

TRINITY NEWS

December 2014

Trinity Reformed Church
North Plainfield, N.J. 07063

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

Members & Friends,

December newsletters have an inevitable way of getting us thinking about Christmas. This one shall be no exception! There are many traditions and symbols that surround us at Christmastime, many of which we never give a second thought and many of which we have no idea why that is a Christmas symbol. For instance, why does Santa Claus wear a funny red hat? (Saint Nicholas was a bishop in Asia Minor. As such he would have worn the distinctive hat of a bishop called a mitre.)

One such question that has come to my attention is; why do we use candy canes as decorations and treats at Christmastime? A variety of answers have crossed my desk. One says that the treats were a secret way for Christians in Eastern Europe undergoing persecution to identify each other and share the story of gospel with each other. However, there is no evidence of the use of candy canes before the late 1800s and even then the early ones were just white. The familiar stripes weren't added until the early 20th Century. As most, if not all, of Europe was solidly Christian during these time periods, it is highly unlikely that the story of persecution is true. Another popular story claims to trace the origins of the candy cane to a choirmaster in Cologne, Germany. The story goes that way back in the 17th Century, this choirmaster had a problem that exists to this day; how do you get the children in the kids' choir to sit quietly through the long services associated with Christmas? By bribing them with candy, of course! (A method still used to this day!) The choirmaster allegedly had white peppermint sticks bent like shepherds' crooks so that the parents wouldn't get too upset that the children had candy in church. Again, the dates don't work and that explanation, while cute, is suspect. Still others trace the origins to a candy maker in Indianapolis, Indiana. Again, how likely is it that we would not know the name of this candy maker, but know the exact town in which he lived?

While the origins may be hard to trace, the reason why we use it at Christmas is not. Regardless of their origins and original intent, many things about the candy cane call Jesus to mind. The candy sticks are bent to look like the letter "J" to represent the name Jesus, although it could look like a shepherds' crook, used to rescue wayward sheep like us. The three fine red stripes were said to represent the Trinity or the flogging that Jesus endured before the crucifixion while the broad red stripes represent His blood that was shed on the cross for our sins. The white represents either the purity of Jesus' sinless life or the virgin birth. The sugary nature of the candy reminds us that Jesus' love for us is sweet. The flavor of the peppermint is similar to the flavor of another member of the mint family; hyssop which was often used in the Old Testament for purification and sacrifice – reminding us again of the purity of the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross for us. The hard nature of the candy can serve to remind us that Jesus is the solid rock upon which we build our faith.

While the origins and original intent of the symbolism may be hard to trace, the simple candy cane can serve as a valuable reminder to us of what the Christmas season is all about!

Grace & Peace,
Pastor Scott

In the month of October we had sermons on the following topics:

10/5/14 – True Perfection (Philippians 3:4-14, Matthew 21:33-46)

Paul points out to us that there are many, many ways to achieve the world's standard of perfection. Unfortunately, even the best of us still fall short of perfection on our best days. Only one—Jesus Christ—could live out the requirements that save us. It is his good name that God sees when he looks at our record. Our true perfection is not ours, but his. Out of thankfulness for this sacrifice, we live in ways that honor our God..

10/12/14 – My Rebel Heart (Exodus 32:1-14, Philippians 4:1-9)

In this sermon we examined the fact that we tend to grow fearful when God doesn't work on our timeline. Furthermore, when we take matters into our own hands, the result is rebellion against God. We were challenged to turn to God in prayer rather than giving in to fear.

10/19/14 – Holy Seal (Exodus 33:12-23, 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10)

In the ancient world a wax or clay seal on a message from a king indicated its authenticity. Just as a seal on a message from the king vouched for its authenticity, the Holy Spirit functions as the God's Holy and Royal seal, vouching for the truth of God's word and the reality of our redemption. Because we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can be assured of the truth of the gospel and the authenticity of our salvation.

10/26/14 – Eighty Years (Deuteronomy 34:1-12, Matthew 22:34-46)

Moses, in his prayer—Psalm 90—says, "The days of our life are seventy years, or perhaps eighty... So teach us to count our days, so that we may gain a wise heart." What does that look like for most of us? A popular acronym in today's society is YOLO (You Only Live Once) which raises the question: What do you do with your seventy or eighty years if you are a Christian? Jesus tells us in Matthew 22 that the most important commandments are: 1) Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind; and 2) Love your neighbor as yourself. Since these two commandments encapsulate all the others, that's a pretty great place to start when making the most of your eighty years.



BROEK CIRCLE - will meet on Monday, December 8th at NOON in the Library Lounge for their annual Christmas Luncheon.

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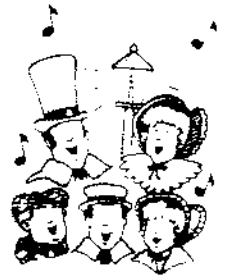
JACOBA CIRCLE - will meet on Monday, December 8th in the Library Lounge at 7:00 p.m. Kathy Harris hosting our Christmas gathering.

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December, 2014

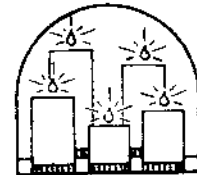
- 4. Leslie Zarnowski
- 9. Jennifer Kenderdine
- 21. Cassie Forgash



FESTIVAL OF CAROLS

Sunday, December 14
at 2:00 p.m.

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Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 24th - 8:00 p.m.

Carols, Candlelight, Cookies and Fellowship

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DEADLINE for January News

Sunday, December 14th



CHRISTMAS SYMBOLS

Christmas Tree - according to the Book of Genesis, the "Tree of Life" grew in the middle of the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were banished from the garden and God placed an angel before the Garden to guard the Tree of Life (Gen. 3:24).

Jesus is the new TREE OF LIFE who gives eternal life to all who believe in Him (John 11:26). The Christmas Tree, then, is a symbol of Jesus. It is an evergreen tree whose leaves never change, but, like Jesus, remains the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 11:8)

Christmas Star - is a symbol of the Magi, or Wise men, who were the first Gentiles, or non-Jews to find the new-born Savior and honor Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. "The star went before them and halted over the place where the Child was." (Matthew 2:9)


Christmas Wreath - a circle, which has no beginning and no end, is often used as a symbol for God "who always was and always will be." Thus, the Christmas Crown or Wreath is a symbol of Christ, the King, who, as God, is eternal and reigns as universal King forever. "The Lord God will give him the throne of David, ...and His reign will have no end" (Luke 1:33). The foliage and red berries also symbolize the Crown of Thorns and drops of Jesus' Blood, reminding us that during the joy of Christmas we must not forget the purpose of Christ's coming.

Christmas Candles - Light has always been a symbol of Christ, the "Light of the World" (John 1:9). The CANDLES on the Christmas Tree (or our modern electric "flames") remind us of the presence of Christ in the world today. The coming of Jesus "gives light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow death". (Luke 1:9)



December



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1. Consistory 7:30 pm	2.	3.	4. Choir 7:30	5.	6.
7.  2nd Sunday in ADVENT	8. Broek NOON Jacoba 7:00	9.	10.	11. Choir 7:30	12.	13. Pick-up Soup Tomorrow
14. 2:00 pm 	15. Yesterday Newsletter Deadline	16.	17.	18. Choir 7:30	19.	20.  Winter
21.  4th Sunday in ADVENT	22.	23.	24.  CANDLE- LIGHT SERVICE	25. 	26.	27.
28.	29.	30.	31.			