



First Reformed Church of Nyack

Nyack's Hometown Church
Celebrating 175 years of
service

January 2014

Pastoral Reflections

What is Reformed? What does it mean to be Reformed? What is the Reformed Church?

I've been asked several times to address these questions. Needless to say, it is impossible to fully answer them in a brief newsletter article. Also, as it relates to this particular essay, I wish to focus on how the Reformed Tradition distinctly supports us spiritually, pastorally and as a community of faith.

1) The Reformed Church honors church tradition.

Historically, the Reformed Church is a branch or stream of the Christian faith whose heritage goes back to the Early Church, through the Middle Ages, the Reformation, and into the modern era. So, the first thing to know is that the Reformed Church has deep roots going back all the way to the time of Christ and the Apostles. This is one reason *Tradition* is so important for the Reformed Church.

The Reformed Churches more formally evolved in the sixteenth century when certain church leaders "publically declared," (*protestari* in Latin) that some aspects of the Catholic Church should be reformed, hence the *Protestant Reformation*.

There were many great thinkers, pastors, and theologians during the Protestant Reformation. For our purposes, John Calvin is the most significant. His unique perspectives laid the groundwork and greatly informed the Reformed/ Presbyterian churches. Initially, some preferred to call the Reformed Tradition *Calvinism*, as a way to distinguish itself from *Lutheranism*, the other major branch of the Reformation made famous by Martin Luther.

2) The Reformed Church is a member of the Reformed Church in America.

There are several Reformed Church denominations. We are a member of the Reformed Church in America. While the Presbyterian Church has roots in Scotland, the United Church of Christ has roots in Germany, Switzerland and Hungary, the Reformed Church in America has its roots in the Netherlands. So it is not uncommon to hear references to the Dutch Reformed Church. In fact, The First Reformed Church of Nyack was originally called The First Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Nyack!

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Pastoral Reflections continued

In the small colonial town of New Amsterdam (now Manhattan, New York City), on a Sunday in 1628, about fifty people gathered for worship in a loft over a gristmill on what is now South William Street. Their celebration of the Lord's Supper marks the birthdate of the Reformed Church in America. The congregation they founded still continues today as the Collegiate Churches of New York, the oldest Protestant church in North America with a continuous ministry.

3) The Reformed Church emphasizes God's Grace, God's Love, and a high view of Scripture.

As mentioned above, theologically, it's impossible to reduce the totality of any tradition to one or two sound bites. Yet, at the risk of oversimplification, every branch of the Christian faith tends to emphasize a particular theological perspective. The Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Episcopal Churches emphasize the Eucharist, Pentecostals emphasize the Holy Spirit, Evangelicals emphasize evangelism, Baptists emphasize the Bible, Quakers emphasize the priesthood of all believers, etc. That said, I think God's generous Grace, God's overwhelming love, and a high view of Scripture is a good place to start toward understanding Reformed theology. And if you hear me preach enough, these are themes to which I tend to return. God loves us. God blesses us with His Grace. Grace is a gift from God. The Holy Bible is God's Word.

4) The Reformed Church celebrates liturgical worship.

On the one hand, our Sunday worship style is not as "high" or "formal" as the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Episcopal Churches. On the other hand, it is not as "low" or "informal" as the more *free-church* worship traditions. The Reformed Church has embraced a middle position. We balance form and freedom. The Reformed Church has maintained forms, especially in the matter of the sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. But it has also entrusted local consistories to develop services that are responsive

to the needs of the congregation. Our common sacramental forms have nurtured a sense of a common identity and affection while congregational freedom has encouraged our growing diversity. For the Reformed Church, Word and Sacrament serve as the heart of our worship.

5) The Reformed Church is Elder-led.

Some denominations/traditions follow an *episcopal* (bishop-led) authority, such as the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox Church, Episcopal, and Lutheran Churches. Others follow a *congregational* authority, such as Baptists, Congregationalists/UCC, and non-denominational churches. The Reformed Church is balanced between the two, a more checks-and-balances organizational style. There are four parts to our polity (organizational structure):

The Consistory: Each congregation is governed by a body called a consistory. The consistory is made up of elders and deacons, elected by the congregation, and the congregation's installed minister(s). Elders maintain order, exercise Christian discipline, and assist in pastoral care. They are responsible for the spiritual life of the congregation. They receive individuals into the membership of a church and plan and participate in the observance of the sacraments. Deacons lead in ministries of mercy, justice, service, and outreach. They care for the needs of people within the congregation, in the surrounding community, and around the world.

Ministers serve as pastors and teachers of the congregation. They are called by God to preach the Word of God, administer the sacraments and care for the members of the congregation, building up and equipping the church for its ministry in the world.

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Pastoral Reflections continued

The Classis: A consistory is in turn governed by its Classis. A classis gathers minister and elder representatives from a group of congregations, usually according to their geographical proximity. *We are in the Rockland-Westchester Classis.* Each classis supervises the congregations and ministers within its bounds. It exercises judicial power over the decisions of individual consistories; receives new congregations into the denomination; ordains, installs, and dismisses ministers; and oversees students of theology.

The Regional Synod: The [regional synod](#) is the next assembly in the RCA. There are eight regional synods in the United States and Canada. *We are in the New York Regional Synod.* Each oversees the interests and concerns of the classes within its geographical area and creates programs to further the work of the gospel and the denomination in its region.

The General Synod: The [General Synod](#) is the highest assembly and governing body in the RCA. Its membership is made up of minister and elder representatives from each classis and regional synod. In its annual meeting, the General Synod sets the direction and tone for denominational ministry. It has authority in all matters relating to denominational program and policy. It also has general

responsibility over all lower assemblies (regional synods, classes, and consistories).

One last point. Throughout history, many have focused on the 5 points of Calvinism, or the acronym TULIP, which supposedly represents John Calvin's doctrine of salvation. Unfortunately, many have reduced the Reformed Tradition to this single aspect, an area often misunderstood. Some churches, pastors, and theologians have even made this the center of their theologies. (Coincidentally, see the latest *Beliefs* article in The New York Times entitled, "Evangelicals Find Themselves in the Midst of a Calvinist Revival"-

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/04/us/a-calvinist-revival-for-evangelicals.html?_r=0). Interestingly, the roots of these doctrines were actually birthed by the great 5th century Church Father, Augustine.) For our church, Christ is the center.

My hope is that the simple highlights above might serve to present a broader and more nuanced perspective of this rich tradition.

Well, there you go. A Reformed Church 101. I hope you find it informative and helpful.

Happy New Year!

Fred



Terri's Thoughts: The Twelve Days of Christmas

By Terri Wanamaker



Last year at this time I wrote about the many different Santa Claus traditions

around the world, my favorite being the Santa that was on the surfboard! I also think I wrote a blurb about the true meaning of The Twelve Days of Christmas. Since I can't remember much more about that newsletter article and I can't find my copy, I am going to write again about that song and its meaning. I know I enjoyed learning about it last year and would like to share it again.

The twelve days of Christmas actually begin on December 25 and go until January 5, as a prelude to Epiphany on January 6. Epiphany is when Western Christians commemorate the visit of the three wise men to the Christ child. It can also be known as "Three Kings Day," or "Little Christmas." In my world, it also means one more gift to give to my kids!

As I looked into the origin of how this might have come about, I also saw controversy about it. For now, I am choosing not to address the other articles that debate this. I love the Christmas season, all the way up to Epiphany and Three Kings Day, and I really

enjoyed the descriptions and meanings of the gifts described in the song. So let's celebrate "**The Twelve Days of Christmas**"!

The 1st day of Christmas: A Partridge in a Pear Tree—the partridge is Jesus Christ the Son of God, celebrating Jesus' birthday on December 25, the first day of Christmas...

The 2nd day of Christmas: Two Turtle Doves—the Old and New Testament...

The 3rd day of Christmas: Three French Hens—The Three Theological Virtues from I Corinthians 13:13: Faith, Hope and Love...

The 4th day of Christmas: Four Calling Birds—The Four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John...

The 5th day of Christmas: ... Five Gold Rings—The first Five Books of the Old Testament, also known as the Torah or the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy...

The 6th day of Christmas: Six Geese a-Laying—Six days of Creation!...

The 7th day of Christmas: Seven Swans a-Swimming—represents the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leading and compassion...

The 8th day of Christmas: Eight Maids a-Milking—The Eight Beatitudes from Matthew 5: 3-10:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake...

The 9th day of Christmas: Nine Ladies Dancing—the nine Fruit of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...

The 10th day of Christmas: Ten Lords a-Leaping—represents the Ten Commandments...

The 11th day of Christmas: Eleven Pipers Piping—The eleven faithful Apostles; it says the list does not include the Twelfth disciple, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus...

And finally, **the 12th day of Christmas:** Twelve Drummers Drumming—the twelve points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed...

The whole Christmas season comes and goes so quickly, that it is nice to keep the real meaning of the season in mind, from lighting the first Advent candle in early December, to the blessed celebration of Jesus' birth, and for twelve days leading up to the Epiphany. Enjoy it!



The 2013 Christmas Pageant—a Success!

Thank you to everyone who pulled together to make all the little pieces of this pageant puzzle fit together to make a beautiful production. It is always an honor to work with this amazing group of people.

Special thanks to....

Bonnie Williams—our Producer

O'le Jim—our Music Director

Nate Stollendorf, Destiny Bossa & Regine from the Haitian congregation—our singers

Jon Biavati and Jim Cameron—our lights and sound guys

Carol Russell, Terri Wanamaker, Cindy Graham, Diona Cameron, Shannon Dedyo, Adrianna, Jenna Wanamaker, Gail Miller—costumes, make-up and child supervision

Skip Russell, Chuck Travers, Kevin Graham and Paul Wanamaker—narration and stage crew

Jill Johnson, John Dedyo and Barbara Demarest—the greeters

Carolyn Travers —putting together the program

The Cota-Esteban family for being the "royal family"

The cast was great...from the little cherubs to the Angels - everyone did great!

I am looking forward to next year being our 90th Anniversary!

Margie Jennings

Christmas Pageant Director

A Few Notes from Our Music Director



While a new year brings anticipation of newness and revitalization, I can't help but reflect on the year that is passing, and in particular the Advent season. We had so much happening, - special music, musicians, the pageant, Christmas eve, etc., - I can't imagine being anywhere else and having the same experience that we did. The Advent program featuring the young people was not only beautifully done, but very well attended. It was punctuated by a wonderful message from Pastor Fred and was well received. (I'm not sure my opinion is unbiased, as Jean and I are directly, or indirectly related to all of the participants!) And what is it that makes the Pageant so special every year! For me, there are way to many things to mention, not the least of

which is seeing SO many friends that I don't get to see on a regular basis. And what a beautiful, satisfying, and uplifting Christmas Eve service! Kudos again to Fred, the readers, and the young people that wove the story, the music, and the message together in such an inspiring way.

I can't wait to get started in the new year. The amazing folks of the choir were often supplanted by other artists, and I look forward to their regular participation again. While there are so many ways to meet with folks of our church on a spiritual level, making music with my friends is the ultimate for me. Fred and I have discussed doing some special things involving music, so stay tuned!

Best from O' Jim



A Buildings & Grounds Committee Update

In the last few months the Pitkin room and the kitchen have been painted. The work was completed by a few members of our congregation as well as several of the members of the House of Prayer congregation. Their hard work and attention to detail is quite evident as you look closely at the job they did. The Pitkin room was completed in one day by about 10 people.

Also, in the back corner of the sanctuary, the plaster wall had to be torn out and replaced due to water damage over the years. Sheet rock was expertly cut and placed and the area was re-spackled and painted. This finished job matches the surrounding walls as if it were original to the building! The paint was meticulously matched by Joe, the owner of Herb Lack Hardware in Nyack (He spent almost 45 minutes of his time

to get it just right!). The spackle was textured by Oscar from HOP who did an amazing job. For those of you who have not seen this work, please take a minute to take a close look.

The hot water heater was replaced after it began leaking. The problem was observed by one of the Soup Angels, so we were able to keep the water damage in the basement to a minimum. We now have a larger (50 gal) heater to better serve the needs of all who use the kitchen.

There are many ongoing repairs that will be addressed going into the new year, and we will hopefully get to them all as time and finances permit.

—Paul Wanamaker

New Year's Resolutions

1. Exercise regularly
2. Eat healthier
3. Rest more often
4. Start a new hobby
5. Support the church & sign up for online payments!



Start the new year right! Support First Reformed Church through service, prayer, and/or giving. The church website is now set up for members and friends to make online donations through PayPal.

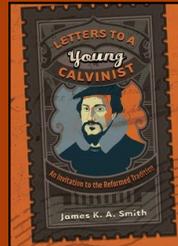
www.nyackreformed.org/giving



~BOOK OF THE MONTH~

Letters to A Young Calvinist: An Invitation to the Reformed Tradition

James K.A. Smith

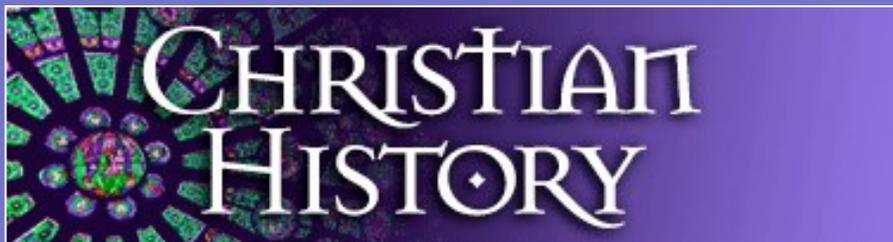


Are you interested in learning more about the Reformed Tradition? Written as a collection of letters sent from an elder to a young person, *Letters to a Young Calvinist* provides a helpful and contemporary perspective on the Reformed Tradition. It is written in a more pastoral format rather than a heavy theological treatise. Smith also provides wise pastoral caution about pride and maturity.

For more information:

http://www.amazon.com/Letters-Young-Calvinist-Invitation-Tradition/dp/1587432943/ref=sr_1_sc_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1388707508&sr=1-1-spell&keywords=letters+to+a+young+calvinist

~ WEBSITE OF THE MONTH ~



<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ch/>

ChristianHistory.net seeks to connect contemporary Christians to their spiritual heritage by communicating church history in an engaging, accurate, and visual way. Our readers, contributors, and consultants represent a variety of theological and denominational perspectives. Consequently, we seek to explore the Christian heritage in a nonsectarian and warm-hearted spirit.



~ MEN'S BREAKFAST ~

Saturday, January 11th ~ 9:00am

Hogan's Diner (41 Route 59, Nyack, NY 10960)



The men and their friends are invited to gather for food and fellowship.

For more information, contact Alan Cann

845.641.6788 abc351@verizon.net

~ ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ~

Sunday, January 19th ~ Following the 10:30am service



~ GUEST PREACHER ~

Sunday, January 19th ~ 10:30am ~ Coffee Hour to follow



Deacon Katherine Rife, co-director of *Soup Angels*

Sermon: "Transformative Love:

A Reflection on the Words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr."



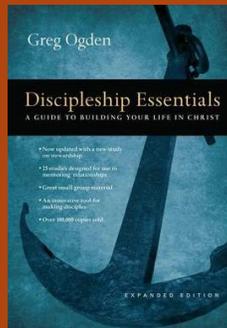
~ HEALING SERVICE ~

Sunday, January 19th ~ 10:30am



Every third Sunday of the month, we incorporate a healing service component into worship for those who desire prayer, laying of hands, and anointing with oil.

WINTER 2014 SMALL GROUPS



This group will meet for 8 sessions and is open to all.

It will cover Part Two of *Discipleship Essentials*.

The first session will begin with Chapter 7, "The Three-Person God."

~ SUNDAY MORNING OPEN GROUP ~

Begins Sunday, January 26th at 9am

Meets in church lounge

Alan Cann, Group Leader

845.641.6788 abc351@verizon.net

~ WEDNESDAY MORNING WOMEN'S GROUP ~

Begins Wednesday, January 29th at 10am

Meets at David's Bagels (2 Lake Road East,
Valley Cottage, NY)

Cindy Graham, Group Leader

845.729.7211 cmg313@verizon.net



FEBRUARY EVENTS!

~ WOMENS'S FELLOWSHIP ~

Saturday, February 1st ~ 9:00am

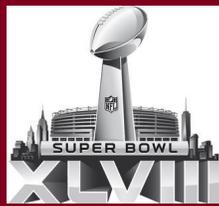
Johnny Cakes Diner (84 Main Street, Nyack, NY)



For more information, contact Margie Jennings
845 548 0593 mrsjennings22@gmail.com

~ SUPER BOWL PARTY AT THE MANSE! ~

Sunday, February 2nd ~ 6pm



Join Fred and Jill for the XLVIII Super Bowl Game
Please RSVP to Fred - nyackpastor@gmail.com

Save the Date!

Sunday, February 9th ~ 10:30am



~ ORDINATION SUNDAY ~



THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

Composed in Heidelberg, Germany this simple, yet rich confessional document is used to teach about the Christian faith. Deeply informed by the Holy Scriptures, it is regarded as one of the most influential catechisms to come out of the Reformation. www.heidelberg-catechism.com

26. Q. What do you believe when you say: I believe in God the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?

A.

That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who out of nothing created heaven and earth
and all that is in them, ¹
and who still upholds and governs them
by his eternal counsel and providence, ²
is, for the sake of Christ his Son,
my God and my Father. ³
In him I trust so completely
as to have no doubt
that he will provide me
with all things necessary for body and soul, ⁴
and will also turn to my good
whatever adversity he sends me
in this life of sorrow. ⁵
He is able to do so as almighty God, ⁶
and willing also as a faithful Father. ⁷

¹ Gen 1 and 2; Ex 20:11; Job 38 and 39; Ps 33:6; Is 44:24; Acts 4:24; 14:15.

² Ps 104:27-30; Mt 6:30; 10:29; Eph 1:11.

³ Jn 1:12, 13; Rom 8:15, 16; Gal 4:4-7; Eph 1:5.

⁴ Ps 55:22; Mt 6:25, 26; Lk 12:22-31.

⁵ Rom 8:28.

⁶ Gen 18:14; Rom 8:31-39.

⁷ Mt 6:32, 33; 7:9-11.



Nyack's Hometown Church

First Reformed Church of Nyack

Church Location

18 South Broadway,
Nyack, NY 10960



Mailing Address

Box 565, Nyack, NY 10960

845 358 5518

frchurch@optonline.net

www.nyackreformed.org

www.facebook.com/groups/frcnyac

Pastor/Preaching Elder

Dr. Fernando Arzola Jr.

fred@nyackreformed.org

Manse 845 480 5680

Office Manager/Newsletter Editor

Sarah Kotecha

Music Director

James Rensink

Children's Sunday School Coordinator

Bonnie Williams

CONSISTORY

Elders

Bruce Biavati

Alan Cann

Chuck Travers (Vice President)

Deacons

Kevin Graham

Katherine Rife (Clerk)

Skip Russell

Paul Wanamaker

*Affiliated with
The Reformed Church in America*



Calendar of Upcoming Events: Don't Miss Out!

Saturday, January 11, 9am: Men's breakfast at Hogan's Diner, 41 Route 59, Nyack, NY.

Sunday, January 19, 10:30am: Kathie Rife will join us as our Guest Preacher and speak on the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Sunday, January 19, 10:30am: We incorporate a healing service component into our worship for any who desire prayer, laying of hands, and anointing with oil.

Sunday, January 19, following the worship service: The Annual Congregational Meeting.

Sunday, January 26, 9am: The Sunday morning small group resumes in the lounge.

Wednesday, January 29, 10am: The Wednesday morning women's small group resumes and meets at David's Bagels in Valley Cottage.

Saturday, February 1, 9am: Women's Fellowship breakfast at Johnny Cakes Diner, 84 Main Street, Nyack, NY.

Sunday, February 2, 6pm: Super Bowl party at the manse.

Sunday, February 9, 10:30am: Ordination Sunday.

January Birthdays

January 17: Skip Russell

January 29: Pastor Fred Arzola

