

TRINITY CHIMES

NEWSLETTER OF THE TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2008

A REPORT ON THE YEAR 2007

The following report will be given by Pastor Albert at the annual Congregational Meeting to be held on Sunday, February 3.

As I report on another year in the life of our church, I do so with gratitude for God's blessings on our church and her people. In the words of the Apostle Paul I can say, "I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus." (1 Corinthians 1:4 NIV). There was undoubtedly plenty to be thankful for and excited about in the year 2007. I, however, also give this report with some concerns that will need to be addressed as we move forward and embrace the promise that a new year holds. But let me first with joy mention some of those things we can be thankful for.

Everything starts with prayer and I am therefore very appreciative of those who gather each Sunday morning under the leadership of Elders Brady and Schiefer to pray. During our weekly prayer meeting there is an opportunity to adore God, confess sins, thank him for his blessings, and lift up our needs in supplication. This weekly opportunity for corporate prayer, in addition to our individual prayers, is vital for the life of our church. My prayer is that this meeting will continue to grow in attendance.

God's blessing was also very evident again during our Vacation Bible Camp. I say this every year, but I am so thankful for the energy that this project brings to our church and those who participate. Under the leadership of Annelise Potgieter, Avalanche Ranch was an enormous success and 75 children from the community were able to learn about God in a fresh and fun way. Our closing worship celebration was attended by 180 adults and children, which makes it the highest attended service of the year. I am confident that God the Holy Spirit will grow the seeds planted by our efforts in the young hearts and minds of these children. Thank you to all who worked so hard and with such enthusiasm to make Avalanche Ranch another unforgettable experience.

In addition to the weeklong Vacation Bible Camp we also held a series of monthly Wowship services for families with young children. For reasons that we don't quite understand it

was a struggle to get Wowship off the ground this past year. It was therefore decided that we will hit the pause button and ground Wowship for now. And even though there is some uncertainty about the future of Wowship, I remain thankful for those who poured their time and effort into this outreach.

Towards the end of last year we did another Spiritual Growth Campaign, and this time it was to launch the Small Group Curriculum that we will focus on for the next few years, called "Disciples." What has happened in the past is that we would start Small Groups for the duration of our Spiritual Growth Campaign, but then the groups would stop meeting after the campaign was over. This time there is some continuity and approximately 25 people are continuing to meet on a weekly basis with the goal of finishing the complete first year's curriculum. I am thankful for those who are meeting and making an effort to share their lives and grow deeper in their faith and relationships with each other in Christ's name.

I am further grateful for our Junior Church and the consistent teaching and support they offered to the children in our congregation. Under the leadership of Linda Schiefer and the participation and involvement of many others, we have been able to provide for the spiritual formation of our children. This is of the utmost importance. There are also plans for the development of a nursery, which would enable us to accommodate families with babies more comfortably.

It was unfortunate that the Helping Hands Ministry disbanded last year and we want to thank all the ladies who made this a wonderful mission to the needy for so many years. Their monthly meetings at church are missed and I know their contributions to different organizations in the community and the rest of our country as well. Through the initiative of Marilyn Amoroso a new ministry was started to help the children of Appalachia, and the Their Daily Bread ministry continues to support the local food pantries with non-perishable food items. In addition the Couples and Friends Club and Ladies Aid / Frauenverein continue to pro-

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

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vide opportunities to socialize with other members of our church. I appreciate the services these different ministries and organizations are offering in God's name.

I am further thankful that we were able to use our Good Friday service again as an outreach opportunity last year. In conjunction with the Grace Notes Choir we were able to present the gospel in a powerful and moving way to those who attended. Our Candlelight Service for the community also took place, in spite of inclement weather. My thanks goes to the members of the Grace Notes Choir and the Celebration Singers of the Colonial Church of Bayside for being willing to collaborate with us during these two special services.

Thank you also to all who joined me in chronologically reading through the Bible in a year. I want to encourage you to continue to do so each year. The weekly readings are posted on our church's website.

With all that we have to be thankful for, there are also challenges we will have to meet with new energy. Let me therefore now mention some concerns that I believe will need attention in the coming year and beyond. For the first time in many years we did not welcome and install any new members to Trinity. We have gained some new adherents, but it seems as if fewer visitors came through our doors last year. This, coupled with the fact that our average weekly attendance dropped, call for renewed efforts to reach out to our community and find new ways to be an inviting church. Fresh initiatives are called for to ensure that we remain a viable and growing church.

Also, again we were unable to balance the budget last year and we had to dip into our reserve funds in order to keep the finances of the church adrift. This remains a concern for Trinity. The fact that we had to do major repairs to the parsonage and church did not help. Thank you to all who so generously contributed to the special fund drive we did to help with the costs of repairs. Even though there will always be maintenance needed to our building, the danger exists to become so focused and consumed by the church building, that we forget our biblical mission and purpose as a church.

It is with this in mind that Trinity's leadership, with the help of Rev. Jon Norton of the New York Synod, decided to engage in the Natural Church Development process. Our dream for Trinity is to be a balanced, vibrant and energetic church in our community, where people can come meet Jesus Christ and be transformed by his Good News. This can better occur when we are alive and well as a church and we consequently need all our members to participate and pray in order to make this happen.

Let us not shrink from the challenges that lie ahead of us. Let us be encouraged by the things we have to be thankful for and the many blessings we have experienced at Trinity over the last year. Let us remember that with God's help and power, nothing is impossible. As a matter of fact, all things *are* possible with Christ that strengthens us.

I close with Paul's words in Ephesians, "*I remember you in my prayers and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and re-*

veal God to you, so that you will know him. I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, and how very great is his power at work in us who believe." (Ephesians 1:17-19 GN).

Thank you for your prayers and support over the previous year. Thank you also for your faithfulness, service, contributions and thank you for your love.

Rev. Dr. Albert Potgieter

Nachfolge

Geh in die graue Straße ohne Bäume am Rande des Lichtes, am Rande des Lebens. Geh in die Straße, die du nur den Namen nach kennst, weil dort die Ausgesonderten wohnen: zwei Zimmer mit Küche für sechs Kinder und Eltern. Blicke den Kindern ins Gesicht, die noch versuchen Kinder zu sein, obwohl sie das Verhängnis schon spüren. Blicke in die Gesichter der Frauen und Männer. Laß dich von Bitternis, Feindschaft oder Stumpfsinn erschrecken, damit du erwachst. Kehre nicht um, als hättest du alles gesehen und Hoffnung wäre vergeblich. Auch hier schläft im Herzen die Sehnsucht. Du kennst Einen, der die Verlorenen sucht am Rande des Lichtes, am Rande des Lebens. Folge ihm nach!

Christa Peikert-Flaspöhler, in: Beten durch die Schallmauer, Düsseldorf 1994, 58.

A Journey of Stones



During this year's Lent, we want to invite you on a journey – a journey of stones. A series of sermons based on the booklet with the same title by Steven Molin, will take us on a journey of prayerful and honest repentance that can become a powerful and life-changing experience. It will also be a journey of celebration, grace, and awe at the miracle of the empty tomb and the promise of life. We invite you to come reflect on and acknowledge your need for God's mercies, to come place stones at the foot of the cross, to come lay at the feet of our Savior all of those things which separate us from him. Along the way, we will confess our faith, we will weep with sorrow, we will tell the truth about ourselves, and we will eat and drink bread and wine. Come join us on a journey of stones, starting on Ash Wednesday, February 6 at 7:30 pm.

Weekly Prayer Meeting

You are invited to join us every week for prayer. An hour before the English service a group of about 10 of us meet to pray for the church and each other. Elder Brigitte Brady and I take turns giving the prayer time a structure, providing a devotional and Bible verses to focus our attention on adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication (what is otherwise known as the ACTS acronym). Sometimes we pray aloud and sometimes we pray silently, and nobody is ever put on the spot to pray aloud if they don't want to. In the process we get to know both God and each other better. What we have is a small group on the sly—and we heartily invite you to join us—Elder Lenny Schiefer.

Junior Church Report

Since December of 2006 we have been conducting Junior Church / Sunday School during the English Service. Brigitte Brady has been doing a great job giving a children's sermon each week in the service. The children go downstairs just before Pastor's sermon. We have a core of seven children representing four families and spanning the grades pre-K to 6th grade. There is a rotation of seven teachers: Linda Schiefer, Lenny Schiefer, Brigitte Brady, Annelise Potgieter, Diana Albanese, Ellen Browrosen and Annie Pellingra. Valerie Popp has assisted us when needed. Through the year we have had about five other children attend occasionally. We have just completed 52 lessons going through the Old and New Testaments, getting "God's Big Picture" "We are starting a new curriculum called "I Explore."

Linda Schiefer

Natural Church Development

The meeting during which the result of our Natural Church Development survey was to be discussed, had to be postponed to a date that is yet to be determined. The survey was taken last year with the purpose of helping us determine where to focus our attention and energy first as we work to become a more healthy and balanced church.

Our Deepest Condolences



We are sad to announce the death of Mrs. Ann Treubert. Ann was a longtime and faithful member of Trinity who led the Frauenverein and was actively involved in many different aspects of our church. A number of years ago she moved out to

Long Island with her husband Frank, who passed away about five months ago. The service was held on Sunday, January 27 at the Werst Funeral Home, and she was cremated the following day. Our deepest condolences go to her children Nancy and Steven with their families, as well as her sister Marieanna.

Congratulations!



We want to congratulate Jenny and Justin on the birth of their son, Joseph Justin. Joseph was born on Thursday, January 24, 2008 at 3:27 PM. He weighed 7 lbs. 6 oz., and was a whole 19 and a half inches tall. We pray for God's blessing on Joseph and his parents. Congratulations also to the grandparents and great-grandparents.

Lenten Bible Study

Ash Wednesday arrives early this year and we invite you to join us for our communion service on Wednesday, February 6 at 7:30 pm. This will be the start of the Lenten season and as we

have done in the past, we will continue with our midweek Lenten Fellowship and Bible Studies on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall. These gatherings are informal and we invite you to come as you are. We sing together, have coffee and cake and this year we will be doing a study called, "Why did Christ have to die?" In our study we will look at the controversies of the cross, the impact of the cross and the elements of the cross. So please join us for the first of five meetings on Wednesday, February 13 at 7:30 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

Annual Congregational Meeting

Our annual Congregational Meeting will take place on February 3, immediately following a Combined Worship Celebration at 10:00 a.m. Please plan to attend. This is an opportunity for you to hear the reports from our different organizations and to ask questions to our leaders. We expect of our members to attend this meeting. Coffee and cake will be served during the meeting.

Special Envelope Included

With the record high energy prices, our energy bill goes up considerably during the winter months. We have included an envelope for any donations you wish to make to help us cover the additional costs. Please know that we are very thankful for and appreciative of your donations.

To Make You Smile or Think?

As a soldier approaches a checkpoint in the dark the voice of the sentry suddenly barks, "Halt! Who's there?" "I'm an American," came the reply. "Is that so? Okay, advance and recite the second verse of the 'Star Spangled Banner.'" "It's, uuuuh, something-something, the morning's first gleam, tell you the truth I don't really know it," came the confession finally. "Proceed," said the sentry.

A truly wise man never plays leapfrog with a unicorn.

Paranoids are people, too; they have their own problems. It's easy to criticize, but if everybody hated you, you'd be paranoid, too.

A diplomat is someone who can say nice doggie until he can find a rock.

Worship Schedule for February

February 3 & 17—Combined Service at 10:00 am

February 10 & 24:

German Worship Celebration at 9:30 am

English Worship Celebration at 10:45 am

February 6—Ash Wednesday Service at 7:30 pm

December 25—Christmas Celebration at 10:00 am

* Communion will be celebrated on February 3