

TRINITY CHIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH

DECEMBER 2013

Becoming Flesh

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

- John 1:14

Perched upon the roll top desk in my home study sits a pair of *klompen*—Dutch wooden shoes—that will soon come out and be put to use on the night before St. Nicholas Day (December 6), where it will hold a special gift the following day for my buddy, Prince (my weimaraner). This is how a visit from *Sinterklaas* is celebrated and marked in the Goodhart household. Following Thanksgiving it begins a month of holiday celebrations and festivities.

I should note, to be fair, that maybe *Sinterklaas* doesn't bring gifts to pets in your home. But in my home, dogs are more than pets; they're part of the family and are certainly recognized as such! Call me sentimental, but that's part and parcel of the holidays.

But only part!

Sentiments are *HUGE* at holiday times in all their various forms: sentimentality, sentimentalism, etc. We associate certain emotions with a variety of elements connected to these festive times. For instance, certain foods have to be served because of certain meanings we've placed on those foods. Certain decorations have particular meanings because of where or from whom they came. Even our activities are loaded with sentimentality. Think of it, this is the one time a year when we "go caroling." Why is that? We could enjoy sharing music anytime, but something about the holidays and the songs we sing make us all just a little sentimental and prod us to this tradition.

Add to all this the memories that accompany these traditions, days, events, foods, music,

items, gifts. Filled with sentimentality! Because, somehow they connect us to our loved ones and our emotions respond accordingly.

Sentiments are not bad and being sentimental is not necessarily a negative. Faith itself demands imagination, an appreciation for mystery, and an emotional intelligence. It would do us all well to employ our emotional hearts along with our reason and understanding. No, indeed, sentimentality is not all bad. It is part of the holidays. But only a part.

Sometimes it seems to be the focus. I'm afraid that if it becomes the primary mode of our festivities and the dominant approach to our celebrations, we miss out on a lot of what God would have for us. We miss the fullness of God's story and impact in our lives and world.

I am honored that in my vocation people are *sometimes*—not always but sometimes—more honest with me, and then maybe can be so with themselves. We'll be chatting, and its like all of a sudden, emotions come spilling out. Often it may be in the form of tears. Each person and their story, issues, and challenges are unique. Still, this happens frequently, from both "church folks" and those not part of the church—and as I said before, it's part of my job as a pastor. But it's not about me; rather I serve as an opportunity, if you will. It speaks of a much greater reality that needs to be said out loud. People are hurting. We live in a world with much hurt and brokenness.

And it is to this reality, to this world, that God enters.

During the holidays we often speak in metaphor, about light shining into darkness, that a child shall lead them, and have all sorts of sentimental associations of shepherds and angels. All of this is good and all, but it is only part. The fullness of the message of Christmas is the fleshiness of it all, that the

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



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Word becomes flesh, that God becomes human, the incarnation—flesh and bone, blood, and (seriously) guts.

During Christmas we often concentrate on the Christmas story from Luke, about how Mary and Joseph finding no room at the inn laid their first born child in a manger—an animal feeding trough—and how the shepherds having heard the message from the angels of “good news of great joy for all the people” hastily went to Bethlehem where they found the child as had been told to them. I imagine and implore you to imagine what it would have been like, that scene, what they would have seen and heard, and maybe even more so, smelt. We so often set up our beautiful nativity sets with manger and child, elaborate crèches with Mary and Joseph, shepherds and (a bit too early) magi. And almost always the animals we figure were there as well, sheep and donkey, maybe a cow and a camel.

So if we do all this, picture that very first Christmas, I'd like us to imagine the fullness of that scene. I'd like us to read clearly what is shared by the gospel writer Luke, and is explained by the gospel writer John. I want us to enter a scene where farm animals have been fed, a scene where shepherds who work in the fields long hours with little *refinement*, a scene where a very young maiden has just given birth. I'd like us to imagine the fullness of that experience, the joy *and* exhaustion, exhilaration *and* filth, the peace *and* anxiety. Bodily, can you imagine that? What do you smell and hear and see? How do you feel? What would you feel if you were one of them? Mary? Or Joseph? Or one of the unnamed—but still to this day talked about!—shepherds?

Real people in a real world filled with beauty and brokenness, and as the Christmas carol goes, hopes and fears. It is to this world, our world, our beauty and brokenness that God enters. Because people are hurting, the creation is longing, so God comes to mend us, heal us, and bring us peace. Christ comes to renew creation.

Sentimentalism is fine and all, but Christmas is so much more. It's about blood and sweat, tears and dirt, real life in a real world, not sugar coated holiday treats. A God in flesh and blood who comes in Christ to bring good news for all the people.

Those *klompen* that I will be putting out, they came from my grandparents, and is part of the sentimental reason I value them so much, not just because *Sinterklaas* will leave my dog a treat in them. My grandfather got them in Holland following World War II, Rotterdam to be precise. They sat on a shelf in their dining room for years, played with by us grandkids when we were young. Eventually I inherited them when they both passed away. Sentiments I may connect to those shoes, but is not about the shoes themselves, or even the memories they foster. It's about the people, the flesh and blood who impacted by life.

May this Christmas and the entire holiday season be for you filled with celebration and joyful memory-making. And more so, may we all experience the fullness of the good news for all people that the angels announced, that the shepherds saw, and the world received in the incarnation of Christ our Lord.

Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas
In Christ's Grace and Peace,

Pastor Tom

Christmas Flowers

Please use the insert provided to place your order for this year's Christmas flowers. The order forms need to be received by the church office by Monday December 9th. We appreciate you helping us to adorn our church during this special time of the year. As always, you are welcome to take your flowers after our Christmas Celebration on December 25.

Advent Bible Study

During the “three Wednesdays of Advent,” we will gather to explore the following Sunday's scripture passages for Advent—a season that is not so much about getting ready for the arrival of a baby Jesus at Christmas, but a time of preparation for the coming of Christ. Come study, explore, and share together each Wednesday evening from 7 pm until 8 pm. ALL are welcome!

- Second Advent: Isaiah 11:1-10, Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19,
Romans 15:4-13 Matthew 3:1-12
- Third Advent: Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalm 146:5-10 or
Luke 1:46b-55, James 5:7-10,
Matthew 11:2-11
- Fourth Advent: Isaiah 7:10-16, Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19,
Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-25

Candlelight Service

Our annual Candlelight Worship Service will be held on Sunday, December 15 at 7:00 p.m. This service is one of the highlights of the church year and is an enjoyable event. Come and join us and bring a friend!

Sunday School Christmas Celebration and Church-Wide Potluck

The **Sunday School Christmas** program will take place on Sunday, December 15th in the Fellowship Hall after the worship service. **Immediately following the Christmas program**, we will gather in fellowship over a **potluck lunch**. Since our church family encompasses a rich and diverse tapestry of linguistic and cultural backgrounds, we encourage everyone to bring dishes that reflect the Christmas traditions of your ethnic heritage or family; there will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex on which you can indicate what you would like to bring. If you have any questions, please confer with Carmen Blanco, Lenny Schiefer, or Linda Schiefer.

Sunday School Mission and Outreach

During the first three weeks of Advent, the Sunday School is doing a special “Palm Tree” collection project for those affected by the typhoon in the Philippines. More information to follow in the church bulletin.

Tamale Making

Tamale? Yes! Tamales are a kind of dumpling, a traditional Meso-american food made with masa (corn dough) surrounding meat or fruit or cheese or some other kind of filling and held together and steamed in a leaf—banana or corn husk (which is not eaten ☺). They are enjoyed in many Latino cultures and are especially found at Christmas time in Mexico. Pastor Tom was ordained in a bilingual English/Spanish speaking congregation in Holland, Michigan that had a significant Mexican heritage. He carries that church family and their traditions with him to our church family here at Trinity.



In preparation for Pastor’s Advent Open House, everyone is invited to come and help make tamales on Thursday, Dec. 19th in the Parsonage Kitchen at 7pm. In addition to the traditional spicy chili pork tamale, we will also be making a vegetarian bean and vegetable tamale, and new this year a sweet fruit filled one. Whether you are an old pro at tamale making, or have never even heard of them till now, all skill levels are welcome! Come learn and share together!

Pastor’s Advent Open House

You are invited to celebrate the season and fellowship with your Trinity Reformed Church family at the 6th Annual Pastor’s Advent Open House on Saturday, December 21st from 7-11 pm. Come and enjoy a Christmas tamale as well as other holiday goodies. Hope to see you there!

Christmas Eve Worship at COTH

Trinity has been invited to worship with Church on the Hill (COTH) 167-07 35th Ave in Flushing, on Christmas Eve at 8 pm. COTH is a sister RCA congregation in the Classis of Queens where Pastor Tom is serving as Classis Supervisor while they are without an installed minister. He will be preaching. Trinity will still gather to worship on Christmas Day morning at 10 am this year as we have in the past.

2014 Offering Envelopes

Next year’s offering envelopes have arrived and are in the narthex. Anyone who does not already have envelopes and would like them for 2014 should please contact the church office. We appreciate it when you use your offering envelopes since it helps us provide you with an accurate record of your contributions for tax purposes.

Parsonage Kitchen Updates!

Perhaps you noticed earlier this summer a lot of commotion and activity around the Church Parsonage? Well, changes four years in the making have been taking place. But first, a little background...

Some months after Pastor Tom arrived here at Trinity he shared with Consistory in 2009 that the parsonage oven was going to need some repairs—the door seal was no longer working correctly. Pastor temporarily fixed it a few times but eventually, the oven could no longer be safely used. The refrigerator was also nearing its multi-decades “life-end” as the hum and rattle of its running was one of the loudest sounds in the house. The Consistory considered the aging appliances and the overall condition of the Parsonage Kitchen—broken drawers, missing handles and latches, and significantly outdated and limiting layout—along with our responsibility in providing appropriate housing compensation as well as being good stewards of church property. In 2011, the Consistory proposed and the congregation approved a budget for 2012 that would allow us to replace appliances and make important upgrades. Due to a variety of factors actual work did not commence until July 29th of this summer at the conclusion of Vacation Bible School.

After thorough exploration, pricing, and research, a local cabinet-maker—who had previously worked on kitchen renewals for some of our church members and came highly recommended—was contracted, with an agreed set price. The original intention was to re-face the majority of cupboards and rebuild a few new cupboards where the previous built-in stove unit had been, as well as install new countertops. As with many building projects, plans had to be adjusted as the extent of aging of some cabinets, water damage to others, and complications with the built in wall pantry eventually led to the majority of the kitchen cabinetry being rebuilt of new solid wood—but still, all at the previously agreed upon contracted price.

Following the now more major renovations, new appliances were purchased—again after thorough and extensive research. Instead of the previously built-in wall oven and counter top range we created space for a standard size and more economical free standing range oven. (Here, Pastor expressed interest in purchasing his own professional model, which he did and is now happily using.) Along with necessary electrical and plumbing upgrades and new lighting features, we were able to stay **under** budget.

The pace of work was steady, albeit slow, throughout August and September. Unfortunately our contractor has run into some personal difficulties and we are still waiting for one last cabinet, a drawer, and some final details including flooring repair and wall work. All that being as it currently is, we are nonetheless excited about all that has been done, and to show the congregation the “new” kitchen. This is an investment in Trinity’s property. Come to Pastor’s Open House and see it at work!

Maintenance Report

When we have heavy rains, water sometimes comes into the men's room and consistory room in the fellowship hall. An inspection of the flat roof over this area (above the nursery) on the Palmetto Street side of the church showed that the tar roof needed to be replaced, the pointing on the parapet had to be repaired, and the downspout in this area which runs inside the building unclogged along with installing a secondary backup downspout. We contracted with Peter Dolan, roofer, at the cost of \$9,000 and he completed this work prior to the recent Thanksgiving rainstorm, and so far, things are looking dry!

We have also had long time leaking in the stairwell leading up to the balcony. We had brick work done last year that improved the situation but did not fix it. Thus Dolan was also hired to fix roof damage on the southeast corner of the building, above the balcony leak and the everyday entrance to the church building. Finally, the parsonage has had YEARS of water damage with significant leaking occurring in the front northeast corner of the house. Previously poorly installed parapet capping is being repaired along with significant masonry work in that corner and window frame capping.

Church Cleanup

On Saturday November 2, over 30 people showed up at Trinity for a cleanup day. Pews were polished, floors and staircases mopped, lots of things got dusted, carpets were vacuumed, and outside weeds were removed and bushes trimmed. A little painting and carpentry also took place. Thank you to everyone who helped out.

Anniversary Sunday

On Sunday November 17, we celebrated the 160th Anniversary of Trinity Reformed Church at our worship service and a dinner which followed at Christ the King High School. There were 104 people in attendance at the dinner and Theo Hessenius prepared an informative slide show showing pictures of most of our former ministers going back to the 1850s as well as the two churches which merged to form Trinity. The day proved to be meaningful and we were pleased that some former members as well as friends could share it with us.



Cake and Rummage Sale



With much love and lots of help, the Ladies Aid/Frauenverein and Trinity conducted another very successful cake and rummage sale. The cake table sold \$727.65 worth of delicious items and the rummage sale brought in \$515.73 for a total of \$1,243.38. Many thanks to those who helped in this endeavor.



Piano Interest...

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord! Be it Psalm 100 or 98 or 95 or any other number of psalms, the biblical writers implore us to sing, to make music, to lift our praise, and to worship God. We are blessed at Trinity to have a fine organ and wonderful organist to assist us in this worship! We also look forward to a future of hope and the possibility of developing a music program where others can incorporate their gifts and talents in lifting up a joyful noise. A number of people have expressed interest in upgrading our sanctuary piano to a better model, and with it, some minor remodeling of the front chancel area to more easily use it. There is present already the promise of significant seed money donation to begin a "piano fund" and Pastor fully supports this effort. However as of yet, no decisions have been made. Not everyone is in agreement. The Consistory would like to foster conversation and elicit input about a piano specifically and music generally. Speak, listen, share, sing...

Happy December Birthdays 🍰

Elaine Brust	8 th	Jordan Martinez	8 th
Eva Reif	9 th	Dorothy Vacanti	13 th
Kurt Andreas	16 th	Linda Morton	19 th
Alma Hohenleitner	20 th	Laura Kurtz	22 nd
John Popp	27 th		

Christmas Poem

*So wie der Stern ueber dem Stall von Bethlehem stehen blieb,
so moege Gott Sein Licht auch ueber deinem Leben leuchten
lassen.*

Just as the star shone over the manger in Bethlehem, so may
God's light also shine in your life.

*Wie die Engel den Frieden auf Erden verkuendeten, so moege
Gottes Frieden auch dein Herz erfuellen.*

Just as the angels proclaimed peace on earth, so may God's
peace fill your heart as well.

*Wie die Weisen aus dem Morgenland ihren Weg sogar in
dunkler Nacht fanden, so moegest auch du entdecken, dass
dein Leben auch auf dunklen Wegen die Spuren Gottes
aufweist.*

Just as the Wise Men from the East found their way even in
darkest night, so may you also discover that even when the
way grows dark, God's Hand is still at work.

*Wie Maria das Wort des Engels in ihrem Herzen bewegt hat,
so moege auch in deinem Herzen immer wieder ein Wort von
Gott lebendig sein.*

Just as Mary pondered the message of the angel in her heart,
so may there also be in your heart the Word of God as a living
power.

*Wie die Hirten in dem neugeborenen Kind den Heiland der
Welt erkannten, so moegest auch du Jesus Christus als Retter
und Erloeser fuer dein Leben erkennen.*

Just as the shepherds recognized the Savior of the Word in the
newborn child, so may you too recognize Jesus Christ as the
Savior and Redeemer of your life.

We are indebted to Margot and Reinhard Groezinger for this
lovely contribution in German. Thank you both!

Worship Schedule for December

December 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 – Worship at 10 a.m.

December 15 – Candlelight Service at 7 p.m.

December 25 – Christmas Worship Service 10 a.m.

- Communion will be celebrated on
December 1 and 15
- Prayer Meeting each Sunday at 9:00 a.m.
- Junior Church each Sunday at 10:00 a.m.

Prayer List

Please be mindful of the following members and friends of our
congregation in your prayers:

Janet Roth, health; Martha Bauer, health; Frederick Dalm,
healing; Groezinger Family; Philipp & Hildegard Febel,
healing; Laura Kurtz, health; Debra Meraglia, health &
healing; Eleanor Rizzo, health & healing; Donna Dowd,
healing; Doris Church, healing; United Presbyterian Church,
Ridgewood and Pastor Henry Fury; Bill Albanese, health &
healing; Susan Gebhart, health & healing; Maritza Garcia-
Castro, health & healing; Fritz & Betty Klaar, health &
healing; Anibal Segarra, safety & protection; Martin Seidl,
health & healing; Barbara Burger, health & healing; Clara
Gomez, health & healing; Felder Williams, health & healing;
Mildred Schleeauf, health & healing; Church on the Hill,
transitions; Isabel, Marcia, and Jade; Andrew Holbrook, health
& healing; Reinhard Groezinger, health & healing; Marie
Shanelly Alvarez; Mohr Family; Janet Kucinskas, health &
healing; Jennie Cartagena, health & healing; Parker Isaiah
Trautmann, thanksgiving; Billie Albanese, health & healing;
Trudy Bambach, health & healing; Sara Segarra; Tito Ortiz;
Michele Dimino, needs kidney transplant; Family of Margaret
Spindler, peace & comfort; Alberto Ortiz, serving in military;
Baby Colette, health & growth; Reformed Church in America,
Queens Classis, and Regional Synod of New York; Dave &
Char Alexander, RCA missionaries in Taiwan; Doug Leonard,
RCA missionary in Oman; Peter Mark Trautmann, The
Navigators at NYU; Leonard & Linda Schiefer, Gideons
International; Pastor Tom and the Consistory.

Stewardship and Finance Report

<u>Expenditures for Month of</u>	<u>Oct. 2013</u>
Personnel Expenses	\$ 6,004.00
Utilities	\$ 532.00
Ministry/Supplies	\$ 323.00
Maintenance	\$ 0.00
Spiritual Life/Outreach/Advertising	\$ 0.00
Other Disbursements*	\$ 4,037.00
Total Expenditures	\$ 10,896.00

<u>Receipts for Month of</u>	<u>Oct. 2013</u>
Weekly Envelopes	\$ 4,256.00
Weekly Plate	\$ 170.00
Benevolences	\$ 363.00
Memorial Fund	\$ 1,000.00
Special Offerings	\$ 453.00
Annuity	\$ 1,792.00
Other Receipts**	\$ 1,865.00
Total Receipts	\$ 9,899.00

*Insurance, coffee hour, CROP Walk, Assessment,
quarterly taxes

** Alanon, CROP Walk, Sunday School

Because the offering envelope contributions were insufficient
to meet expenses, \$500.00 was transferred from the Memorial
Fund to make up the difference.

December 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Worship Service 10:00 am First Sunday of Advent <i>Their Daily Bread Collection</i>	2 NA Mtg. 7pm	3 Al-Anon 7:30pm	4 Advent Bible Study 7:00 pm	5 UPC Welcome Kitchen 4:00 pm NA Mtg. 7pm	6 UPC Welcome Kitchen 4:00 pm	7 NA Mtg. 7pm
8 Worship Service 10:00 am Second Sunday of Advent	9 NA Mtg. 7pm	10 Al-Anon 7:30pm	11 Advent Bible Study 7:00 pm	12 NA Mtg. 7pm	13	14 Couples and Friends Christmas Party 1pm-5pm NA Mtg. 7pm
15 Worship Service 10:00 am Third Sunday of Advent <i>Sunday School Christmas Program & Church Potluck Lunch</i> <i>Candlelight Service 7pm</i>	16 NA Mtg. 7pm	17 Consistory 7 pm Al-Anon 7:30pm	18 Frauenverein/ Ladies Aid Christmas Party 12 noon Advent Bible Study 7:00 pm	19 Tamale Making Parsonage 7 pm NA Mtg. 7pm	20 Puselia's Student Recital 7 pm @ Maranatha Romanian Church Last day for newsletter submissions to Bill Voges	21 Pastor's Advent Open House 7 pm NA Mtg. 7pm
22 Worship Service 10:00 am Fourth Sunday of Advent <i>Grace Notes Choir Concert 3 pm</i>	23 NA Mtg. 7pm	24 Christmas Eve Service @ Church on the Hill 8 pm Al-Anon 7:30pm	25 Christmas Worship Service 10:00 am	26 NA Mtg. 7pm	27	28 NA Mtg. 7pm
29 Worship Service 10:00 am	30 NA Mtg. 7pm	31 Al-Anon 7:30pm			Prayer Meeting Sundays 9am Junior Church Sundays 10am	