

***CRIBB<S>NOTE – March 23, 2008***

This has been a difficult week as charges, assaults, and distortions regarding the United Church of Christ filled airwaves across the country. In a perverse sense, it has been reflective of the week that followed Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. Then, cheers turned to jeers as the same crowds that welcomed him were persuaded to condemn him to death. The modern day activities put our beloved denomination at the center of a media storm that escalated into a saturation of daily accounts targeting the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, the former pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago.

Actually, the events that dominated television, radio, and newspaper coverage were not about Dr. Wright and his 41 years of ordained ministry or his 36 years as pastor of Trinity UCC. The campaign to smear him, Trinity, and the United Church of Christ was designed to elevate negative impressions of a viable candidate for President of the United States and member of the United Church of Christ. An extraordinary effort was made to sway public opinion against one man who has achieved historic success across social, racial, and geographical demographics.

While not making a comparison between Jesus and the current personalities in the media's spotlight, it cannot be missed that prophetic ministry is inaccurately portrayed as radical, racist, and divisive. Failure to look into the ways people continue to live in desperate and unjust conditions provides a mockery of the ideals etched in the founding documents of this nation. Further, it blinds the public to the circumstances that separate people along polarizing perspectives.

Scenarios based on imagination create powerful impressions that can lead to an outcry in reaction to repeated and boisterous messages that denigrate decent and reasonable people. It happened 2,000 years ago and it is happening now. It doesn't take much to rile up angry voices and focus their attention in the direction intended by a few, strategically placed operatives.

The last word has yet to be uttered or written. The heat of evil intention burns only so long and scorches only so deep. The amazing gift of God's eternal grace extends even to our time. These days of hurtful practices to destroy the candidacy of a public servant remind us again what it means to remain true to our faith and trust in Jesus' purpose for coming into the world. His crucifixion was not the final statement.

Today, we sing 'Alleluia' because in the midst of profound grief and disappointment, Jesus comes back to life and leads us closer toward God. We still believe there is more than the evidence in front of us. There is life after the worse experiences send us into the abyss. We in the United Church of Christ feel the pain of unfair, unjust, and wrong behavior, but we know Jesus Lives! This moment shall pass and God's mercy will sustain us and lead us to peace and victory. All we have to do is keep the faith.