



Second Reflections

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SECOND REFORMED CHURCH

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OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesday, Wednesday,
Thursday
9 am—4 pm

Friday
9 am—Noon

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A "MUSTARD SEED"
FOR OUR YOUTH

DEEP and WIDE Pastor Voskuil

Re-learning a Familiar Song

I was younger and had much more hair when I first learned this song. Please join me in singing the lyrics: *Deep and wide, deep and wide, there is a fountain flowing deep and wide...* Enthused children still spread their arms as high and as wide as they can when singing this song. It is a lovely sight.

I don't know the exact etymology of the lyrics, but there are plenty of intersection points between the rich biblical imagery of water and our faith in Christ: the waters of baptism, Jesus offering living water, the very river described flowing through the New Jerusalem in John's Revelation. I've begun using this language to describe our basic life before God. Not only does this language describe the depth and width of God's grace, but it is also a helpful way to describe our basic call to discipleship.

Deepening our Commitment

The elders spent much of the fall discussing the relationship between discipleship, membership, and commitment. This will be an on-going conversation. At stake is our basic understanding of what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ gathered together in a community of faith. Pragmatically, everything flows from this discernment: resourcing our ministry, prioritizing our time, and even determining whether or not we are being faithful and fruitful to God's calling upon our life. In using the "deep and wide" language, we are directed to deepening our commitment to Christ, to being Christ's body, to learning the story of our salvation, to celebrating God's reign, and so much more.

Widening our Hospitality

At the end of the 11 pm Christmas Eve service we walked to the outside front porch and sang "Joy to the World" while looking out into the world. It was a lovely moment (sorry to any neighbors who may have been looking out a few windows around midnight). We know that we are gathered as a church to share this joy with the wider world. In this way, not only is our discipleship pushing us to deepen our commitment on so many levels, but it is also pushing us to widen our hospitality so that others might come to know and experience the transforming love of God. Widening our hospitality also has many meanings and levels, but one basic way of engaging the topic is asking ourselves who is not yet in our community of faith? Put differently, who in our life feels unwelcome in our midst; who carries heavy burdens; who could especially use our support and solidarity; who is still stuck and subjugated; who hasn't heard in their heart the carol "Joy to the World"?

I look forward to engaging these questions with the consistory, staff, and wider congregation in the months to come. I ask for your prayers and wisdom as we re-learn the song many of us first learned as children. One thing is for sure, it is exciting to be part of a faith that flows deep and wide and that invites us to keep going even deeper and wider as a church family.

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Epiphany, 2015**Following the Light**

Tucked between the 12 days of Christmas and the 40 days of Lent is a season often named after its first day. This all begins on the day of Epiphany, the day we remember the magi seeking and finding Jesus. It is a power story that involves non-Jewish star-gazers going to great lengths to pay adoration to young Jesus. They even play their part in protecting Jesus from Herod's fierce jealousy. That God's son is revealed to these gentiles before most others is important for us to remember. The Sundays after the magi experience Jesus focus upon more epiphanies (defined as "revealings" or "manifestations" of God's self). The First Sunday after the Epiphany is always focused upon Christ's baptism, whereas the last Sunday of this season is focused upon the transfiguration.

I invite you to keep looking for how Christ might be revealing himself to you. Might it be through the stillness and awe of an early morning walk on a cold January day? Might it be through a new devotional or renewed spiritual discipline you've started in this new year? Might it be through the face of the person you visited at the hospital or through the actions of the person you served at the Holland Mission? Might it be through a powerful moment in corporate worship or through the silent moment after our weekly prayer of confession? Might it be through the time of prayer you've nurtured each night or through teaching your grandchild the very stories of our savior?

The Epiphany story reminds us that God will give us light to guide the way, but that it is also God's desire for us to engage the journey itself. Sure enough, starting any journey involves taking the first step towards the destination.

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It is my prayer that this new year provides new energy and new motivation for all of us to take larger steps towards the ultimate destination we have in Christ. Best yet, it has been my experience that the more we journey towards Jesus the more we realize how Jesus has already journeyed towards us.

Classical Relations: Building Health through Relationships and Worship

I appreciate Second's deep connectedness with our classis (regional grouping of churches) and wider denomination. I believe in our polity's understanding that churches are most faithful when connected in concrete and accountable ways to other congregations (Acts 15). Eric, Miriam, and I are all members of the Zeeland Classis, and we are committed to its health and vitality. All three of us meet and learn from colleagues from various congregations and ministries. Besides building relationships we can grow in our connectedness with these other churches through exchanging pulpits. In this spirit, I will be preaching at Faith Reformed Church this coming week, Miriam will be preaching at First Reformed in February, and Jonathan Elgersma from Faith will be preaching here at Second in February. Please let me know of your ideas on how we can continue to support and collaborate with others for the sake of Christ. I do know that a collective witness to the gospel is certainly stronger and more constructive than doing it alone!

With Grace, Karsten

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Consistory Considerations . . .

Dave Bosscher

Along with you, the consistory was blessed by our worship services around Advent and Christmas. Our church staff worked very hard to both plan and serve during that busy time of year. **Thank you.**

Consistory did not meet during December although the Executive Committee continues meeting frequently. We are considering these vital issues in the life of our church:

Membership – You will remember that, during the fall, we have been concentrating on what it means to be members of Christ’s body. We have explored the benefits and responsibilities of membership. Elders are now preparing to send letters to some church members asking them to clarify their membership status.

Communion – In the summer of 2014 we last considered how we practice communion. As part of that discussion, and acting on the recommendation of the Worship Committee, we decided to celebrate weekly communion during special times of the church year. We also committed to discussing our celebration of the Lord’s Supper at our upcoming meeting in January.

Capital Campaign Leadership Group - This group is being convened to REACTIVATE the Capital Campaign so that we can fund important higher cost church improvements.

The consistory is very grateful to have been able to serve during 2014. We are anticipating that 2015 will continue to bring growth both individually and together as members of Christ’s vital body.

Dave Bosscher

CONSISTORY MEMBERS 2014/15

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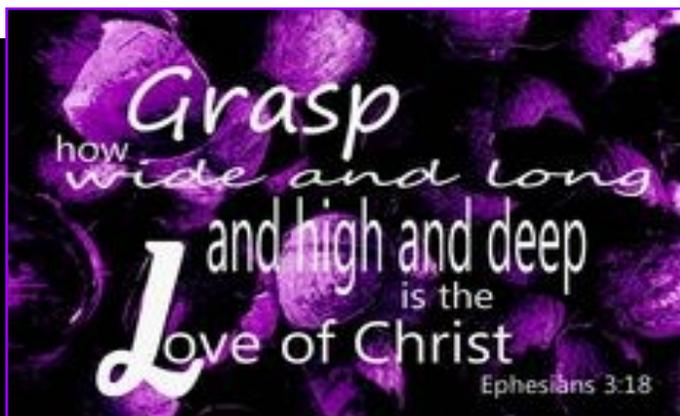
* **Phung Lam**, Clerk of Deacons

Sheri Holstege

Dennis Scheppers

Martin Vander Velde

(*Executive Committee)



. . . We can ALL make a difference to one another. . .



Outside of my youth pastors there are two particular people who stick out in my memory of early church experiences. Norm Fox and Art Hughes frequently come to my mind whenever I think back to my time as a pesky pre-teen and teen. (The next time my mother is here, ask her about the time I skipped Sunday school by hiding under a pew. She was my teacher, so I wasn't too successful in fooling anyone!).

Norm was the sexton at Cobblestone Reformed Church (aka *Second Reformed* of Rotterdam!), and he loved Union College football. Every Sunday Norm would recount the details of the game to me. My Dad and I would usually go to a game or two each fall and, sure enough, Norm would be there wandering the grounds as he rooted for the Dutchman of Union College. Norm had a stroke when I was in elementary school. Even as he recovered he sought out my friends and me to chat about Union football and how our own Pop Warner football seasons were going.

Art was a life long member of Bellevue Reformed Church where we started attending as I was heading into 9th grade. Even when Art and his wife Ruth weren't officially greeters Art was at the door, smile on his face, hand outstretched, ready to hear about your week. One of my all-time favorite church memories happened one of my first Sundays back from college. Art was at the door. "They'll let anybody in here these days," he said to me as I entered. Knowing Art, I knew that was his way of saying, "Welcome home, and remember we're always here with open arms.

If you've continued reading up to this point you might be wondering why I'm telling you about Norm and Art. What's so remarkable about them? Why write an article referencing them?

Norm and Art were impactful in my life because they were adults outside of teachers, parents, and youth group leaders who took an interest in me; who took their baptismal promises to me seriously. Norm was in his 60s and Art was in his 80s when I was growing up, not the ages stereotypically associated with working with teenagers. Yet fearlessly they wandered over to the teenagers during coffee hour to strike up a conversation.

My hope is that, as we continue to live into our baptismal promises, Second Church is a place where the Norms and Arts are engaged in the lives of our pre-teens and teenagers. Youth at this stage may sometimes be intimidating, but they're eager for adults to know them; they're eager to know that the church is a place that welcomes them and loves them.

Sometimes all it takes is a handshake and a "How was your week?" to plant a mustard seed from which faith can flourish.

Eric Barnes, Associate Pastor of Youth and Young Adults