

# TRINITY CHIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH

MARCH 2010

## This I Believe

*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17-18*

In the early 1950, the title of this page was also the title of a five-minute radio segment broadcast on CBS by the prominent journalist Edward R. Murrow. *This I Believe* invited both famous and everyday folks to share a short essay of “the core values that guide their daily lives.” (<http://thisibelieve.org/>) This format would later be duplicated by Radio Luxemburg for broadcasts in Europe. The statements of belief were not intended so much to espouse religious or dogmatic perspectives. Rather, they were meant to convey what motivated the individual sharing her or his essay. The show has since been revived here in the States in 2005, shortly followed by a similar format in Canada in 2007.

What is it that you believe? That I believe? That we believe? What are the core values that guide your daily life? What motivates us?

While the show, *This I Believe*, was intentionally not a religious broadcast, allow me license to use it as entry into a conversation about belief and faith and how one lives one’s life and collectively, how we the church lives ours.

The people of God have longed used statements of belief to convey their core values. And often, these belief statements are a reactive communication, that is, they are stated when other values seek to command attention. It is at the center of the Jewish prayer, the *Shema*, said twice daily by observant Jews and coming from Deuteronomy 6:4-9, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one...” The central value is the core belief in one God. This belief statement is also proclaimed by Christians, as it continues, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.”

The early church too made a simple statement

the core of its identity, “Jesus is Lord.” Simple, but not easy. Wrapped up in just three words is a profound and complex belief that motivated the early disciples of Jesus to live out that belief. This belief statement brought with it consequences, for to say that Jesus is Lord is to confess that Emperor Caesar is not. And this core value could lead to suffering and even death.

Throughout history the church has found it necessary to flesh out what it is that we believe. We may take such statements for granted—perhaps the theology they contain has so richly percolated its way into our own faith identity (or alas, we simply haven’t taken the opportunity to examine what we believe!). The Creeds we confess on Sunday (Apostles, Nicene) and the Confessions that assist us in understanding our faith (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, Cannons of Dort) do not merely speak simply of doctrine but get at the core of who we are. Thus, the Heidelberg comes out of answering the question, “what do you Protestants believe?” And specifically it was aimed at a particular group of people, German Protestants in the Palatinate, and contrasted with the teachings of the Roman church at that time (1563). The Belgic Confession is similarly answering the question of what it is that these new Protestant Christians believe, but in this instance, a period of religious war and persecution in the low countries—Belgium, Luxemburg, and Holland—the Belgic is a statement to demonstrate how much Protestant and Catholic belief is similar, and perhaps more to the danger at hand, Protestant Christians are not rebels but can be good and faithful Christian citizens of a Catholic Spanish King. (Let’s stop the killing. It didn’t work.)

Our denomination, the Reformed Church in America, does take belief statements lightly. The last new one was in 1619. The same can be said of our reformed tradition. However, by the 1970’s and 1980’s many Reformed Christians in South Africa began examining what it is that they believed, what their core values were, and how they were living those values out. The Dutch Reformed Church from the Netherlands founded the Reformed Church in South Africa as they had us here in New York. Yet in the African context other values had

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Our vision is  
to help  
people find  
New Life in  
Jesus Christ!

invaded their core beliefs including racism, so much so that it became a church originated and government sanctioned policy of apartheid. Over centuries, racist values had persisted so that eventually three separate Dutch Reformed churches existed—all believing the same faith, and worshipping in the same way but divided simply by the color on ones skin—the white church, the black church, and the coloured church.

But the Spirit of God convicts and transforms hearts and by the 1980's two of those churches understood that they could not call themselves by the name of Christ and divide simply on the color of their skin, thus the Coloured and Black churches united forming the Uniting Reformed Church of Southern Africa. In 1986 they endeavored to plainly say what they believe about Jesus, the God they worshiped, and the Church they were called to be. What they ended up with was the Confession of Belhar that line by line explains in entirely biblical terms that God is about reconciliation, unity, and justice. And since God is about that, so necessitate that the church be about it too. While the statement of belief comes from a Reformed Protestant Christian background and a South African context, the message is universally Christian for a follower of Christ in any time or place. Therefore, they went one step further and shared their statement of belief with the rest of the church, especially their sisters and brothers from the same Dutch roots.

We in the RCA have been studying and conversing about the Belhar Confession for over 20 years and are now on the precipice of adopting it ourselves, that is making it one of the core statements of what we believe. As I said earlier, we have not done that since 1619. But certain times demand that we clearly say what we believe, to call us back to our core values.

I truly hope our denomination will adopt the Belhar. It has already been adopted by our highest assembly, the General Synod, in 2009 but needs 31 of 46 Classes to ratify it. Our Classis of Queens will be voting next week. I ask you to pray for the church, for the RCA. It is a moment in time for us to answer what we believe, for us to proclaim what our core values are.

In Christ's Grace & Peace,

Pastor Tom

For more on the Belhar, you can go to [www.rca.org](http://www.rca.org) or speak with Pastor Tom who can give you a copy of the Belhar Confession.

### **Ecumenical Fellowship Dinner**

This is another reminder that Trinity Reformed Church will be hosting an ecumenical fellowship dinner on Sunday March 14 at 3:00 p.m. (snow date March 21) along with the United Presbyterian Church and St. Matthias. A home made pot roast dinner is planned and tickets are \$ 10.00 for adults and \$ 5.00 for children under 12 years of age. Each church is limited to 50 tickets and they are being sold on a first-come, first-served basis. If you would like to purchase a ticket please speak with Linda Morton or Marieanna Trautmann.

Trinity will be responsible for the dessert so if anyone would like to bake a cake it would be greatly appreciated. If you can help out, please let Linda or Marieanna know.

### **Church Women United**

All women are invited to become part of the Ridgewood-Glendale unit of Church Women United. This group meets the second Monday of each month at various neighborhood churches. Trinity will host the April 12 meeting at 12 noon.

The purpose of Church Women United is to encourage church women to come together in a visible fellowship to witness to their faith in Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Savior and enabled by His Spirit to go out together into every neighborhood and nation as instruments of His reconciling love.

All churches in the area are invited to participate. For more information see Linda Morton.

### **Tape Ministry**

Some members may not be aware of our tape ministry. Each week the Sunday worship service is recorded on audio tape and made available to shut-ins who can't make it to church. Jim Hoffman is in charge of the tape ministry and makes sure that the tapes are distributed. Currently two people receive them. If you know of someone who would enjoy hearing the Sunday service please let Jim or Pastor know.

### **A Note from our Church Secretary**

I have informed Pastor Goodhart and the Consistory that I plan to retire as the church secretary by the end of June. I have spent nine wonderful years here at Trinity and have appreciated your prayers, love, and support during that time. I will miss you.

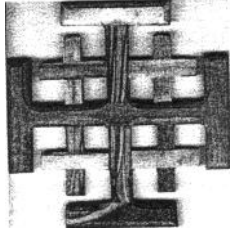
Yours in Christ,  
Elaine Brust

Editor's Note: We want to wish Elaine well in her retirement and thank her for her dedication to Trinity.

### **Lenten Bible Study**

Our weekly Wednesday evening Lenten Bible study at 7:30 p.m. continues through March 24. A time of fellowship with coffee and cake is included afterwards. Please join us!

## Zur Symbolik des Jerusalemkreuzes



Fünf Kreuze bilden im Jerusalem-Kreuz eine Einheit. Die Fünfzahl erinnert an die 5 Wunden Jesu: zwei für die Hände, die soviel Gutes getan haben, die so liebevoll andere Menschen berührt haben; zwei weitere stehen für die Nägelmale an den

Füssen, die einen so einzigartig freien, aber auch schweren Weg gegangen sind; das fünfte Kreuz steht für die Wunde, die der Speerstoß in Jesu Seite verursacht hat, also mitten hinein in das Innerste Jesu, das so voll war von Liebe zu Gott und Güte zu jedem Menschen, dem er begegnete. All das wollten die Menschen zerstören und konnten es doch nicht: am Ende steht ein offenes Grab, das in Jesu Jüngern die Liebe und Freiheit hervorruft, die am Kreuz zerstört werden sollte.

Noch etwas spricht mich an in der Symbolik des Jerusalem-Kreuzes: Das grosse Kreuz birgt die kleinen Kreuze. Obwohl Christus den Tod am Kreuz besiegt hat, gibt es bis heute so viele Kreuze in dieser Welt. Das grosse Kreuz, das Kreuz Christi, hat die kleinen Kreuze nicht beseitigt. Auch mancher von uns muss mit einem schweren Schicksal fertigwerden. Und dennoch scheint es so, als ob das grosse Kreuz den kleinen Schutz vermittelt, eine grosse Geborgenheit ausstrahlt. Im grossen sind die kleinen Kreuze geborgen. Dazu ist Christus ja gestorben: um denen nahe zu sein, die im Leid zu verzweifeln drohen.

Seine Auferstehung ist der Widerspruch gegen all das Leiden, das Menschen einander zufügen, das sie sich selbst bereiten, vor dem sie resignieren wollen. Jesu Auferstehung ist der Beginn der neuen Welt Gottes, in der es am Ende kein Kreuz mehr geben soll, wo „Gott abwischen wird alle Tränen von ihren Augen, und der Tod wird nicht mehr sein, noch Leid noch Geschrei noch Schmerz wird mehr sein“ (Offenbarung 21,4).

### The Symbolic Meaning of the Jerusalem Cross

Five crosses form the entire Jerusalem Cross – one large and four smaller ones. These represent the 5 wounds of Christ: two in the hands, which did so much good and touched people with such love; two in the feet, that walked such a lonely and difficult road, yet by choice; and one from the spear wound in His side, His heart so full of Love to God and to those He met. The world sought to destroy all the love and goodness that Christ brought, but could not. There is the open tomb which spells love and freedom for His followers.

The large cross encloses the four smaller ones. This indicates that although Christ destroyed death, there still remain crosses for us in this world. Many have to cope with very difficult circumstances in this life. Yet the smaller crosses are protected by the large one, just as Christ is near those who suffer.

The Resurrection of Christ stands in contrast to all suffering: self imposed, inflicted on others and to which people succumb with resignation.

## Stewardship and Finance Report

<u>Expenditures for Month of</u>	<u>January 2010</u>
Personnel Expenses	5597.30
Utilities	1380.47
Ministry/Supplies	368.40
Maintenance	59.97
Spiritual Life/Outreach/Advertising	317.00
Other Disbursements	464.00
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>8,187.14</b>

<u>Receipts for Month of</u>	<u>January 2010</u>
Weekly Envelopes	4162.00
Weekly Plate	160.00
Benevolences	1162.00
Memorial Fund	110.00
Special Offerings	3402.00
Other Receipts	185.66
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>9181.66</b>

### Building Fund Drive

By now you should have received a letter providing some information about our Building Fund Drive. We hope to replace the windows in the fellowship hall, do some work on the church office, and upgrade the electrical system. Some people have already given a donation towards this and we are grateful to them. We will keep you informed as to both the progress of the renovations and to the amount of money collected.

An additional project not mentioned in the letter is the waterproofing of the outside church wall behind the sanctuary mural of Jesus tending the flock. This picture has special significance since it originally was in the Avenue B church which predated Trinity's current location. It is important that this picture is properly taken care of, and waterproofing the outside of the church by the picture will help accomplish this. In addition, pointing has to be done to some of the bricks on one wall of the parsonage. We are grateful to two members of our congregation who donated the

## Worship Schedule for March

March 7, 14, 21, 28 —Regular Worship Schedule  
10:00 a.m.

Wednesday Service— March 3, 10, 17, 24 at 7:30 p.m.

- \* Communion will be celebrated on March 7
- \* Prayer Meeting each Sunday at 9:00 am
- \* Junior Church each Sunday at 10:00 am