



Connections February 2009

Have you heard about THE FRESH WIND LETTER?

THE FRESH WIND LETTER was produced by RCA elders, deacons, and pastors from across the denomination who gathered in response to a recommendation in the president's report given at the 2007 General Synod. This group gathered at Peace Reformed Church in Eagan, Minnesota in May 2008 to discuss leadership in the church and how leaders help revitalize congregations and assemblies. At this gathering the participants were moved by the Holy Spirit to send a letter back to the church. The letter was presented to the 2008 General Synod with the recommendation that this letter be sent to every consistory and that people be open to what the Spirit says to them through the letter.

The consistory of Trinity Reformed Church reviewed the letter and recommended that THE FRESH WIND LETTER be shared with the entire congregation. Below is the abridged version of THE FRESH WIND LETTER. For the complete letter, go to www.rca.org and choose "Consistory Corner: from the Leadership drop-down menu and click on "Read the Fresh Wind Letter."

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Christ.

We, your sisters and brothers, felt the fresh wind of the Spirit blowing out the idols and rituals we have erected and maintained in the selection of ordained leadership--the idols of aspiring to position rather than function; of popularity and influence rather than Christ-like character and calling; of availability rather than a growing relationship with Christ.

We felt the Spirit blowing in new ways for congregations to call followers of Jesus Christ into leadership within the body of Christ. We felt the fresh wind of the Spirit blowing in:

- ◆ *true parity of office, equality in function, with servant hearts and a willingness to be actively engaged **in** relationships of mutual accountability and mentoring.*
- ◆ *a commitment to continuously clarify and obey our call from God.*

Continued...

We were convicted of our need for repentance as we fall short of what Christ wants us and our churches to be. We experienced the grace of God and the fresh wind of the Spirit that carries us on, and we were flooded with renewed gratitude for the abundant gifts and life-giving work God entrusts to us.

We felt the fresh wind of the Holy Spirit calling and challenging leaders in the RCA:

- ◆ *to a deeper, more intimate relationship with Jesus Christ as evidenced by the fruit of his Spirit in their lives, their congregations, and their assemblies.*
- ◆ *to be Spirit-filled leaders-God-pleasers who exalt Christ and give God alone glory and honor.*
- ◆ *to follow Christ's example in serving others. The Spirit reminded us that Christ's presence will be manifested as we lead his people in prayer and worship, as we share our faith, as we renew our commitment to equip the saints for the work of ministry, and as we recommit to faithful spiritual disciplines in our own lives. In the power of the Holy Spirit, we urge all RCA leaders to walk this path we gladly follow. The price of avoidance and delay is too high.*
- ◆ *to remove the blinders and boundaries that separate us from our sisters and brothers who may live next door, miles away, or even oceans apart from us. The Holy Spirit told us that as disciples of Jesus Christ, we must confront institutional, economic, and environmental injustices and seek unity, healing, reconciliation, and peace.*

In response to the breathing of this fresh wind of the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves, and call the church, to action. We covenant with God and one another to the following leadership practices.

1. *We look at the world with Christ's eyes and let his spirit within us lead our feet to join him mission.*

Where we have grown lukewarm, we repent from our self-centeredness and lack of passion.

The Spirit calls us:

- ⇒ *to move from our comfortable pews to not only see and hear the needs of our world but to be active participants.*
- ⇒ *to be vibrant leaders who mobilize members to use their educational, financial, and human resources to join Jesus in mission locally and globally; to show compassion for others; and to advocate for the "least of these."*
- ⇒ *to build intentional, sustainable relationships with other churches, educational institutions, and community-based organizations in order to understand and meet the needs and challenges of our communities to be missionaries in our own back yards.*

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2. We lead our congregations and the denomination to become receiving and diverse.

We hear an unmistakable call from the Holy Spirit to live into the powerful vision of Revelation 7:9-10, in which God gathers all nations around the throne in worship.

The Spirit calls us:

- ⇒ to help transform congregations already in diverse neighborhoods..*
- ⇒ to actively seek partnerships with churches and organizations that reflect the diversity of North American society.*
- ⇒ to help all people learn, individually and collectively about other cultures and the history of race relations.*
- ⇒ to reconcile and heal differences between and among those we encounter. Christ compels us to look afresh at the growing economic and educational gaps between and among our community members and to seek to end the disparity, to participate in RCA and other global mission projects that nurture and sustain long-running partnerships in all parts of the world, and to aid efforts to mobilize and organize resources for advocacy in social justice.*

3. We equip and empower all disciples to serve in areas where God has best gifted them.

We hear the Holy Spirit affirming the challenge found in 1 Peter 4:10: "Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received ... "
We yearn and work for the day when all in Christ's church discover, recognize, develop, and use their gifts to advance God's kingdom in our churches, communities, and world.

Christ calls us:

- ⇒ to serve in those areas where the Holy Spirit has gifted us.*
- ⇒ to serve everyone in our communities, crossing cultural and racial ethnic boundaries.*
- ⇒ to empower, support, and encourage all people in the discovery and use of their gifts.*

We nurture vibrant leaders who put God's interests before any and all personal interests.

We hear the words of John 17 - that Jesus wants his disciples to be unified in order to be a powerful witness to God's love.

As Spirit-led leaders we:

- ⇒ build a well-articulated vision, shared by leadership and the congregation, to live in union with God and one another.*

Continued.....

- ⇒ *claim Christ's call for pastors, elders, deacons, and non-ordained leaders to serve as equal partners in ministry, with separate roles, while pursuing a common mission for the church.*
- ⇒ *Identify and resolve issues before they become conflicts, so that the world sees our unity in following Christ.*

In obedience to the fresh wind of the Spirit, we call the church to action, believing that God is calling all of us into a personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ as evidenced by the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives and our faithfulness as Christ's disciples. God's call to leadership requires more of us-continuing training, accountability, spiritual growth, and a commitment to grow a community of servant leaders in our congregations and assemblies.

We are convinced that the Holy Spirit is calling us to live obediently, serve gladly and risk freely, right now. We cannot wait-obedience demands our response.

Let those who have ears to hear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the leaders of the Reformed Church in America.

Questions for Reflection:

- 1. What does it mean for each of us to look at the world with Christ's eyes?*
- 2. How do I see the Holy Spirit leading me to join Him in mission?*
- 3. What does this letter reveal about the fresh wind that is blowing within the RCA?*
- 4. How does this letter correlate and/or differ with the Belhar Confession?*

Remember when . . . this is an express that is often used as we reminisce upon some event or situation from the past. Often during a time of transition or endings, we take the time to intentionally reflect upon the past. As such, I would like to share with you some of the events that have happened this past year that I think are significant to reflect upon, to learn from, and to give thanks to God.

As I reflected on 2008, I thought of these significant collective events that happened in the Trinity Family:

- Canceled church two (2) times because of the weather – February 10 and December 21
- I began serving as your SIM on January 29
- A financial gift was given from the Endowment Fund to Trinity's granddaughter – Life Quest Church
- Cluster Group Gatherings to dialogue and discern God's Calling for Trinity Church
- In April, said "good-by" to Sherry Fik, the Parish Nurse, as she was called to another fulltime ministry; Arlyne Vander Woude was called up out of "retirement" to help with the Pastoral Calling
- Trinity Family Gatherings to "test" the missional calling that was emerging from the Cluster Group Gatherings
- Said "good-by" to Rachel Brownson as she ended her seminary internship time
- The custodial contract with Bob Groteler was not renewed; custodial services were contracted with EnviroClean – Admira Kirtuc began cleaning
- Trinity family Mission Trip to Jackson County Ministries, Annville, KY
- All church Pig Roast at the home of Bill and Barb Stehouwer
- Lynn Post was led to "re-retire" from Pastoral Calling; we celebrated his ministry at Trinity
- Trinity Preschool Board decided to discontinue the preschool
- Trinity's Call – 122 people signed commitment cards in affirmation and support of this Calling
- Trinity Church unanimously affirmed a pastoral call to the Reverends Michael and Elizabeth Harde- man; they declined this call
- Said "good-by" to Kevin Vollema as Trinity's Youth Director

Modifications and improvements were made to the organ, projection system, and lighting in the sanctuary

Some of these events were joyful; some of these events were sad. They were truly a reflection of life as life is made of beginnings and endings. People come and people go. Change is constant and is anticipated by God.

- Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."
- The Bible says, that we "are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit."

The Bible instructs us to "be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Yet, in the midst of transitions we are assured that our Heavenly Father "does not change like shifting shadows." What a sense of confidence we as Christians can have in the midst of changes and transitions.

Continued.....

I was also led to think about people transitions that happened at Trinity during 2008.

- 7 members of our church family made the transition from this life to the next
- 10 families (24 members) transferred their membership to another church
- 2 families (3 members) became part of the Trinity family
- we had -0- baptisms and confessions of faith – we were scheduled to have 1 baptism in December but the weather caused it to be delayed until January 2009

As of December 31, 2008, the Trinity family consisted of:

- 197 Households
- 342 Active Confessing members
- 50 Baptized members

Now is also a time to reflect upon what happened financially at Trinity Church. This is a summary of the financial matters of 2008:

- Beginning Balance – 1-1-08 - \$11,982.54
- Total Giving to the General Fund - \$400,577.46
- Total General Fund Expenses - \$429,656.32
- Estate and Missionary Memorial Gifts - \$17,926.97
- Ending Balance – 12-31-08 - \$830.65

As you can see, it was the special estate and memorial gifts that helped us finish with a positive cash balance. However, even with these gifts, deficit spending did occur in 2008. In light of the current economic situation, the consistory has not given any staff pay increases for 2009. Each of the ministry areas was also asked to continue to be fiscally conservative during 2009 and consider ways to reduce expenses so that they can be in alignment with the giving of the church.

One of the challenges that always affects the financial planning of a church is extra year end giving. Many special gifts are given toward the end of the year and the consistory is never sure what that giving will be. As an example, almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of Trinity's giving occurred in November and December. As such, the consistory always lives by faith that there will be those special year end gifts.

Again, thanks for your faithful giving to and support of the ministry of Trinity Church during 2008! May you continue to experience the grace of God in your life as you graciously and cheerfully give from your financial resources to Trinity's ministry. And remember, God loves a cheerful giver!!

By the way, one of the options you have for giving is "direct withdrawal" from your checking or saving account. You can have a predetermined amount given either monthly or bi-monthly; either on the 1st and/or the 15th. If you would like further information on this regular and systematic way of giving, contact Gretchen Fisher. Many people find this a helpful to not only pay monthly utility bills but also helpful in giving on a monthly basis.

Well, these are some of the thoughts that came to me, I am sure that you have also thought of events that occurred, people who impacted your life, and transitions that occurred in your personal life. Take time to "remember" those events and people and thank God that in the midst of the transitions, He was there with us both individually and collectively.

Hope and confidence to you . . . John DeKam



PULLMAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Dr. Patrick S. Creagan
Principal

*5580 South Avenue PO Box 458 Pullman, MI 49450
269-236-5235 Fax (269) 236-5307*

January 9, 2008

Dear Church Members,

On behalf of the staff and students of Pullman Elementary, please accept our deepest gratitude for all of the hours you have devoted to our students. Without you we wouldn't have a whole church of new friends.

Please accept these letters from the children that you all helped over the Christmas Holidays. Your love and kindness is most appreciated from the smallest to the oldest.

I of course, being a child at heart, who happens to love the Christmas Holidays, had the most fun sorting, delivering and sharing with all the kids.

Sincerely,

Sandy Anderson Office Clerk

This letter arrived at the church near the end of January along with dozens of letters and notes sent by the Pullman students who received the Christmas shoeboxes. Several letters are on display on the church kiosk in the gathering area and others are in a box on the brick half wall near the kiosk. Look through the letters for one from the recipient of your shoebox. Some of the younger classes sent a group letter. It was very thoughtful of the teachers to take the time to help the students write these letters.

The Search Team has received a number of profiles from candidates interested in entering into a conversation with Trinity about our open pastor position. We had gathered together to discuss the profiles and are in the process of first interviews with these candidates. Following these interviews, we will narrow down the list and have a face-to-face interview with the candidates we feel would be a good fit for Trinity and for the missional direction we are headed towards.

This is not a quick process, and we covet your daily prayers during the next few weeks as we listen for God's prompting to find the pastor we believe will bring us and nurture us through this time of transition. Please keep our families in your prayers also as this process of interviewing frequently takes us away from home.

We serve an amazing God and we truly believe that He has incredible things planned for Trinity. Don't wait until our new pastor arrives to get involved. There are many areas that need support and leadership. Get involved today!

LADIES NIGHT OUT

Thursday, February 19, 2009

5:30 p.m. Dinner with a Mexican theme (but not too spicy)

6:15 p.m. Service Activities of Knitting, Crocheting,
Card Making, Sewing, Quilting, Baking

7:45 p.m. Dessert

Sign up at the information counter near the church office

All women are welcome!

GUATEMALA MISSION TRIP

The team of youth and adults bound for Guatemala in June is realizing this mission trip is right around the corner and the excitement is building. Team members are Samantha Dannenberg, Bryan Gezon, Jessica Myaard, Ali Neevel, Gabby Helmus, Ross Helmus, Cassie Kooyers, Jessie Kooyers, Courtney Kooyers, Warren Kooyers, Lori Kooyers, Matt Mast, Arie Mast, Betty Mast, Bill Van Auken, Jan Van Auken and Gretchen Fisher

Guatemala is located in Central America and the Trinity team will be working with Paradise Bound Ministries which has had incredible opportunities to reach the poor and oppressed there for the past 11 years. Paradise Bound has established a ministry building and giving homes to those living in cornstalk shelters and conducting Mobile Medical Clinic/Outreaches in remote villages. Almost 500 homes have been built, donated and dedicated to date and nearly 70,000 patients have come through their clinics. But the most exciting part is that thousands have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior through Paradise Bound and the teams from the U.S. that work alongside them.

There are a few ways that the Trinity congregation can help. First and foremost you can pray. Prayer is need that all the details will come together, passports will be obtained, and the team will have safe travel. Pray that each participant's heart will be prepared for this incredible time of service and ministry. Pray for the people in Guatemala that the Trinity team can bless them in ways they never imagined. In the middle of February prayer cards will be available to partner with the participants.

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Another way the Trinity congregation can help is financially. The mission budget has committed to cover the funds needed to build the homes (\$900 for each group of five) and conduct the medical clinics (\$2,000). The cost of the trip for each team member is \$1,250. The goal is to generate through fundraisers about one-third of the cost, with the participants contributing two-thirds. Even if you cannot travel to Guatemala, you can partner with the team and make a significant impact on this experience.

As you may know, about every four weeks there is a bake sale after the morning worship with the funds going toward the Guatemala trip. Beginning Feb. 1, envelopes with various dollar amounts written on the front will be hung from a clothesline in the gathering area. Select an envelope with the amount you would like to contribute, place a check in the envelope, and return it to the church by Feb. 15. Contributions are tax deductible, so if you donate cash, please also put your name on the envelope if you want it recorded on your contribution statement. If you are unable to pick up an envelope at church, any contribution can be sent to the church designating "Guatemala Mission Trip". Also, save the date of Sunday, March 22, for an all-church brunch and program highlighting the work of Paradise Bound.

Think about how much you can contribute, select an envelope with that dollar amount, put a check for that amount in the envelope and return it to the church.

From The Consistory...January 2009

The new year for your Consistory began with welcoming everyone introducing themselves. New members were welcomed.

A major restructuring of committees - now to be known as Ministry Teams. Here are the proposed teams for this year:

1. Spiritual Growth that is responsible for faith nurturing programs on all levels.
Consistory Liaisons Paul Bruursema and Jeff Myaard.
2. People Care that is responsible for welcoming guests, membership and special needs of people in the church. Consistory Liaisons Barb Stehouwer and JoAnn Dykstra.
3. Worship that provides relevant worship services for those not yet members and Meaningful services for members. Consistory Liaison Bill Van Auken
4. Finance that is responsible for all financial matters and spiritual growth in teaching and assisting people to be good stewards of their resources.
Consistory Liaison Paul VanderStarre.
5. Buildings & Grounds that is responsible for care of all of our facilities and grounds. Consistory Liaisons Jim Allen, Steve Lundy, and Del Kuipers.
6. Member Deployment in Mission that is responsible for discovery and use of our members' spiritual gifts in the best places both within and outside of our church. Consistory Liaisons Bob Reed and Lara Helmus.
7. Executive Team that provides executive leadership to the church, support to and resources for the staff of our church. The team includes President John DeKam; Vice President Ken Neevel; Clerk of Consistory Gayle Scott; Chair of Deacons Rick Fisher; and 2 members of the Great Consistory.

WE ARE ASKING YOUR HELP. Please let us know what Ministry Team peaks your interest. We need the help of our congregation to make these teams work. We need your help to establish and meet the goals our church has created. Please feel free to make your interests known to a consistory liaison who will be happy to discuss specifics of a team with you.

Gayle Scott,
Clerk of Consistory

LOVE IS

All except one of the Words of Love hidden in this puzzle can be found in 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8. Words can be found in any direction.

Can you find them all?



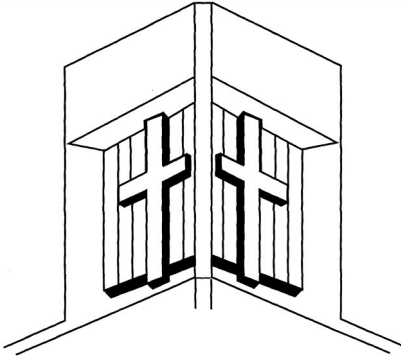
PATIENT
KIND
TRUSTS
PROTECTS
NOT RUDE
NOT PROUD

NEVER FAILS
AGAPE
PERSEVERES
HOPES
TRUTH
DOES NOT ENVY

Which word is the special word? What does it mean?

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Dan Baker	2/1	Mary Fris	2/10
Paul Essenburg	2/2	Emily Camp	2/15
Deb Kammeraad	2/4	Merle Boes	2/16
Bryan Stehouwer	2/4	Janet Oosterbaan	2/17
Ron Kalmink	2/5	Paula Wassink	2/17
Marilyn Kuipers	2/5	Rodger Dalman	2/19
Tom VanderKuy	2/7	Lauren Bedard	2/21
Les VanRy	2/7	Pat Kleis	2/21
Brianna DeKorte	2/8	Lucile Kooyers	2/21
Doug Dykstra	2/8	Rob Harrington	2/22
Carleigh Libby	2/8	Harriet Kok	2/22
Steve Kleis	2/9	Amanda Baker	2/23
Betty Vredeveld	2/9	Karen Bos	2/27
		Paul VanderStarre	2/29



Trinity Reformed Church

712 Apple Avenue

Holland, MI 49423

Phone: (616) 396-6526

Fax: (616) 396-8513

Website: www.trinityrc.org

E-mail: info@trinityrc.org

Our Call

God is calling Trinity Church to be transformed into an outward missional focused church that advances the Good News of God's Kingdom into the lives of people in our community and beyond.

My Call

God is calling me as part of the Trinity Family to intentionally:

- ◆ Love God with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength.
- ◆ Extend His love to those at Trinity Church and those in my relational network not yet in a Family of God.
- ◆ Use my life experiences, abilities, gifts, and passion to engage with people who are not in the Family of God.

Your Consistory

Elders

Jim Allen
Paul Bruursema
JoAnne Dykstra
Jeff Myaard
Ken Neevel
Barb Stehouwer
Bill VanAuken

Deacons

Rick Fisher
Lara Helmus
Del Kuipers
Steve Lundy
Bob Reed
Gayle Scott
Paul VanderStarre

Please feel free to contact any consistory member with questions, comments or concerns