

# OUTREACH

*participating in ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy*

**{Outward}**

STAY TUNED for a synopsis of Saturday morning's outreach planning session. If you couldn't make it but have thoughts about building upon 2016 initiatives or an urge to do something for or with our neighbors, speak with Rachel.

## Boulevard United Methodist Church



It was then about four o'clock in the afternoon (Jn 1:39). John included this concrete significant detail. It is concrete because it was the beginning of Sabbath. It was significant because Sabbath meant staying in one place until the end of the following day.

- Alyce McKenzie

January 15, 2017

On the Cover: Lamb of God plaque.

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THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

We make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world (Matthew 28).





## Crossing Boulevard

with Rev. Rachel

### ! HERE IS THE LAMB OF GOD John 1

I've heard it said that that the names I use for God shapes my relationship with God. Experience suggests that this much is true. What we call God and why we refer to God with the titles and images that we do *matters*.

What people call Jesus in the gospels is significant. It says something about what they have been taught to look for and who they long for Jesus to be.

What John means when he declares, "Here is the Lamb of God," is debatable. Read Christopher Skinner's excellent overview of the subject ("Another Look at the Lamb of God") and your reaction might resemble mine. *Oh my. It's a landmine.*

Briefly, there are nine major views. Seven of those views are heavy on the idea of substitution: Jesus as the Lamb of God stands in for something or someone.

There are two other possibilities, which part ways with the idea that "Lamb" is a sacrificial term. What John means, say these schools of thought, is that Jesus is the suffering servant of Yahweh (Isaiah); or the Triumphant Lamb (Revelation).

I guess what I'm up to here is asking you to think about it. What does it mean that John calls Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (v.29)? Sermons are supposed to start a conversation. It sure is easier to start a conversation with folks who have dipped at least their big toe in the water!

The question once more: What does it mean that John calls Jesus what he calls him (v.36)? Remember, there are two Johns; John the Baptizer—the one who sees Jesus coming toward him and refers to him in terms of a lamb; and John the Evangelist—the inspired author of this gospel.

Another thing to keep in mind is how the John in the story is *not encountering Jesus in light of how Jesus will die*; though John the storyteller certainly is. John in the story is seeing Jesus and pointing to his presence and forthcoming ministry (C. Skinner).

Consider John's words. Consider the words you use to refer to God/Jesus. Those words, I imagine, issue an invitation: Come and see (v.39).

Maybe the sometimes priestly and prophetic, always a poet Shakespeare was on point. "Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

### John 1:29-42

<sup>29</sup>The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! <sup>30</sup>This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' <sup>31</sup>I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." <sup>32</sup>And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. <sup>33</sup>I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>34</sup>And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God." <sup>35</sup>The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, <sup>36</sup>and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!"

<sup>37</sup>The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. <sup>38</sup>When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" <sup>39</sup>He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. <sup>40</sup>One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. <sup>41</sup>He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). <sup>42</sup>He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).