

# TRINITY NEWS

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April 2018

Trinity Reformed Church  
North Plainfield, N.J. 07063

Rev. Scott R. Harris, Pastor  
Ginger Smellie, Editor

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Members & Friends,

I know this letter is going to be longer than usual. I expect that it will take up more space in the newsletter than we usually give it. But I ask for your patience and understanding and that you keep reading!

**When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered around Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make gods for us, who shall go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." Aaron said to them, "Take off the gold rings that are on the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people took off the gold rings from their ears, and brought them to Aaron. He took the gold from them, formed it in a mold, and cast an image of a calf; and they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" (Exodus 32:1-4 NRSV)**

Anxiety is present in every system, organization, relationship and church. However, anxiety that isn't managed well can lead to disaster. In the story from Exodus as quoted above, we have an example of a symptom of an anxious relationship system; the desire for a "quick fix". I have to admit that I am guilty of having that desire at times. If a course of action doesn't yield results in short order, I am tempted to give up on it and move to the next thing. But, if I take the example above seriously, such a lack of patience can have disastrous results!

We have been working with the Classis Focus Church Development Process since being selected as the focus congregation for 2017 – 2018 in May of last year. And, like me, many of you are asking; when are things going to start happening? When are we going to start to grow? When are the new members going to get here? Has the process failed?

Well, I guess that all depends on what your definition of church growth is. If it is merely numbers of members, then you might say what we tried didn't work. But if, as I believe, growth is spiritual in nature first then I think the process has been successful. Mark 4:26-28 reads; <sup>26</sup>He also said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, <sup>27</sup>and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. <sup>28</sup>The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head." In other words, there are things we control, and things only God controls when it comes to growth. All we can do is prepare the way and trust in God to provide the growth by the power of the Holy Spirit if that is God's will. Preparing to me means working on our own spiritual health, our relational health as a congregation, reaching out to the community around us and fulfilling our mission given to us by God. So, what (if anything) have we done along those lines?

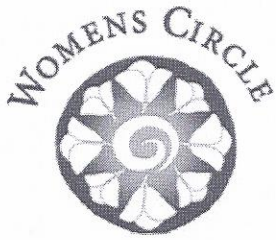
At a recent meeting of the Focus Church Development Process Steering Committee, we reviewed what has been done so far and even I was shocked at how much we have actually accomplished! On a steering committee level, we have spent time examining what it means to be a healthy congregation. We have worked more closely with our daughter church; The Agape House. In fact, we have engaged in several joint projects; hosting the January Classis meeting, reaching out to the neighbors that live around our building and inviting them to our Stigma Free Summit in February, including each other's announcements in our bulletins to facilitate communication and interaction between the two groups and Joan Beil has started working with some children from Agape House to teach them how to read music and sing as a choir! Our two congregations have combined our Bible Studies into one on Wednesday evenings and Pastor Scott and Pastor Ursula take turns leading it. We have begun exploring how we might be better mentors to Agape House members to teach them how to be a church with real staying power by inviting them to volunteer to serve on our committees and see us at work. This is an example of symbiosis; they need our experience; we need more hands to do the work! This has led me, and others, to conclude that if there is a future for Trinity and for Agape House, it will be together and so we have begun to examine our church organization structure to see how to best facilitate that and how Agape House can organize as a congregation in their own right; independent and yet connected.

And there are plans for the future to be presented to Consistory, sometimes to the congregation. Among them we would like to host a workshop by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center on how to be a healthy church and have healthy relationships with each other and other congregations. We would like to make our weekly coffee hour a joint coffee hour with both congregations participating and that way we can get to know each other by name as well as by face! Sometime after Easter we would like to collaborate with Agape House in starting a special worship service once a month for their teen and young adult community; a service aimed specifically at them and their tastes and needs. By Thanksgiving we would like to host a meal and invite the community that lives around the church building in to enjoy a meal and fellowship. When the children's choir is ready we would like to have them perform at one of our worship services as well as have the Liturgical Dance group from Agape House come in one time and share their special gifts with us. We would also like to have the children's choir perform at an upcoming Classis meeting!

Most of these ideas and accomplishments and goals have come about as a response to specific things people wrote about in their answers to the questions we included in our bulletins a few months ago, including the desire for filled pews, people getting a fulfilling foundation in faith, finding ways to share our gift of music with the community and the concern that our congregation doesn't reflect our immediate community.

So, has any of this packed our pews? Have we had a large number of people asking to join our church? Not yet. But then again, if we planted corn, we wouldn't expect to harvest it the next day. Or the next week, or the next month for that matter! These things take time and only God controls that time and how long it will take. All we can do is to be patient, to be faithful and be engaged. Join me in praying for the courage to journey into the future God has envisioned for Trinity Reformed Church.

Grace & Peace,  
Pastor Scott



BROEK CIRCLE – will meet on Wednesday, April 11th at 11:00 a.m. at the home of Joanne Nuber. Hostess, Ginger Smellie

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Broek Cooks will have Chicken Florentine soup available in May. An order form is in on the hall bulletin board.

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JACOBA CIRCLE – will meet on Monday, April 9th at 7:30pm at the home of Deena Zolkiwsky. Deena, Hostess.

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Church World Service Blanket Sundays

CWS Blankets will be displayed along with information and an envelope. Blankets are now \$10 each, but any donation you care to make will be gratefully accepted- and matched by the Benevolence Fund!

Make checks payable to Church World Services.

Thank you  
Ginger Smellie



April, 2017

- 7. Timothy Harris
- 9. Howard Hong
- 14. Shawn Borelli
- 16. Barbara Nuber
- 20. Sarah Coppola
- 23. Tom Wagner
- 30. David Zolkiwsky

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“IN MEMORIAM”

John Kormendy

at rest February 23, 2018

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MAY Newsletter DEADLINE -

Tuesday, April 17th



In the month of February Pastor Scott gave the following sermons:

On February 4<sup>th</sup> the sermon was titled was "All Things To All People". This sermon was based on Isaiah 40:21-31 and 1 Corinthians 9:16-23. In this sermon it was shown that Christians are called to be willing to renounce their rights, status and privileges when necessary so that others can hear and respond to the gospel. As a result it is hoped that we will see that sharing the gospel, reaching the next generation and the well-being of our fellow believers is more important than our social status and control or even a nice building.

On February 11<sup>th</sup> our texts were 2 Kings 2:1-12 and Mark 9:2-9. The sermon title was "Sankofa: Retracing the Way In." From this sermon we not only learned about the African tradition of Sankofa with its symbol of a bird flying while looking backward. A Sankofa journey is a spiritual discipline in which one goes back to one's roots and beginnings to remember what is important so that one can move forward in one's life journey. It was shown that sometimes retracing our steps (much the way that the prophet Elijah and his apprentice Elisha did) helps us to remember who and what God calls us to do and to be. It is hoped that as a result of learning this we might recall our role in the story that God is telling.

Ash Wednesday was on February 14<sup>th</sup> this year and on that night our texts were Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:10; and Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21. In the sermon that followed we examined the Biblical roots of things like fasting and the impartation of ashes and learned that these are ways to connect our physical bodies to our spiritual life by receiving and outward, physical mark of what was going on internally and spiritually for us. It is hoped that as a result of this sermon, we might be better able to appreciate the death and resurrection of Christ through self-examination, repentance, prayer, fasting and self-denial as we journey through Lent towards the cross on Good Friday.

On February 18<sup>th</sup> our sermon was "Starting Over". Our scripture lessons for this sermon were Genesis 9:8-17 and Mark 1:9-15. Remember "do-overs" from when you were a child playing a game? Wouldn't it be great if we got "do-overs" in real life? In this sermon it was shown from the scriptures that Jesus did for us what we could not do for ourselves; meet God's requirement of perfection in obedience to the law. In response it is hoped that we will rely on Jesus to make us right with God and then become God's partners in restoring God's kingdom rule and God's goodness to the creation.

On February 25<sup>th</sup> our scripture lessons were Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 and Romans 4:13-25. In a sermon titled "Faith in the Unbelievable" it was shown from these passages that God has done something for us that we cannot do for ourselves – restored us to a right relationship with God to the end that we will trust that we are set right with God purely by grace, not by works.