



Harvest Call

December 16, 2018

Ecumenicity at Heart

The True Church

The Church is properly called Christian because of the particular anointing of Christ. Her members are the followers of Christ, anointed by the Holy Spirit to be prophets, priests and kings. At Antioch (Acts 11:26) enemies acted in derision by referring to her members as Christians. The conduct of the Church and manner of her speech reflected Christ. What her enemies intended as slander, is her badge of honor.

Christ the Head

Westminster Confession of Faith 25.1 states, *"The catholic or universal Church which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all."*

The Church does not save sinners! Jesus Christ is the savior of his people, he alone redeems his people and saves them from the fury of hell (Matthew 1:21).

The anointed followers of Jesus are exhorted to walk with fidelity, and in their lives to exhibit the pure light of the Word, the only Word that outshines the darkness in a fallen world. The elect in the Anointed One have a holy calling. In faithful exercise of that calling they prove to possess the marks of the true Church. These are attributes of members of Christ's Church.

Reformation & Mortification of Sin

The calling of the Church is to separate herself from all false religion. The evil inclination of human hearts demands unceasing effort to put to death all leaning to sin (Ephesians 4:17-5:21). As the redeemed anointed saints do in their walk, so also the whole body does. Reformation is a continuous present process.

By faithful witness the Church is a people who are separated from the world — those who walk according

to the tenets of the human heart do not accept the confession of the Church. Every person's confession describes their allegiance (Acts 5:13). The radiance of Christ shines out of the character of the witness of the Church.

Marks of the True Church

The true Church is readily recognized. She is differentiated from all falsehood by the preaching of the pure Word, the faithful administration of the sacraments, and by her exercise of Christian discipline for correction of those who stray. (Belgic Confession, Article 29).

The Church is born out of the Word of God. She is built on the testimony given of her and to her (James 1:16-27). Thus the true Church confesses the pure doctrine of truth in her witness and proclamation. Her unity is Christ. Unity does not come about through mere agreement of men, only by the Spirit are sinners conformed to Jesus Christ.

The church cannot survive without actively conforming herself to all things she is taught in the Word - the testimony of Jesus the Messiah. All followers of Christ live under the discipline of the Word, by the Spirit.

This magnificent privilege of union with Christ makes the Church the recipient of the fulness of Christ's graces, *"which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all"* (Ephesians 1:23). Nothing compares with the privilege to be a member of the true Church!

The true Church cannot keep silent. She is saturated in the joy of the Living Word, and the Spirit is her comforter (John 14:16-17). The Lord has given His Church a special place in the world and in eternity. Humility marks her privileged position. Her joy and peace cannot be silenced! Yet we must distinguish between the characteristics of true Church and the fruits of the Spirit that are present in her members.

The Local Church

The local church is not a single visible entity and she is not a subdivision of the Church. The local church is complete in whatever location she manifests presence.

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Paul wrote his letter to churches in Rome, Corinth, and to her presence in various provinces (2 Timothy 4:9-13). The apostle John wrote letters to seven particular churches (Revelation 2:1, 8, 12, etc). The Scriptures do not recognize a single visible world-wide church. We do recognize that Rome speaks of a single visible church, as do others such as the Mormons. Any organization that claims to be a visible universal body that takes upon itself the name “the Church” is an imposter — a false church.

The local church is the place where the Word of God speaks. Local churches exercise fellowship with one another. They must recognize the authority of the Church with exceeding care and respect. They are careful to observe the bounds of rightful authority with which they act. We see a glorious operation of the exercise of bounds of authority relayed to us in Acts 15, in the work of the Jerusalem Council.

The unity of the Church is evident in active participation in particular Assemblies, Synods and Church Councils by which fellowship is recognized. The external evidence of such fellowship lies in correspondence and in unity of confession. Thus there exists an inescapable necessity to concur in system of doctrine as expressed in the confessional standards of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Such confessional standards are subordinate to the Word of God.

Prayer for Church Unity

A faithful church is “*eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” (Ephesians 4:3), in the knowledge that God hears the prayers of His saints (1 Peter 3:2), pursuing peace and mutual upbuilding (Romans 14:16-19).

It is the duty and privilege of the saints to bear each other up before the Throne of Grace, to promote all faithful labors in the proclamation of the Word of grace, the good news to a perishing world, to the glory of the Risen King. Prayer for the unity of Christ’s Church engages the church to make petitions for and on behalf of areas in which she confronts the powers of darkness and in her work of proclaiming the

acceptable day of the Lord that is present in the gospel.

The church militant finds herself often besieged in the heat of battle suffering contusion, bruising, and wounds. The loss of fellow Christians through injury, failure, falling, or passing away can be devastating. We need to be reminded that our Head has fully conquered sin and death. He is risen indeed! His strategic conflicts cannot fail, and His soldiers triumph to all eternity. Let us lift our eyes up to the Lord with eager expectation for the time when the dwelling place of God is with man, when every tear will be set aside (Revelations 21:1-4).

The gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church of Christ, yet the evil one will not relent until the return of the Lord. Pray, for the battle is fierce and the victory of Christ’s Church is sweet indeed! Pray for the proclamation of the gospel of grace at home and abroad. Let us make petitions for those who labor to bring the good news against the tyranny of evil — for some at great temporal personal cost.

OPC Congregation

Calvin OPC, Phoenix, AR

Calvin held the first service October 19, 1980 with nine families in attendance. At that time, Calvin was placed as a mission church under Prescott PCA with Rev. Bill Read overseeing Calvin and other PCA churches in the Phoenix area.

On August 9, 1981 the Rev. John B. Anderson was called to be the organizing pastor. Six months later, on February 21, 1982, Calvin was organized as a particular church, having grown to about 25 families, and with several men able to serve as elders. Shortly after being organized as a church, Rev. Anderson, the Session, with the guidance of Rev. Read, sought to do the impossible and buy land and build. By God’s grace, land was purchased in North Phoenix, close to the Scottsdale border, in a little neighborhood. In the spring of 1984 the ground was broken and construction began. Everything went smoothly and on

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December 6, 1984, held its first service in the new building. In May 1986, Rev. Anderson and his family left Calvin, moving to Florida, and on October 1, 1986, the Rev. Wayne A Buchtel came to be the new pastor.

In October 1992, Rev. Garrett DeYoung and the members of the former Trinity PCA joined Calvin, adding about six active families to the congregation. On March 27, 1994, after much discussion and prayer, Calvin petitioned the OPC for membership. The Rev. Dr. Greg Bahnsen, son of one of our member families, preached the sermon at the organizational service; the Rev. Jay Fluck and Rev. Ross Graham also aided in the worship and administering the vows.

In mid 2005, Calvin assumed the oversight of Iglesia Nueva Vida, a Spanish speaking mission work. In 2011, that church was fully integrated into the life of Calvin. Also, in May of that year, Pastor Buchtel retired and moved to Virginia. For nearly two years, the Rev. William Warren filled the Calvin pulpit as interim pastor until the Rev. Michael Babcock was called.

Michael had served as a missionary in Scotland, originally with Calvary Chapel and then as a pastor of a Reformed Baptist church in Dumfries. He met his wife in Hamilton while working with Calvary Chapel. After the birth of their first son, Ciaran, in Dumfries, Michael became convinced of covenant theology and decided to return to the United States to attend Westminster Seminary in California where he graduated in 1999.

After an internship in Grants Pass, Oregon, he was called as church planter of Providence OPC in Las Vegas. That mission had undergone many ups and down, and in September 2005 the Missions Committee of Northern California and Nevada Presbytery told Michael that in all likelihood they were going to have to close the work. Michael put extra effort into the mission but in January 2006, he met with the congregation to announce the determination of the Presbytery and that of his own need to start looking for another call.

After the congregation prayed, and as Michael said, "Amen," his cell phone began ringing. At the other end of the call was Matt Miner (chairman of Calvin's diaconate and who had visited the Babcock in Vegas

several years prior) who told him that Calvin was looking for a pastor and asked him if he would be interested in being a candidate. *"I just told the congregation that I was going to have to start looking, so I can't say no."* After several times meeting the congregation, in November 2006 he was called as Calvin's new pastor. He took up the ministry in March 2007.

Shortly after Michael arrived, the Session helped to develop a Bible study in Tucson and oversaw it as it grew into a new mission (which is now a particular church pastored by one of Calvin's interns, Christopher Chelpka). As the Lord has blessed Michael's ministry, the congregation outgrew its facility. In May 2011, the church approved a two-phase project where a multi-purpose facility would first be built with a new worship and Sunday School facility to eventually follow. The first phase was finished in November 2013 and the dedication service was held on December 8, twenty-nine years nearly to the day after the original building was dedicated! By mid-2018, the mortgage was paid off and the Session is now looking into phase 2 for larger buildings to facilitate its desire for outreach and growth.

PRAYERS:

- For faithfulness in outreach and hospitality.
- For continued blessings in church's sanctification, piety, unity, and fellowship.
- For the Session and the building committee as it looks into Phase 2 of the building project with the construction of a new Sunday School and worship facility.
- For addition of new families.

SouthWest Presbytery News

Rio Rancho OPC, NM - Rev. Tkach

Is located in the City of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, adjacent to northwest Albuquerque and overlooked by the beautiful Sandia Mountains. The church began as a bible study in January of 2007. It was organized as a mission work of the Presbytery of the Southwest in

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late 2007. Mr. Todd Bordow was called as the founding pastor and installed in fall of 2009. He was a beloved pastor to the people until 2017, when he was forced to stand down from his ministry for medical reasons. The core of the congregation persisted despite the lack of a minister until they called Rev. Thomas A. Tkach. He was ordained and installed to his first post on June 24, 2018. The congregation has approx. 60 members, 3 ruling elders, and 2 deacons.

Pastor Tkach has finished his first sermon series on the book of Ephesians. They are currently working through some Psalms and other passages until beginning a new series in Micah in the New Year. For Sunday School they continue to shore up their foundations and remember basic truths of the faith by working through one or two questions from the Shorter Catechism each week. They plan to begin a bi-weekly bible study on Wednesday nights in the new year and have their hearts set to enjoy some fellowship and explore the topics of evangelism, outreach, and apologetics.

Rio Rancho OPC have been greatly encouraged by the presence of a number of people who are moving into the area. God has added regular attenders from families with young children to seasoned saints. Because of this interest in membership, they will be running another round of the membership class early in 2019. This will make for a busy time!

Regarding facilities, they have just completed re-painting of the sanctuary to match new business cards that were printed to facilitate inviting interested friends to church. To add to the cosmetics, they are looking into matching vinyl applications for some of the windows to tie everything together and make it easier to locate them in the business park where they meet. The website has been re-designed thanks to the work of one of their members.

Hopefully these measures will make the meeting place as inviting as their members are. God has graciously provided for the church by a substantial one-time donation that has greatly helped bolster reserves! Praise be to Jehovah Jireh who provides for all our needs!

PRAYERS:

- Thank God for:
 - His word and the fruit it is producing in the lives of his people.
 - A recent baptism and reception of two new members.
 - Bringing in interested visitors.
 - His generous provision for the church!
- For the congregation, for the work of Pastor Tkach and the Session, that these would bless and sanctify the congregation and glorify God.
- For continued provision for the needs of the congregation.
- That the congregation will take hold of more opportunities for outreach and growth.
- That God would provide gainful employment for several members searching.
- For physical comfort and healing for those dealing with chronic health problems and illness.

Listening In and Sounding Out

Cornerstone OPC (Houston NW)

Heartfelt thanks are rendered to God that the Cornerstone congregation is now cleared to occupy their new property and will be doing so this coming Lord's Day. Excitement and thankfulness fills the air for the Lord's mercies and generous provision.

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