

The Bellringer

The Newsletter of The Wyckoff Reformed Church

The Marks of the True Church , *part 5*

~ Rev. Jim O'Connell

Just a reminder, we have looked at the classic three "Marks of the True Church," from the Belgic Confession,

1. Pure preaching of the gospel
2. Pure administration of the sacraments
3. Practices church discipline

And the first of two additional practices of the church:

1. Governs itself according to the pure Word of God.
2. Holds Jesus Christ as the only head.

The preeminence of Jesus Christ in our life is a fundamental of faith. It is true of our Reformed tradition that Christ is the only head of the church. This was not a new concept for the church during the Reformation.

However, prior to the Reformation, this idea yielded to the notion that a bishop of the church could and should take the reigns in the absence of our Lord. The idea that Christ is somehow absent would deny what Jesus promised his disciples after his resurrection, ". . . I am with you always, to the end of the age. Mt 28:20."

Christ first in the life of the church means:

- We are not a business
- We are the body of the church
- We are not a special interest group
- We are the living presence of the kingdom of God
- We are not judges
- We are the witnesses of salvation in Christ
- We are not a

social club

- We are the invitation to a life of purpose and hope

In the gospel of John, we learn that Jesus promised to dwell in us if we would dwell in him. "Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, is the one who loves me; and the one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love and manifest myself to them. John 14:21"

Jesus also states that the world will know we belong to him by our love for one another. Which raises the question, how much love are we showing these days? To put Christ as the head of the church and to see the church as the living body of Christ should mean then that love,

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The Marks of the True Church , part 5 ...continued

forgiveness, acts of kindness and generosity ooze out of every pore of our church and every member of The Wyckoff Reformed Church.

The major goal of a business is to make money and lots of it. The goal of a congregation which gathers in the name of Christ should be to make Christ clearly

seen in all that we do. David Fitch, the author of "The Great Giveaway," says, "The church itself [is] to become the message. . . [it] takes its own salvation as seriously as it does others' and, in the process, makes its own way of life impossible to ignore as the standard-bearer for what is real and relevant in a fragmented and

seeking world." The early Jews used to write on the doors of their homes', "Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one you shall have no other gods before him." This was, and still is today, a call to regard God as the head of the believers' lives and therefore head of the believers' religious community. Similarly, when we say that Christ is the head (continued on page 3)

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Prayer concerns and celebrations

Please remember in your prayers: Norma Holland, Ralph Self, Kim Ackerson, Jason Sweetman, Daniel DeRose, Sr., John Brain, Sr., Sally Anne Pilcer, Cole Van De Water, Doug and Barbara Wiley, and Elsie Golden.

For anyone who would like to write to Sally Anne as she undergoes physical therapy after knee-replacement surgery, her address is: Lincoln Park Nursing Home, J.P. Turco Medical Rehab Center, 305 Pine Brook Road, Lincoln Park, NJ 07035.

During the past three weeks, Rev. Dave and Cyndie have been blessed with two new granddaughters. On November 23, their oldest daughter, Melissa and her husband, Mike, adopted their second daughter, Caitlin, who joins big sister, Sophie.

On December 7, their daughter, Erica, and her husband, Paul, had their second daughter, Kayla, who joins her big sister, Mia.

We express our Christian sympathy

to the Raney family on the death of Carol's father, long-time member, Chet Wanamaker.

CDs are available from "The Service of Celebration for the Life of Frederick P. Davies." If anyone was unable to attend this service and would like a CD, they are a magnificent recording of a most appropriate tribute. They are available for \$15.00 (2 CDs in each set) and can be obtained by calling Dorothy Fish at 201-891-7473.



of the church, we are saying that there is no other god for us than the same God who led Israel out of bondage in Egypt into the freedom to worship God. This same God promised to send a messiah and we believe that this Messiah is God with us, Jesus, the Christ. Therefore we, as a community of believers, hold that Jesus is the head of the church and head of our life in every square inch of our life:

- Head of our check book
- Head of our time
- Head of our behavior
- Head of our relationship
- Head of what we say
- Head of how and why we live

The people who honor God in such a way always benefit from being known as God's people. What changes or adjustments might you need to make in your life to become more a member of the true church? We are a church that embraces God in a profound and authentic way. During this season of Advent, search out other places in your life where you can make God more visible. Jesus, our Emmanuel (God with us), will help you.

Advent Celebrations

Advent began November 29th, the fourth Sunday before Christmas. Each year there are themes chosen to help with our two-fold understanding of Advent. We anticipate the celebration of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, our Lord and Savior, and we wait and watch in anticipation of Christ's return to earth, when he will make all things new again. The season of Advent challenges us to ask the question, "If I knew I only had weeks to live, what would I do?" It likewise begs the question, if you knew Jesus was coming in a few weeks, how might you live differently?

Each Sunday during Advent, different families of the church will come forward to read scripture, share a prayer, and light the representative candle(s) on the Advent wreath. It is a practice that can be carried home and repeated each day throughout the week. A time of worship, study, and service can become a habit and part of our week-long experience. Many families set aside time for this at the dinner hour. Some make space as part of their bedtime ritual. Still others make it part of their morning routine. What is important is to put and keep Jesus before you,

behind you, above you, beneath you, beside you and inside you during these coming weeks. It will be well worth the effort and will bear great dividends for months and years to come.

The scriptures in the lessons and themes (*page 5*) are a good starting point. Reflect on where you see God in the text. Then ask yourself the question, what does this text say about people? Lastly ask yourself the question, what do I learn about myself from these verses? There are also Advent helps in the office.

Enjoy Dinner and Dickens! "A Christmas Carol" to be presented on Saturday, December 19

A dinner theater presentation of Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol," will be offered on Saturday, December 19. Tickets to this Yuletide classic are \$15, which includes dinner, the show and dessert.

Presented in "readers' theater" style, the evening promises good food, entertainment and the singing of Christmas carols after the show. Tickets will be sold during coffee hour, or call the church office, 201-891-1782, to reserve a seat.



Treasurer's Report at the November Consistory Meeting for the month of October

1. October income was \$44,901 and expenses were \$63,381 resulting in a \$18,480 deficit that is \$8,409 above the budgeted deficit of \$10,071. Year to date results show a deficit of \$59,292 versus a budgeted deficit of \$35,385.
2. Envelope income for October totaled \$38,543 versus a budget of \$37,546. Year to date, envelope income is \$251,838 versus a budget of \$281,594, a shortfall of \$29,756. Budget for envelope income does not consider seasonality of summer months which may account for some of the year to date shortfall. Year to date, total income is \$325,971 versus a budget of \$368,004 for a negative variance of \$42,033. On a year to date basis, other operating income is below budget by \$15,204 due to shortfalls in holiday fair (\$8,348), endowment transfer (2,865) and miscellaneous operating income, including Klomburg rent (\$8,754) offset by interest and dividends (\$2,263) and organization income (\$2,500). Much of the differences, such as holiday fair and endowment transfer appear to be timing related. Klomburg rent is owed for September and October (\$4,400).
3. Expenses year to date are \$385,263 versus a budget \$403,389 or \$18,126 under planned spending. Most under spending is primarily timing related from mission expenses not be paid out (\$2,471), classis expense not being paid (\$9,710), education expenses not being paid out (\$10,475) and utilities being under budget (\$6,191). Partially offsetting these items were salary expense over budget (\$5,890) and insurance over budget (\$7,675).
4. Fund balances at the end of August are as follows:
 - a. Designated Funds – \$852,009 versus \$864,265 in September, a decrease of \$12,256 from normal monthly fund amortizations and payments from 09 Fair Capital Repairs, Pastor discretionary fund, mission fund and Northside Food Pantry account.
 - b. Endowment & Scholarship Funds - \$641,090 versus \$636,660 in September reflecting increases in earnings and market valuation.
 - c. Investment Account - \$687,380 versus \$696,246 in August reflecting decreases in our investment market values and earnings.
5. Treasurer concluded that church needs to continue to monitor envelope income and hopes to see income pick up in the next several months. Recommendation to Executive Committee to provide update to congregation regarding financial performance as of the six months ended September 30, 2009. Committees are asked to continue to continue to control expenses. Committee chairs will be receiving a detailed analysis of accounts that were part of their budget and will be asked to provide a forecast for the rest of this year. This will help provide a baseline for the budget process next year.
6. October attendance was 17.6% lower than 2008 (216 vs. 262). For year to date 2009 through October, average Sunday attendance was lower (235 vs. 245).

If you have not yet submitted a pledge, you may do so on Sunday. Pledge cards are available in the pews or on the Genesis information table.



Christian Employment Support Network Needs Your Support

The CESN group includes church members and friends of the church who are looking for employment opportunities and need your support. Brief summaries of their needs are listed below.

Executive with a broad skill set across all aspects of international business leadership, finance and operations. Seeking a **leadership or general management position** in any industry. I have a B.A. in Accounting and M.B.A. in Management. Tom Zitelli - tomzitelli@yahoo.com

Seasoned Human Resources leader in multiple industries seeking full time work in a small or medium sized company. Start up, compliance, and people solutions experience.

Seasoned Office and Project Manager seeking part-time position in a small or medium sized company. Experience spans a range of industries.

Person seeking work as an **Assembly Mechanic**. Has tools and precision instruments.
g.melignano@verizon.net

Person seeking a position that will utilize administrative and technical skills. A dedicated and technically **skilled professional with an administrative background** developed through 18 years of experience as an office manager and admin assistant.
Jeane17623@aol.com / 201-790-4473

Communications and public relations professional, will help you create and execute your consumer and employee communications strategies. Keen expertise in speaking to ethnic and international audiences.

If you can help, please contact the person listed above or Karen Riether @ kriether@gmail.com to make the connections. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

*“The best of all gifts around
any Christmas tree: the
presence of a happy family
all wrapped up in each
other.”*

~ Burton Hillis

Lessons and Themes for Advent

Advent 3

Sunday, December 13

Zephaniah 3:14-20 /

Isaiah 12:2-6

Philippians 4:4-7 /

Luke 3:7-18

Sermon: **Warn**

Theme: John preaches good news and warning combined – the one coming is mightiest of all.

Advent 4

Sunday, December 20

Micah 5:2-5a / Luke 1:47-55
or Psalm 80:1-7

Hebrews 10:5-10 /

Luke 1:39-45 (45-55)

Sermon: **Welcome**

Theme: How do we welcome the presence of Christ into our homes and into our lives’?

Christmas Eve

Thursday, December 24

Psalm 96 / Isaiah 9:2-7 /

Luke 2:1-14, 15-20 /

Titus 2:11-14

Sermon: **A Spotlight on Joy**

Theme: We pause in our busyness to consider a moment in time that changed everything for all time, the light of our world was dimmed by the brighter light of God’s presence.



**Ladies Aid
Cookie Exchange
Scheduled for
Wed., December
16**

All women are invited to our Christmas meeting. After a bit of business, we will have our annual Cookie Exchange, were you bring a batch of your favorite cookies and exchange them for a nice assortment to take home. In addition, there will be a rousing game of Christmas Bingo (prizes, of course!).

Don't miss out on a jolly good time ~ be there! Also, don't forget the food pantry. Help make some family's Christmas merry by your generosity.

*"I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year."
~ Charles Dickens*

**Kennedy Family Sets Up our Christmas crèche
for 29th Year**

The antique nativity scene currently on display in front of our church is one of the most exquisite crèches in New Jersey. It has been set up during the past 29 Christmas seasons by the David and Jill Kennedy family. David and Jill's family includes Elizabeth Kennedy, Sarah and Joseph Lembo, and Laura and Stephen Flynn.

The German nativity figures in the crèche were originally discovered in the basement of a religious import house in New York City. They were found when the business was moving to a new location after being on Barclay Street for 130 years.

All of the figures are more realistic and detailed in their facial expressions than Hummel creations. The posturing and coloring also give evidence of more exacting craftsmanship than that found in traditional Hummel figures. Each of the numerous crèche figures is more than two feet high, with the exception of the reclining animals. All of the figures are in perfect proportion

to one another. The infant Jesus, however, is larger, reflecting use of a technique by 18th century artisans to highlight the focal point of a composition.

One pair of figures in this antique Christmas crèche is that of a grandfather with a child on his knee before the manger. This pair of figures captures the sense of excitement which every generation feels when telling the Christmas story to the next generation. Our church crèche was donated almost 40 years ago by an older couple, Harry and Millie Jager, whose loving hope was that it would help children better understand the world's greatest story.



