

Trinity



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We Have Tasted

Robert Louis Wilken, distinguished fellow of the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology, was recently asked how modern culture and ancient Roman culture presented similar challenges to the Church. He wrote: *In some ways [they are similar], yes: this culture is no longer our culture. It still has many Christian elements in it: the calendar (with major holidays like Christmas and Easter – though even they have been denuded), church architecture, choral music (much of which is Christian), art, and the like. But with the passing of each generation, the sensibility of the culture is less Christian. The feeling of being a distinct minority was very much the experience of early Christians. But our situations are different in one key respect: today we in the West live in a post-Christian world, in an aggressive secular culture. This culture has known Christianity, and it is bitter toward Christianity; the culture is in revolt against what existed before. Ancient paganism did not have that kind of bitterness. It was*

curious about Christianity, even incredulous.

There are many who have lip synched the common assertion that we are facing the same kind of challenges today that Christianity once faced in its earliest life. While there are certainly common elements



between the positions, there is one unavoidable, unique difference. In the early years of the Church, Paganism had never even heard of Christianity, and so found itself curiously attracted to the claims of this new faith. As antagonistic

as Roman and pagan culture was to Christian faith and preaching, at the same time it was also drawn to the ideas that formed the core of that teaching. What drew the interest of these pagans was the claims of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and the consequences of this resurrection for those who believe in Him. In other words, the whole idea of new and everlasting life stood in stark contrast to the limits of the moment, and it was this teaching that piqued their curiosity about this new faith. In other words, they were hungry for the prospect of life beyond death.

In contrast to that day, our modern culture has adopted the erroneous idea that somehow everyone will live after death – in some sort vague spiritual existence maybe, but in some sort of existence, nonetheless. People today don't hunger for this, nor do they need faith to introduce this idea to them. They expect a spiritual existence to transcend death, and no one seems to live in much fear that such an existence might not be all that ful-

filling (they seem to have little real fear of hell or some sort of equivalence). Since people today expect that some sort of spiritualized life will continue past death, they no longer feel any need to focus upon this, or to shape their lives in anticipation of this, and thus they are free to indulge fully and freely in everything this present moment offers – especially its carnal pleasures.

A second difference is the attention the early Christian martyrs drew to Christianity. Theirs was a faith that could not be compromised and compelled them to risk all – even death – in order to be faithful to its doctrine and life. In contrast to this unbending commitment to the truth that is Jesus Christ, Christianity today is soft and flexible, easily molded, bent, and shaped by the culture – and quick to jettison its most basic tenants and longest held convictions in the face of questions or challenges.

Consider, for example, how quickly many Christians adopted a cultural shape of worship that fully embraced our modern penchant for technology, video, and entertainment – or how quickly many Christians have changed their minds about issues such as abortion, same sex relationships, living together before marriage, etc... They have been quick to ditch long held positions of the Church of ages past in order to adopt positions more friendly to the move

and mood of modern culture. Sure, there are many people still dying for the faith (look at the Middle East) but it would appear as if modern Christianity is not willing to risk even a hangnail for the sake of Christ and the faith yesterday, today, and forever the same.

One final difference between the Church in its earliest years and the Church of our day is that the Church in its infancy appears to have had a full, vibrant confidence in their leaders and pastors. They not only paid attention to them but they enthusiastically followed them much more willingly than the average Christian hears and heeds them today. In fact, today many Christians tend to view the leaders of the Church with the same disdain and suspicion most view our political leaders in Washington. There is, thus, little discipline of the faith or of the faithful. Each person ends up being the final authority in their own life and family concerning what will be believed and lived out in the name of Christianity. The stance of the Church is often questioned first by the faithful even before those outside the faith have had their two cents worth at what is believed, taught, and confessed.

The bottom line, it seems, is that modern culture (including, sadly, many who bear the name Christian) is not curious about Christianity but appears to have

tasted it and spit it out. To be sure, modern culture detests the taste of doctrine and truth, of disciplined confession and practice, of public piety and faithfulness. We live in a world that is unfriendly to Christianity and unapologetic about its unfriendliness – not because it has never encountered Christianity – no, modern culture presumes it knows all about Christianity and has decided that Christianity has been found wanting, offensive, and objectionable. It has rejected the faith. And now its goal is to marginalize the faith, the faithful, and the Church.

Has there ever been a better time to be living than the time in which we now live, where we are privileged to bear upon our brows the mark of the Crucified One once slain for sin and risen from the dead – where our Lord and God has given us the joyful task of confessing Him to all so that many, through Him, might be saved? May God grant us a willing spirit to do this, to the praise and glory of His most holy name, and for the benefit of His Bride, the Church. Amen.

Birthdays

Jonah Korondi	1/3
Carlee Luppess	1/6
Ellen Propst	1/8
Eli Ramer	1/10
Harry Akiyama	1/12
Jacob Wornson	1/13
Janice Bozarth	1/16
Tony Alshouse	1/18
Katherine Rogers	1/21
A.J. Martinez	1/22

Marcea Harms	1/26
Laura Perry	1/27
Don Jaeger	1/27
Leslie Young	1/29
Joyce Lehning	1/30
Doris Mann	2/4
John Barth	2/4
Steve Christensen	2/6
Kevin Schroeder	2/6
Megan O'Grady	2/7
Max Goodwin	2/8

Baptisms

Nancy Oldag	1/1
Mark Young	1/1
Leslie Young	1/1
Natalie Jackson	1/1
Lisa Starkebaum	1/2
Tanner Mayes	1/5
Dorothy Riley	1/8
Linda Newman	1/8
Matthew Cuba	1/8
Laura Perry	1/13
Max Goodwin	1/13
Christi Fent	1/15
Carlee Luppess	1/18
Aaron Propst	1/21
Jonah Korondi	1/21
Jane Alshouse	1/29
Katelyn Brammeier	1/29
June Lueckert	2/1
Mary Ellett	2/1
Bette Hensel	2/10
Jacob Wornson	2/10

Anniversaries

Craig & Shari Schley	1/1/2011
Jeremy & Angel Harms	1/9/1999
Bill & Karen Wersinger	1/14/1995
Mark & Leslie Young	2/8/1992

Elders

Vic Edwards
Larry Goodroad
Ken Meier
Dallas Hoffman
Peter Korondi
Bill Moore, Jr.

Acolytes

Jan. 3	Simon Korondi
Jan. 10	Eli Ramer
Jan. 17	Gabriel Sowell
Jan. 24	Ben Starkebaum
Jan. 31	Andrew Swain
Feb. 7	Joe Goodroad
Feb. 10	Tom Goodroad
Feb. 14	Sammy Harms
Feb. 17	Colton Harris
Feb. 21	Conner Jackson
Feb. 24	Simon Korondi
Feb. 28	Eli Ramer

Ushers

January 3 & 10

Darrin Abend, Tony Alshouse

January 17 & 24

John Barth, Chris Blunk

January 31 & February 7

John Bosky, Tim Brammeier

February 10 & 17

Dallas Hoffman, Mike Jackson

February 14 & 21

Vic Edwards, Andy Fairhurst

February 24

Don Jaegger, Pete Korondi

February 28

Tony Propst, Dan Goodroad

Greeters

January 3

Bob & Dawn Marchert

January 10

Curt & Gwen Mayes

January 17

Scott & Lacey Mayes

January 24

Don & Sharon McCubbin

January 31

Cheryl McClain, Janet Miller

February 7

Ken & Brenda Meier

February 10

Jack & Nancy Oldag

February 14

John & Dianne Mischlich

February 17

Julie O'Neal, Pat Owens

February 21

Bill Moore, Kimberly Murphy

February 24

Tony & Ellen Propst

February 28

Linda Newman, Yvonne
O'Grady

Altar Guild

Jan. 3, Jan. 24, Feb. 7

Pat Owens, Mary Ellett

Jan. 10, Feb 14

Deanna Korondi, Kari
Goodroad

Jan. 31, Feb. 28

June Ramer, Phyllis Clemens,
Tara Altis

Jan. 17, Feb 21

Dee Hoffman, Mallory Swain,
Leslie Young

Family Fellowship

The group will have a Pizza, Planning and Game Night at 6:00 PM on Saturday, January 23. It's time to plan some fun activities for the year! Bring your ideas, games, a snack and drink along with your appetite and let's get the new year going!

Ladies Night Out

Our next event is January 25. We will meet at the Corner Café in Liberty for some delicious comfort food. Plan on joining us at 6:00 PM and sign up on the kiosk. Questions? Contact Shari Schley, 686-3270.

Epiphany Open House

Pastor and Linda would like to invite you to join them for their annual Open House on Sunday afternoon, January 10, from 2:00 to 5:00. We will have pulled pork sandwiches, drinks, snacks and lots of time to visit. Everyone is invited. We hope you can be with us!

Lent Early This Year

Lent will be starting early this year, with Ash Wednesday being February 10. Mark your calendars and plan to join us as we prepare to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Easter Sunday, which is on March 27.

Stewardship Notes

With due diligence and prudent spending the Board of Directors was able to finish out the year in the black even though we failed to meet our stewardship goals. Even with that, however, we were still able to take on some projects that needed to be taken care of since we had money set aside for special projects and building maintenance.

The purpose for the existence of the Church is that we are about

the business of proclaiming God's Word and extending forgiveness to sinners so that all might thereby enjoy the blessings and benefits of God's kingdom of grace and glory.

You and I, we are members of this congregation because we want to see this done among us and around the world. But to do this requires more from us than just desire. As members of this congregation we each "own" (so to speak) this building and ministry, and as much as we wish it weren't so, the fact is that it requires money, time, energy and effort on the part of each and every one of us.

So I would ask boldly that we each consider whether or not there might not be more than we could do to further the work God has given us to do in this place. If each of us would simply increase the amount we are giving to the Church by 2 or 3% I dare say we would be able to meet our financial goals this year quite handily. But if you aren't able to do that, then consider what else you might do in the way of time or talent given to the work of the Church. We are always looking for teachers, students, helpers, cleaners, picker uppers, and you name it. All I ask is that you pray about it and let our Lord tell you what you can do to help.

UnConference

Our congregation hosted a Higher Things UnConference,

"We Confess," on Saturday, January 2nd here at Trinity from 3:00 to 9:30. It was called an "UnConference" because it was held in Chicago with a live web-cast, which we followed along with here at Trinity. The focus of this event was the Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism. We started with a Vespers Service, followed by seven sessions of live streaming, then a tasty dinner provided by Rob and Ardyth Stone (and their friend Michael, who was visiting with them from up north), and then we closed by singing Evening Prayer. It was a bit unusual being led in worship by pastors and organists 400+ miles away, but it really went well. We had 24 in attendance and everyone had a great time of worship, fellowship and learning. We hope to do it again one of these days in the future.

Why I Joined A Dead Religion

This is a very thoughtful blog post I found online from a blog entitled "Sellers of Purple." Thought you would enjoy reading it. If you'd like to read more from this LC-MS blogger you can find her at: "www.sellersofpurple.blogspot.com"

The man in the white dress was coming around, handing out gifts to the children on their knees – this mixed group of silver-haired saints, sticky faced toddlers, working class stiff, and menopausal moms.

Some ancient tune being played in the background, the notes brought invisible peace that I didn't know I needed. He put the bread in my waiting hand, I took it and ate. He gave me red wine, I took it and drank.

Nothing changed - but everything had. So I got up, gave a slight bow, and as I walked away from the portal and back to my seat I said to myself, "THAT is why I joined a dead religion."

Dead. That's what I always thought. That's what I was always told. Any stodgy church that doesn't have a rockin' band is dead. Any church that isn't growing is dead. Any church that limits the Holy Spirit is dead. Any church without a youth group is dead. Any church without a coffee shop is dead. Any church that's older than 50 years is dead.

Why on earth would I ever want to be set foot in a rotting graveyard like that? I'm into "deeds not creeds," ya know? Creeds are for zombies – the dumb moans of spiritless shells. Confessions are for the walking dead – lifeless words that can't cast heavenly spells.

No, none of that ancient garbage is for the "true believer." The time for formulas has come and gone, and we've evolved. We're off the map and we're spirit filled. At least, everyone around me was...

Don't you know? In a "spirit filled" church, pastors must

wear skinny jeans – they all do, you see. They tell funny jokes, give relevant references to the upcoming Star Wars film and can life coach like nobody's business from the stage. Canned messages from sermons.com cast a vision from heaven and all the good little lemmings will jump off the cliff together.

Hipster Pastor has the Words of Life but never uses them, doesn't even know what to do with them except throw out a nugget here or there, but mostly keeps them shut in that book of red letters. Then like the performer that he is, he skillfully turns the mirror on you and there you are; kind of happy about it because you love yourself most of all. Only it's not the squeaky clean image everyone around you sees; no, it's your blackened self, your zombie self. Then he throws a sprinkling of magic words about a Jewish guy and something about a cross and tells you how to repay that holy man for what He's done because you suck so bad and He deserves your best. He tells you to have fun with that and slips away as the words fall to the floor and Hipster Band takes over the room, the lights go down and the smoke machine winds up.

Worship repeats the word "I" a thousand times over so God knows we mean it, so we know how important we are, so we FEEL, so we know. Tears must stream down cheeks and bodies must sway while hands touch

the sky – it's a sure sign you're really in it. Maybe if you cry that Jewish man will know you're really scared and confused and don't know what you're doing, and maybe THEN He'll hear your prayers and tip towards your tears. But no.

First the plates must be passed and records will be checked for faithfulness – so don't forget, your faith shows through painful giving. You can't cheat God and He's always watching. Fork it over and you'll be blessed. Then that Jewish man will come closer so you don't have to reach out over the edge where all the other lemmings just went.

Then speak languages only angels understand – you must if you are true; if you don't you are not one of us. Make it up, mumble something, anything, slippery words so they all think you can and don't notice when you can't. They'll keep coming back, keep pressing their other-worldly hands on your body to make you morph with them, make you talk like them, make you join their club. So just whisper your prayers; they'll see your mouth moving and it will make them happy, and they'll go away and leave you to tears you want no one to see. God gives it to them, but not to you. They speak His language, but you don't. The pain goes down to infinity and up to eternity.

Next, give your time, your talents, your everything because Someone gave everything – that

Jewish man who haunts you – it's the least you can do and it's not nearly enough. Give your attention, your heart, your soul, your gifts, all you are and more. Pray more, get on your knees, get in that prayer closet you hear then; there's still 23 hours in the day and you can't remember everything you forgot, be diligent and get it all out in fresh new words every time.

Stuck in the Matrix. Stuck knowing there's two worlds and not knowing which one is real or which one you should be in. What are those red letters? How to even know what they mean? I know they must mean something. How to hear Him speak, see His face, feel Him near, know He loves, and even maybe forgiveness for the twisty monster in the mirror? Is He even real? Is any of this real? I don't hear the voices, speak the tongues, see the visions – maybe I'm not real...

The smoke machines, the angels overhead and demons at your back, the weight is too heavy, skinny jeans and skits, money and music, slain in the Spirit, drunk in the Spirit, ecstasy all around an I can't fall down, swirling water a symbol of grace, a Saltine symbol of a Jew I once knew, grape juice symbol of blood once spilled. Spirits and saints, gold dust from heaven, purpose and destiny that I can't figure out. There's not enough tears, not enough reaching, not enough asking – it's always for someone else and just

out of reach. I just want to give up and make the spinning stop. STOP!

I passed it by a hundred times, never paying any attention; a little building with stained glass windows and a sign about a potluck. LC-MS. What is that anyway? Some kind of cult, probably. But I might look it up, can't hurt to try. A week later and we go in, sniff the air suspiciously.

Little old ladies with polyester jackets, an off-key organ making me cringe, kids crying at inopportune times, burnt coffee, songs I don't know, stand up, sit down, I have no idea what's going on. This is not what I expected, and yet it is.

And I love it. I LOVE IT. I am told about that Jewish guy, and His name is Jesus. He is the Red Letters. He is the Word. I am told who I am to Him, that yes I am a blackened sinner but He loves me anyway. He knew I was the walking dead heading towards the cliff, so He got on a cross to rescue me. He died, then He was gone. GONE.

And He took my sins with Him when He went. Then He came back. And I am a saint – because He said I am, not because of what I do or say or think or feel. I'm a saint because He is who He said He is and He did what He said He'd do.

I hear the man in the white dress reading the red letters – all of them, all the time. He tells me what they mean; they are about Jesus – all of them. The Red

Letters are the Words of Life and He is the Word. And He is in the words from the very beginning – ALL of the words are Red Letters and He is in them all because they are all about Him. All of them.

And so I take the bread and take the wine, and Jesus is there because He said He is. And I am forgiven and I am free because He said I am. I do not have to wonder, don't need to muster tears, fake whispers to angels or cast demons from the past, no praying out sins I can't even recall or giving till it hurts, or anything at all.

So what do I have to do? Nothing – absolutely nothing. The Red Letters say my work is to believe in Him and He does the rest. All of it.

He saved me in my baptism, in water He washed away the death because He was there. The Red Letters told me. And He saves me in the bread and wine, and brings new life because He is there. The Red Letters told me. And He comes to me in that book, every black & scarlet word between the covers because He is there. The Red Letters told me.

The man in the white dress came around, handing out the gifts of God to the this child on her knees. I didn't have a vision, didn't speak a language of angels, didn't even think to ask. And yet there He was – right there, giving me everything because He loves.

He put the bread in my waiting

hand; I took it and ate. Jesus is the Bread of Life. He gave me red wine; I took it and drank. Jesus' blood shed for me. Forgiven. Free. Real. The Red Letters told me.

Then I got up, gave a slight bow out of respect for the Holy of Holies, and as I walked back to my seat I said to myself, "THAT is why I joined a dead religion."

Board of Director's Meeting

December 14th, 2015

Members present: Dan Goodroad, Connie Brammeier, Norm Sowell, Nelson Hayes, Melvin Altis, Mark Fairhurst, Bob Marchert, Pastor, Leslie Young, Tim Brammeier, Dee Hoffman, Larry Goodroad.

Bob called the meeting to order. Pastor opened with prayer and continued our study of the Augsburg Confession.

Mark moved we accept the minutes. Norm seconded.

Melvin gave outline of security and emergency management meeting.

Norm moved to add additional duties to VP position including security and emergency management. Nelson seconded.

VP: Nothing new to report.

Treasurer: Norm moved we receive the report, Nelson seconded.

Elders: Talked about visits. Symposium Jan 17-23rd.

Properties: Discussed kitchen

roof problem. Ameren replaced something on the transformer out front. No changes needed on updated building agreement. Sump pump installed but not deep enough, Dry Basement coming to correct problem.

Evangelism: Updating name-tags for greeters with magnets.

Education: Christmas program on Dec. 20th. Then work begins on VBS.

Stewardship: Nothing new to report.

Youth: Keeping eye on IA Higher Things registration. Ice skating in January. Sweetheart Dinner in February.

PR: Nothing new to report. Be sure to visit Trinity's Facebook page and like and share events there.

Planning: Nothing new to report.

Services: Giving Riley a gift and waiting to give a baby gift when Julian Goodroad is baptized.

Unfinished Business: N/A

New Business: Annual Meeting January 24th.

Pastor's open house is January 10th from 2-5 PM.

Troop 360 Boy Scout Parker would like to convert pavilion into storage shed for church mower as his Eagle project. Norm moved we approve the project, Dan seconded.

Synod no longer supports scouts. Charter due at first of the year. If no replacement organization found before Dec 31st, the

Board discussed granting them 6 month provisional charter to give them time to find a new chartering organization.

Dan moved we adjourned. Mark seconded. Pastor closed with prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Emily Goodroad

Annual Voters' Meeting

The annual Voter's Meeting will be held on January 24th following Sunday School and Bible Class. The only business presently on the agenda is the approval of the yearly report and the submission of the names of pastors to run for Synod President.

Lutherans For Life

The Northland Chapter meets the quarterly at the home of Fran and Marsha Szarejko. If you have any questions, please contact Kimberly Murphy, 628-6815. Everyone is invited to join us at these meetings.

Trinity Care Group

Do you need assistance because of illness, birth of a baby, death, hospitalization, etc.? Trinity Care Group can help. We would be happy to arrange for providing meals, doing errands, visiting with the family, etc. Please contact Dee Hoffman at 320-2490.

Top Of The Hill

The Top Of The Hill Group will meet Tuesday, January 12, in the Fellowship Hall for a lunch of soup and great dessert. Please

join us for lots of fun, fellowship and great food!

Thank You Notes

Thank you for all of your support throughout 2015. – Kearney Food Pantry

* * *

On behalf of all of us at Martin Luther Academy, thank you so much for your support of our annual cookie walk. It wouldn't be possible without you! Thank you and God Bless . . . Stephanie Parker, Coordinator

From Bonhoeffer

It is not we who build. [Christ] builds the church. No man builds the church but Christ alone. Whoever is minded to build the church is surely well on the way to destroying it; for he will build a temple to idols without wishing or knowing it. We must confess – he builds. We must proclaim – he builds. We must pray to him – that he may build.

We do not know his plan. We cannot see whether he is building or pulling down. It may be that the times which by human standards are times of collapse are for him the great times of construction. It may be that the times which from a human point of view are great times for the church are times when it is pulled down.

It is a great comfort which Christ gives to his church: you confess, preach, bear witness to me and I alone will build where it pleases me. Do not meddle in

what is my province. Do what is given to you to do well and you have done enough. But do it well. Pay no heed to views and opinions. Don't ask for judgments. Don't always be calculating what will happen. Don't always be on the lookout for another refuge! Church, stay a church! But church, confess, confess, confess! Christ alone is your Lord; from his grace alone can you live as you are. Christ builds.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer No Rusty Swords, trans. and ed. Edwin H. Robertson (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), quoted in *The Treasury of Daily Prayer*, Concordia Publishing House, 2008, pp. 840-1.

Youth

On November 29, the youth group hosted a soup dinner after church service for the Hanging of the Greens. In addition, our youth group hosted the first Advent dinner on Wednesday, December 2.

For the month of January, the youth group is planning a trip to Crown Center for ice skating. Watch for Facebook posts and the kiosk for a sign-up sheet.

We are in the planning stages for our 2016 Annual Sweetheart Dinner on Saturday, February 6th. The youth group will be taking reservations throughout the month of January so please plan to reserve your spots early so that you don't miss this fantastic event.

We will be reaching out to our confirmed youth who are interested in attending the 2016 Higher Things Conference soon so that we can reserve spots by the end of January 2016. We will likely be attending the conference in Cedar Falls, IA at the University of Northern Iowa scheduled for July 5-8th this year. For our confirmed youth planning to attend the conference, please talk with Connie Brammeier or Lisa Starkebaum.

Trinity's youth group is comprised of grades 6-12 and everyone is welcome and encouraged to participate. If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Starkebaum or Connie Brammeier.

