



# TRINITY CHIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH

DECEMBER 2009

**Happy Holidays And  
Merry Christmas**

*"...and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."*

*Matthew 1:23b*

Since I am writing this prior to Thanksgiving, it is far too early for me to think very easily of "Christmas." That's just how it is in my brain. Sometimes, I simply need to focus and give my attention to one thing at a time, before too quickly moving through it to something else. Following Thanksgiving, I will then proceed into Advent—that season of expectant waiting and preparation for the coming of the Christ child. During Advent and in preparing for Christmas I will decorate—put up the tree, send holiday cards, get gifts, etc.—but will do my best to not really celebrate Christmas until Christmas time, which is the twelve days following Advent and preceding Epiphany.

For everything there is a time and a season: Advent comes first, then Christmas, then Epiphany. I guess you could just consider it a pet peeve of mine. In any event, when I wish someone "Happy Holidays" it is often from a very specifically Christian perspective—an understanding that there are many Christian holidays at this time of year that we are celebrating.

But I will also say "Happy Holidays," and again from a very specifically Christian perspective—that is Christian as in Christ-like—to my many friends and acquaintance whom I know do not celebrate Christmas (or Advent or Epiphany). I will wish Happy Holidays not to be politically correct, but rather, out of the Christ-like characteristics of humility and hospitality.

Don't get me wrong, during the actual days of and those just before Christmas, I will most likely wish Merry Christmas to most everyone and especially my Christian sisters and brothers. And in a similar manner, I will probably say Happy Hanukkah to my Jewish friends. To those who celebrate it, I will extend a joyful Kwanza. In humility and hospitality during this time of year I will wish to each and all, but

especially my friends who are agnostic or atheist a genuine "Happy Holidays." I do this because as much as the holidays are a time to celebrate and to share, Christmas is mostly about Jesus.

and to try to demonstrate a Christ-like behavior and attitude is much more important than forcing my holiday on someone. Let me share...

At the center of what we believe about Christmas is that God becomes one of us, Emmanuel, the Word becomes flesh. Or in other words, the Incarnation. In so doing, the Creator of the Universe demonstrates the greatest humility in clothing Godself as a vulnerable infant. And not simply taking on mere humanity, but so humble as to be an infant born of a pregnant teenage peasant in a backwater village, literally in a barn!

The apostle Paul lifts up this humility as he puts it in the letter to the Philippians, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself...(2:4-8)

At the core of the Christmas story and central to the incarnation is Christ modeling of humility. As we live out our faith in modeling Jesus, we need to practice humility.

But why is this so important? Well, it's not just to jump into the culture wars, as important as it is to keep Christ in Christmas. The Christmas story, and for that matter the Christian faith, has to do with power and humility. Look at the Christmas story as it is told in Luke 2, "In those days...Emperor Augustus" and "while Quirinius was governor." Yet it was not to the powerful that God came. It was to the nameless and the powerless, to a couple of peasants and a bunch of shepherds and a barn full of animals. God entered the world and entered the lives of the humble working at changing things in what appears to be a backwards way. Christ still does.

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



As Christ continues his mission in this world, a mission that brings healing and redemption and transformation, he instigates from the bottom up, from the lowly, from a baby, and from the humble. As we follow Christ we would do well to do likewise.

Happy Holidays & Merry Christmas/Fröhliche Weihnachten,

Pastor Tom



### Reception of New Members

On November 15, four new members were received into the fellowship of Trinity Reformed Church. They are Siegfried Burger, Anita Anonowitz, Rosemarie Walz, and Richard Clausen. Welcome!

### WEIHNACHTSLIED

Vom Himmel in die tiefsten Kluefte  
ein milder Stern herniederlacht;  
vom Tannenwalde steigen Duefte  
und hauchen durch die Winterluefte  
und kerzenhelle wird die Nacht.

Mir ist das Herz so froh erschrocken;  
das ist die liebe Weihnachtszeit!  
Ich hoere fernher Kirchenglocken  
mich lieblich, heimatlich verlocken  
in maerchenstille Herrlichkeit.

Ein frommer Zauber haelt mich wieder,  
anbetend, staunend muss ich stehen;  
es sinkt auf meine Augenlider  
ein gold'ner Kindertraum hernieder,  
ich fuehl's, ein Wunder ist geschehen.

von Theodor Storm  
(aus Husum)

### Cake Sale



The Ladies Aid/Frauenverein held their cake sale on November 21. The cake sale generated \$621.65 and the sales table \$242.50 for a total of \$864.15. The money collected will benefit the church. Thanks to everyone who worked so hard to make this a success.

### Candlelight Service

Our Candlelight Service will be held on Sunday December 20 at 7:00 p.m. and the Colonial Church of Bayside will be joining us again this year. This is one of the most popular events at Trinity and draws many visitors. Bring a friend or neighbor with you and join us for this beautiful service

### News Briefs—FYI

The November Consistory meeting was held in the parsonage and Pastor treated the members of Consistory to homemade apple pie which he made from scratch. It was excellent!

A combination VCR DVD player has been donated to the church for the fellowship hall TV. Any groups who use the TV for their programs have access to this.

### Worship Schedule for December

Sunday Morning Worship 10:00 am

December 20—Candlelight Service at 7:00 pm

December 25—Christmas Celebration at 10:00 am

\* Communion will be celebrated on December 6

## October 2009 RCA Missionary Update from Charlene and David Alexander

Dear Friends,

We have let too many months slip past since our last letter in May. During that time our lives have been fairly packed, with the exception of a 3-week vacation in July when we went to Michigan to participate in the celebration of Char's parents' 60th wedding anniversary. So, month by month, here's a bit of what has happened since our last note your way.

In June we were occupied with end of term for our students, both Taiwanese and international. That meant giving exams, correcting papers, and helping people leave Taiwan to return to service in their home churches around the world.

July, as we mentioned above, was mainly spent abroad, which was a pleasant break from the tropical heat of Taiwan's summer and a joyful time with family and friends.

Early in August, Char began teaching the summer intensive English course for new students of Tainan Theological College. She had hoped to hold it in one of the two air-conditioned classrooms, and was willing to pay for the air conditioning herself, but there were too many students for one of those rooms. August also brought the welcome confirmation of Char's return to teaching at Chang Jung Christian University and the good news that she would be given the maximum number of hours available to someone with her qualifications. The university wants Christian teachers but cannot discriminate against applicants based on religion. Char is there on a missionary appointment, which puts an additional Christian on campus and in relationship with students. Her teaching duties—four classes—began in mid-September.

But, back to August. At the end of the first week of the month, a typhoon dropped tremendous amounts of rain on Taiwan. Now referred to as the 8/8 Flood, it was the worst disaster to hit Taiwan in 50 years, causing massive flooding in areas near the seashore and landslides that destroyed villages, roads and bridges in the mountains. In the end, more than 500 lives were lost.

Here at the theological college we got off very lightly. Several trees were broken, some roofs were damaged, and one window of the chapel blown in. The worst of our problems, so minor in comparison to others' suffering, was when all the water in the city was shut off for four days. In response to the disaster, the college suspended the language courses for three days so that students could go help people shovel out their ground floor rooms and mop up after the typhoon. Those days had to be made up during the week after the intensive course was scheduled to end, the week Char had planned to use as preparation for university teaching. The result is that she's been running since we returned from our vacation.

August also saw Grant's departure for his senior year of high

end, the week Char had planned to use as preparation for university teaching. The result is that she's been running since we returned from our vacation.



*Our whole family in Chicago in July 2009*

August also saw Grant's departure for his senior year of high school at Morrison Christian Academy in Taichung, where he lives in the dormitory. Now our house is lonelier, just the two of us and the noisy cat.

September brought the beginning of term at both the university where Char teaches and at the theological college where both of us work. Dave is shepherding the six international students who have arrived (and two more who have yet to get to Taiwan) and is teaching a course in Theological English to several Taiwanese undergraduate and graduate students. He has also been put on the list to mentor senior students fulfilling their "preach to the college" requirements for graduation, a responsibility that he is thrilled to have been given.

Early in October, Dave accompanied a group of students to visit typhoon refugees, housed at an old soldiers' home. They found aborigines from many separate villages, grateful to be alive, but sorely out of place far from their mountain homes, and with little indication of when they would be allowed to return. In the months following the typhoon, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and its congregations continue to minister in God's name to those affected by the disaster.

Life is always interesting. If you'd like to be kept up to date more often than these letters, we invite you to check the Reformed Church web site and go to our weekly updates. It's at [www.rca.org/alexanderwebpage](http://www.rca.org/alexanderwebpage). We've posted nearly 400 stories there since July of 2008, and continue to add to them as time goes by.

We remain grateful to God and all of you for the opportunity given to us to live and serve here. Please continue to pray for Taiwan, its people, the mission of the church and our role within it.

Peace,  
Dave and Char

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