

# TRINITY CHIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2011

## The State of the "Church"

**Then Jesus said to them, "The sabbath was made for humankind, and not humankind for the sabbath; so the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath."**

**-Mark 2.27-28**

Mark and Anna had never been to a church worship service since they were married. Although Mark had grown up in a church, he gradually withdrew from it as an early adult. There had been no major conflict, crises of faith, or even loss of meaning, merely a slow separation to where finally he would readily identify, "well, I'm not really religious, more spiritual. I believe in God and all..."

It was different with Anna. She was very spiritual. Anna was a seeker, always asking questions, probing for meaning...and deeper meaning. She had grown up in a non-religious home. Not necessarily anti-religious, just non-religious. Her own mother had once been a "church person," having as a child gone to Sunday school, being baptized as an adolescent, but she too had parted ways with organized religion once she became an adult. Her husband, Anna's father, was more firmly a self-proclaimed agnostic. It wasn't that he was hostile to religion—far from it, he actually enjoyed studying about and reading up on various world religions, Christianity included. The issue with him, rather, was that he just needed to see it to believe it. And so far in his life, he never saw anything that led him to believe.

Mark and Anna had never been to church together, had never attended mass or a worship service or meeting. And so it was out of the ordinary that together they decided that perhaps they should "go to church" sometime. They lived in a community where there seemed to be more than enough churches to choose from so the following Sunday they showed up at the one a few blocks from their home.

What did they find?

Mark and Anna are real people, although, that's not their real names. They aren't actually from our neighborhood, but they could be. "Marks and Annas" are everywhere. Our houses of worship are surrounded by "Marks and Annas."

On Sunday, February 6<sup>th</sup> Trinity Reformed will gather following the worship service for our annual congregational meeting. There we will report on the state of our church—how we are doing, what we are doing. In many ways it will be a very helpful endeavor and even inspiring as we share the many wonderful things that are taking place at Trinity. In other ways it can be a challenging experience as we talk about finances, stewardship, and budgets. I hope that you will make every effort to be there and that you will be both inspired and challenged.

One of the greatest challenges that we have in presenting an accurate picture of how Trinity is doing relates to the tangible elements that we measure and get to see versus the more important intangible elements that they represent. For instance we will talk about money—a tangible item. But what does that money represent? What are the intangibles being communicated? Generosity. Compassion. Justice. Affection. We will talk about tangible numbers, such as members. But what about the remark that more than one of our new members this year spoke, "this is a place where I belong"? How do we measure the intangibles that contribute to someone saying, Trinity is a community to which "I belong"?

The verse from Mark that is quoted above follows an incident where Jesus and his disciples are walking through a field of grain on the Sabbath. Being hungry, the disciples pick some of the heads of grain and eat them, to which they immediately receive the condemnation of the religious authorities who claim it is religiously

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

unlawful for them to pick the grain, and thus work, on the Sabbath. Jesus's rebuttal is that the religion has lost its focus, purpose, and point. Not that obeying Sabbath regulations are bad, but to remember what the point of the Sabbath, a tangible, is all about in the first place; that the Sabbath is meant as a gift to humankind, to elevate more intangible values, and not to be a burden.

I've underlined the word Sabbath in the above passage and have been playing in my mind by replacing it with other words. For instance, Church.

Which leads me back to the question that followed my introduction about Mark and Anna. They go to church. What do they find?

As I think a lot about the state of the church—here at Trinity, the Reformed Church in America, or simply the church generally speaking—its easy to get bogged down and overly focused on certain very important tangibles: numbers of members and finances. But I can't help but to keep returning to thinking about Mark and Anna.

Maybe that's a good thing. Because if we ever really want to evaluate how the church is doing, then perhaps we need to measure not simply the details about the folks who make up the church, but also those who aren't yet here, folks like Mark and Anna.

In Christ's Grace & Peace,

Pastor Tom

### Tagesgebet

HERR,

wache ueber uns und unser Leben.

Halte schuetzend Deine Hand ueber uns  
und gib uns Frieden fuer unser unruhiges Herz.

Wache ueber uns und unsere Gedanken,  
damit uns die Angst nicht verzehrt.

Wache ueber unseren Glauben an Deine Guete,  
damit wir das Vertrauen nicht verlieren.

Wache ueber unseren Lebensmut damit wir uns nicht  
selbst aufgeben.

Staerke Hoffnung und Zuversicht und lass uns den Reich-  
tum erkennen, den Du auf unser Leben gelegt hast. Amen.

LORD,

watch over us. Protect us and give us peace for our  
restless hearts. Watch over our thoughts so that we are  
not overcome by our fears. Watch over our trust in Your  
goodness so that we do not lose our faith in You. Watch  
over our will to live, so that we do not give up on  
ourselves. Strengthen our hope and trust. Make us ever  
mindful of the riches that You have given us. Amen.

### How Much Does a Prayer Weigh?

How much does a prayer weigh? There is a story of a grocery store owner who tried to weigh one. A tired looking woman came into the store and asked for enough food to make a dinner for her children. The grocer asked her how much she could spend. The frail woman answered, "I have nothing to offer but a little prayer." The storekeeper was not very sentimental nor religious, so he said, half-mockingly, "Write it on paper, and I'll weigh it." So she did. The grocer placed the prayer on the weight side of his scale. Then he began piling food on the other side but to his amazement, the scale would not go down. He finally became flustered and gave the woman a large bag of food.. The grocer never saw the woman again but he treasures the slip of paper upon which the woman's prayer had been written—"Please, Lord, give us this day our daily bread."

### Stewardship and Finance Report

<u>Expenditures for Month of</u>	<u>December 2010</u>
Personnel Expenses	5663.00
Utilities	1192.00
Ministry/Supplies	0.00
Maintenance	472.00
Spiritual Life/Outreach/Advertising	82.00
Other Disbursements	4559.00
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>11,968.00</b>

<u>Receipts for Month of</u>	<u>December 2010</u>
Weekly Envelopes	8340.00
Weekly Plate	505.00
Benevolences	419.00
Memorial Fund*	100.00
Special Offerings	3476.00
Other Receipts	1934.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>14,774.00</b>

\*Includes donations to Memorial Fund and Building  
Repair Fund.

### Worship Schedule for February

February 6, 13, 20, 27—Regular Worship Service  
at 10:00 a.m.

\* Communion will be celebrated on February 6

\* Prayer Meeting each Sunday at 9:00 a.m.

\* Junior Church each Sunday at 10:00 a.m.