors.*

The first step has been taken. The Wesley Institute Board has developed guidelines for continuing education compatible with CEU guidelines of the Board of Higher Education and the 2000 Discipline of the United Methodist Church. The guidelines are meant to support each pastor, in consultation with the District Superintendent, in a personal study plan that leads to increasingly more effective ministry and leadership.

Your time counts. What you do to further equip yourself counts. And your feedback counts. You will see more and more of your ideas and suggestions incorporated into events and how they are offered. For example, local and regional events are essential for providing affordable opportunities for quality continuing education close to home for busy pastors. Now, when your church or district plans an event (and many of you are offering events with top-notch speakers) that may qualify for CEU's, you can notify Wesley Institute for media support and potential collaboration, for sanction of CEU's, and for automatic recording of CEU's for persons attending. We will work with you in any way we can.

Your CEU's count. And the quality of your CEU's matters. The conference will be looking at CEU's and the quality of the events you attend for continuing education—events that will multiply your talents and prepare you to be more and more effective in your place of ministry.

One of the ways the Wesley Institute can be helpful to pastors is to let you know of quality upcoming events. The Wesley Institute website will continue to be developed with information for you to conveniently



access. Wesley Institute will also keep records in such a way that it will be easier and more convenient for pastors to report their continuing education at charge conference time (a task mandated by Discipline for pastoral accountability).

Pastors are already submitting signed brochures or have sent e-mails with websites/information of events they attended since the 2003 Charge Conferences. It makes your records complete, up-to-date, and accurate with little hassle.

The Wesley Institute is listening to your requests and is in the process of making long-range plans for the coming years in order to enlist the brightest and most effective trainers/speakers/preachers available in the United States, many of whom are booked several years in advance. The hope is that each event will bring hope, build faith, incite inspiration, provide perspective, insight and wisdom, as well as proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to each person in ministry.

Persons exempt from earning 3 CEU's per year are: Local Pastors active in Course of Study or Advanced Course of Study; pastors currently enrolled and active in degree programs (BA, MDiv, DMin); pastors in Clinical Clinical Pastoral Education; Commissioned Probationers who are participating in a mentoring/small group in preparation for full ordination as elders or deacons.

All other persons appointed to a charge, including retired pastors, and local pastors who have completed the Course of Study are responsible for obtaining 3 CEU's per year or 12 CEU's per quadrennium.

(See Wesley Institute website for CE Guidelines, grants, and upcoming events: www.holstonconference.com/wesleyinst/)

Consider:

- 1) For attendees of Holston Conference Events that are coordinated or supported through the Wesley Institute, CEU's earned for attending that event will automatically be recorded from attendance records.
- 2) For clergy who attend events outside Holston Conference or for events in which Wesley Institute was not involved, the pastor submits a brochure or agenda signed with a note that he or she attended. If the event qualifies for CEU's, Wesley Institute will record the pastor's attendance and grant appropriate CEU's based on actual contact hours with a certified trainer. Events must address an area of ministry appropriate to your ministry. If there is any question about any event of any kind, a pastor should get approval in advance for CEU's to be granted.
- 3) To receive a credit of 1 CEU for personal study, a list of books by title and author; and a list of any ministry training videotapes, noting sponsoring institution, is submitted.
- 4) On-line learning can earn 1 CEU per year. Submit website information, title, sponsoring institution, and hours on-line.
- 5) At the end of August of each year, a report will be sent to each pastor listing the CEU's on file for the appointment year July 1 through June 30. The event, location, dates, and CEU's awarded will be recorded on an official charge conference form that can be further completed with the pastor's plan for next year, staff parish recommendations for continuing education, and monies allocated, and then submitted at your charge's annual Charge Conference in the Fall.

The Future of The United

... certain because it will grow at a gradual but definite pace. It will do this because it seeks to proclaim the essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It must never focus on the nonessentials or follow fads that may initially attract people but are not sustaining or growth producing.
— James Titcombe



... more dependent upon the people in the pews rather than the people in the pulpit — not that the latter are off the hook, by any means. Why? Because the people in the pews get their cues from the people in the pulpit.
— Frank “Buzz” Trexler

... in our hands. Will we be diligent in our efforts to stand firm on Godly principles and doctrines already in place? Or, will we follow society in bending rules to attract the masses?
— Alta C. Raper



... exactly what its members make it.



The difference will be leadership - pastoral and lay - with vision and enthusiasm. Keeping ourselves spiritually fit and open to God's leading;

enlisting renewed commitment to our Lord among adults and helping children and youth find a spiritual focus for their lives will make the difference.

— Christine Bean

... fulfilling the ‘Great Commission’ given by Jesus Christ found in Matthew 28, verses 18-20.

— Paul B. Longmire

... today. Anything prior to today is history we learn from. Anything beyond today is a hope and a dream we look forward to. It is in “today” where our futures are found. Today is where we find grace sufficient enough to make it through life, and today is where God will speak to us. Live in the present, today, and you will know the future.

— Gregg Bostick

... Change! Music is important ... not the answer ... Change back to what Jesus charged us to do ... make disciples ... we must not be concerned with numbers ... true disciples will correct that ... we must change the way we accept others into the congregation ... they must be made aware of the commitment ... the responsibility of being a true disciple of Christ ... change the way these disciples are nurtured ... not left to fend for themselves ... We need to remember the lesson Jesus taught in Luke 14:33-35 ... “tasteless salt” ... Read the entire lesson from 25-35 ... not many sermons are preached from this one passage.

— Billy Jacks

... a continuation of the fight against authorities. The Church will be successful if we keep ourselves open to the power of Him who is the ground and the negation of everything which is authority on earth and in heaven.

— Donald E. Stansell



... filled with possibility. Overall, our people are growing in their spirituality, their sense of enthusiasm toward mission, and in learning new ways to worship, share faith and speak up for those who can't. Our church has the right balance of warmhearted faith and reasoned thought that resonates in today's culture, and has stood the test of time. Though we aren't in the lead any more, we are still a mighty force for good in the world.

— Brad Scott

... as bright as all the promises of God. God is calling many (for some the ministry is a second career) who are not ashamed of the tried and true and yet not afraid to take challenging new paths of ministry. God still blesses faithfulness. Thanks be to God!

— Ralph Kidd

... uncertain. We have lost our way. In recent years the leadership in the UMC has been unable or unwilling to lead. We have not been able to define sin and lead sinners into the Kingdom. We have spent much time debating the issues that threaten our society and church, homosexuality, etc. If we're not able to identify sin, how can we ever offer sinners God's *transforming grace* and forgiveness? Unless we can return to The Gospel that John Wesley embraced and proclaimed, our future looks bleak. My prayer is that we'll find our way back to the faith of our fathers who seem to know *right* from *wrong*, and were not timid in sharing that information.

— Bill Lichlyter

d Methodist Church is ...

... must be characterized by, at first glance, two seemingly opposing traits: the church must change, but then she should not change.

The church must keep her biblical and doctrinal beliefs, and push for that to be her trademark, her identification to society. It's great to be known as the church with open minds, hearts and doors, but people seek an authentic, personal relationship with the ultimate Change Agent, the ultimate Lover of their souls. This is what I continually hear from our visitors. The Lord Jesus must be lifted up as OUR banner.

What must change? Pastors. Bureaucracies. Budgets. Buildings. Anything that keeps us from supporting all that introduces people to Jesus Christ.

Our future will hinge on making changes that are inevitable: better trained pastors.

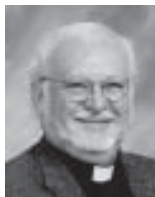
— Meg Taylor Poister

... at hand. In the Post Modern world, we stand at the gates of ancient Rome. Remember Pilate's words, "What is truth?" As we preach truth, salvation by faith in the blood of Jesus, we can expect to see a growing church on fire for evangelism.

— Paul G. Humphrey

... bright and promising if we continue to fan the flame of evangelism in unconventional and contemporary methods, encouraging and allowing our youth to lead the way.

— Terril D. Littrell



... dependent upon breaking the socioeconomic parameters of class divisions. A snapshot of many of our churches today would have us looking like we are cloning our congregations - we have to make a decision and a plan on how to become the church for all God's people in more than just words.

— Randy Hensley

... spiritually secure. I witness power of Resurrection through the lives of thousands of young people who are vital links in the connectional chain. We are being prepared to spread the gospel by entirely new methods as we enter the 21st century.

— Will Shewey

... secure for evermore, or until two events happen:

1. The U.S. Congress provides a prescription plan to take care of its "own" Citizens.
2. All UMC members pay their **tithe** in full.

Should these two events happen, The United Methodist Church will enter into a state of shock, and expire. I'm teasing you.

— John L. Rhoads



... The future for us lies in stepping away from the forms and structures of modernity, and looking for new ways to incarnate Christ. Our church must learn to re-embrace authentic New Testament *community* instead of once-a-week religiosity. We need new wineskins for a new world.

— J. Todd Kingrea

... dependent on our reclaiming "methodism." While we're busy with our "Wesleyan" theology, other churches have been growing at a phenomenal rate doing "methodism" (small groups, rousing worship, piety, acts of mercy, and church plants where the people are) better than we have.

— Mark Davis

... settled before we were born. As the custodian of the Gospel, she is under commission to transmit its message worldwide. Our decision, then, is whether *our church* will be part of *The Church*. The future of the United Methodist Church is, and must be, world evangelization.

— RuthAnne G. Henley

... totally dependent on the ability of we who are called Methodists to follow the mandate of Jesus. We must go and make disciples.

— Joe D. Moore



... will be a lot brighter when United Methodist preachers stop talking so much about their pain. Pain is real and has many sources and is manifest in lots of ways. Pain needs to be recognized and dealt with in appropriate ways. Pain should not be given hospitality and nurtured. Pain should not be a defining experience. There is often a subtle shift of attitude between pain and joy. And since we can control our attitudes maybe we can convert some of our pain into joy in Christ's service.

— I. C. Brimstone

... dependent on believing and obeying Jesus' words to Sardis and Laodicea:

"I know ... you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up! ... Repent! ... You say, 'I am rich, I have prospered ...' (but you are wretched, pitiable, poor... blind and naked, Repent!" (Revelation 3)

— Phyllis Hankins



Photographs used when available.

There Really Is Strength In Numbers

THE FOLLOWING GROUPS HAVE GREAT VALUE AND ARE VIGOROUSLY ENCOURAGED:

- Bible Study Groups
- Prayer Groups
- Encounter Groups
- Spiritual Formation Groups
- Sharing Groups
- Therapy Groups
- Hiking Groups
- Golf Groups
- Supper Groups
- Advocacy Groups
- Growth Groups
- Outreach Groups
- Caring Groups
- Reading Groups
- Case Study Groups
- Lectionary Groups



However, Covenant Discipleship Groups Are Unique.

Covenant Discipleship Groups are:

- Up to 7 persons who meet together for one hour each week to hold themselves **mutually accountable** for their discipleship.
- They do this by means of a **covenant** which they themselves have written, shaped by the General Rule of Discipleship.
- Where Christians “watch over one another in love” by giving each other a weekly compass heading.
- Task-oriented gatherings whose task is to help each other become better disciples and pastors.
- Trustworthy and effective means of identifying and nurturing **leaders in discipleship** for mission and ministry.
- Not where our discipleship happens, but where we **MAKE SURE** that it happens.

The written covenant includes the following components:

Acts of Compassion:

The simple things we do out of kindness to our neighbor. Our neighbor is anyone who is in need, anywhere in the world.

Acts of Justice:

We must not only minister to people in need, but also ask why they are in need. In the name of Christ, we must implement God's righteousness and denounce injustice.

Acts of Worship:

These are the means of grace that we exercise together: the ministries of word and sacrament. They enable us to build each other up in the Body of Christ.

Acts of Devotion:

The private spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible reading, and inward examination that bring us face to face with God.

There are several Covenant Discipleship Groups of clergy beginning in Holston Conference. For more detailed information and a training session, contact Jim Green at JamesGreen@holston.org or 865/690-4080.

Wandering, Yet Accountable Souls

I serve in a unique situation. Under special appointment by the Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church, I serve as minister-in-residence at the Knox Area Rescue Ministries (KARM) in Knoxville, Tennessee. Daily, KARM offers emergency overnight shelter for the homeless and a recovery residential program for over 320 people.

Part of my appointment charge is the establishment of a worshipping community – a new church – that is named The Carpenter’s House. It maintains its identity and function as a program ministry of KARM, yet it is “nondenominational in practice and interdenominational in spirit.”

Serving residential and nonresidential guests of our mission, as well as the community-at-large, the people of The Carpenter’s House gather to celebrate the presence of the risen Christ in the world *and are committed to the practice of accountable discipleship*. It is accountable discipleship that establishes and situates our church in a unique situation.

Membership in The Carpenter’s House is defined by the expression of desire and willingness to be part of weekly accountable discipleship gatherings. While one need not be a “member” to participate in the worship and fellowship of The Carpenter’s House, some followers are inclined and/or called to an intentional act of discipleship that is guided by a life of worship, devotion, compassion, and justice. Our “membership” is less about “privilege” and more about a willingness to be a disciple of Jesus and to be accountable for our walk with God and others.

Approximately half of our membership is made of followers of Jesus who are living lives of recovery from addiction. While confronting their addictions, a quarter of our membership have the added challenge of mental-health issues. Describing the numbness and pain of her addiction, one person said of herself and others like her, “*We are just wandering souls. I am a wandering soul.*”

“Kathy” has long struggled and attempted to cope with her mental illness through her addiction. Yet she adds, “*I am more than that. I am more than a wandering soul. I am a follower of Jesus. My accountable discipleship group makes me be more faithful to God, to others, and even myself.*”

Living in the midst of addiction and/or impairing mental illness can be aimless, lonely, and akin to wandering. Then again, life itself is one of wandering in our brokenness.

The Carpenter’s House is where our common brokenness is acknowledged and we celebrate God’s love for us. The accountable discipleship group is where we open ourselves to God’s transforming grace so that we can be changed into loving people.

*Bruce W. Spangler
presently under special appointment
as the Minister-in-Residence with
Knox Area Rescue Ministries, Knoxville, TN*



I’m Glad I Found a Home

(IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH)

I, too, have a story to share.

I am now entering twenty-seven years of pastoral ministry. I was licensed in 1974, and ordained two years later in a major Pentecostal denomination. It was there that I was privileged to “pioneer” one church start and eventually revive another dying one. My first call from the Lord led me to a storefront building in a town where previous attempts to grow a congregation had ultimately failed.

After sharing my “call” with my denominational board, I was told that their prayers were with me, but that was about it. After several prior failures, they had agreed not to fund another effort there. So, with savings of a few thousand dollars, lots of faith in God, and vision of a flourishing church, I began life as a pastor. After much trial and experience, and leadership of the Holy Spirit, a church was established. After 4 years, we were able to build a new facility outside town. During that time, I received honors in Oklahoma City as pastor of the fastest growing Sunday School for the year. Over 300 conversions had taken place, and 3 young people had been called into ministry.

From there, circumstances led me to Miami, FL. I united with an inner city church, and worked on staff several years. It was during this time, in 1985, that I was called to serve Trinidad and Tobago in a missions capacity. After my missionary permit expired, I returned to Miami and again followed my heart’s desire of planting another new congregation. Our meetings began in my living room, moved to Hibiscus Elementary School, and eventually into larger space. That was the origin of Metro Christian Center, a non-denominational community of faith.

My father’s illness and subsequent death brought me to Virginia in 1989. I was called by my former denominational superintendent requesting that I serve a dying congregation. To make a long story short, during the next 4 years, our church grew to a membership of 120. That church is still in business.

Dr. Fred Austin, who was D.S. called my church office on Sunday night. I knew he offered God’s will to me. He wanted me to consider going to the UMC, New River Circuit. All of a sudden, I found myself not in one new church start, but pastor of 4 wonderful, established churches. My 5 years there were good, and my territory was certainly enlarged.

I am now in my 5th year at Hiltons Memorial UMC, looking forward to beginning 11 years of service in the denomination I proudly claim as home.

I am extremely grateful to God and to Holston Conference for the opportunity to continue ministry in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*Will Shewey is pastor of Hiltons
Memorial UMC, Hiltons, VA.*



Pastoral Prayers

Private pastoral praying is doing theology. Pastoral praying is looking at the day in light of the Gospel, and it is profitably done at the close of the day.

The real events, encounters, meetings, and services of the day are recalled in some detail with questions attached to each:

- Were persons valued and taken seriously?
- Was the truth told tempered with respect and love?
- Were persons confronted with the unique demands of the Gospel?
- Were persons reminded both implicitly and explicitly that the Church is inclusive in dramatic and disturbing ways?
- Was it made clear that salvation is a process and not a ticket?
- Were compromises made to keep the peace when the peace led to a more deeply entrenched resistance to the Gospel?
- Was respect for different opinions clearly communicated so all voices could be heard?
- Were the Christian disciplines encouraged so that God could accomplish healing and conversion?
- Was vision placed against indifference and indolence?
- Was the future made more promising because of what happened this day?

The pastor asks personal questions.

- Was I weak or strong?
- Do I have a compelling vision for this ministry?
- Have I paid the price to gain competence, knowledge, and discernment?
- Am I afraid of being changed by the Gospel that I am supposed to represent?
- Am I sufficiently tired to need more Sabbath?
- Does my view of the world extend beyond my local parish?
- Do I take those who adore me and those who do not with equal seriousness?

So ...

Pastoral praying is first thinking/meditating about what actually happens followed by confession and gratitude. Such praying becomes very specific and personal.

Pastoral praying is open, honest, specific, private, and essential. It is one way of doing theology. We are all practicing theologians. The question is: Are we good theologians? Time will tell.



Jim Green is steward of clergy concerns for Holston Conference.

Crowd

continued from page 2

As to Scriptural accuracy, be aware that there are some extra-biblical moments in the film; for instance, Satan's presence in the Garden of Gethsemane at the very beginning of the film, telling Jesus that taking on the sin of the world is more than any man can handle. Such moments are forgivable, though. After all, this is a dramatic production that allows for interpretation.

Some have claimed the film is anti-Semitic given the obvious complicity of the Jewish crowds. If it were to be classified as such, then it would also have to be considered anti-Roman, and even anti-humanity. In reality, no one gets off the hook with this film — unless your heart is made of stone. But then, no one gets off the hook when it comes to the

reality of the Gospel message: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

It reminds me of the time my 7-year-old son asked me this question concerning his Jewish baseball coach.

"Dad, is Alan one of those who killed Jesus?"

I let the question sink in before answering.

"No, son," I said. "Alan wasn't alive then."

As he grew a little older, he came to realize we all played a role in this film.



Frank "Buzz" Trexler is pastor of Green Meadow UMC, Maryville

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