



The 4th Focus

“Community”

I grew up in a small town in Southern Ohio. In a town of roughly 5,000 or so people, you can expect to know everyone around you. I knew the man who ran the local ice cream shop. I knew the cops. I knew the town’s auto mechanic. I knew who ran the local sports leagues. I went to the largest church in town, so I knew everyone there. And of course, I knew all of the teachers and most of the other students in my high school. But despite the familiarity that I seemingly had with the entire town, it was still possible to feel as if I was entirely alone.

We can know countless people and we can have many good friendships, but many of us feel some kind of isolation or some kind of loneliness. We may write it off and pretend that it is not that big of a deal, but we feel it when we go home, or when we go to bed at night. We even sometimes feel it when we are around others, when we are at work, or when we are with friends, or even when we are with our family. It can be a nagging, persistent thought.

We are surrounded by people, but we are disconnected from them. This is what sin does to us. Every time we feel isolated or lonely we feel what Adam and Eve felt moments after eating the fruit. They were naked and alone. Their intimate relationship with each other and with God was ruptured. The union with God they were made for was destroyed and so they became alienated from each other.

Most of us don’t walk around holding grudges against everyone we meet. Most of us are friendly, personable people. Most of us have friends and family of some kind. But yet we can still feel estranged from others. Perhaps there is a problem that lies not in others but within ourselves. The surest way to establish a deep relationship is by opening ourselves, but that is not natural to us anymore. What is natural is to hide ourselves. What is natural is to put on fig leaves to cover up our shame. What is natural is to say everything is going fine when someone asks you how you’re doing. Speaking what is going on in our minds and in our hearts is foreign to us after the fall, but it is what forms community. Until others know us, until they know our issues, until they know our stories, until they know where we come from, until they know our pain and brokenness, all of our relationships will leave us wanting. They will leave us unfulfilled because we will still be in Eden, hiding behind fig leaves hoping that no one will see us for who we truly are. But we don’t have to be in Eden any longer. We have a friend, brother, and king who took on all of our guilt and all of our shame and nailed it to a cross.

We are free to be in community because we have been freed from all shame, but community can still hurt. We are messy, and other people are messy. Fellowship groups here at Fourth provide a means to create a community out of a group of isolated, sinful people like ourselves. The fellowship groups exist, in part, to be a space where we can engage others at a meaningful level, where we can ask uncomfortable questions and get uncomfortable answers. They are there so we can speak truthfully to one another. So we can tell secrets and listen to secrets. Fellowship groups are not the ultimate form of community, but they are a start. They are a place where we can learn to finally drop the fig leaves and the shame and instead we can be honest with one another. Then we might finally see community formed and we might finally see loneliness extinguished.

- Jake Parks
Western Seminary Intern

New Member



Jan Abbott recently joined our church. You may not know her, but I have known her for my whole life; she is my grandma. I'm not sure how much I can tell you about her without getting in trouble, but I will tell you I am amazed at her faith in the face of great trials. Not only has she had to put up with my father, Norm, all these years, she also rallied behind us through my mother's

cancer, and has been widowed more than once. Through everything, she continues to trust in Christ as her Savior and Lord.

My grandma spent time at Fourth as a child before moving to Lowell. By some conspiracy of God, my dad and mom wound up attending here MANY years later. Now my grandma is back.

She often sits in the back of church with my father, and my Uncle Al and Aunt Nancy. This past fall, she began knitting hats for the kids who attend the ministries of New City Neighbors. We put a bunch of them out at Christmas and the kids were stoked to get hand-made hats. It was funny to watch them wear them proudly all night.

I'm glad my grandmother is back at Fourth. There is something cool about being able to worship in one place with four generations of family. I'm also eager to see how God will continue to use her to build his kingdom.

- Eric Schalk

CHECK THESE OUT!

Encounters with Jesus by Timothy Keller

- unexpected answers to life's biggest questions.

Unglued by Lysa Terkeurst

- making wise choices in the midst of raw emotions.

A Year of Biblical Womanhood by Rachel Evans

- how a liberated woman found herself sitting on her roof, covering her head, and calling her husband "master."

Homespun Gifts from the Heart by Karen Ehman

- meaningful gifts that are quick and affordable.

Unspoken by Dee Henderson

- favorite fiction author is back with a new book.

Happy Birthday!

Jan.

2 - Jim Berthiaume
3 - Laura Horinga
3 - Delores Christians
6 - Lynn Berthiaume
6 - Jennifer Parks
9 - Connie Wierenga
10 - Ed Van Timmeren
11 - Jim Rinkenberger
13 - Dave Gleason
13 - Nicholas Walton
16 - Marge Berrevoets
17 - Amalie Woods
24 - Gary Proos
26 - Justin Bierens
27 - Steve Wammack



Feb.

2 - Nancy Springfield
2 - Caden Gleason
4 - Becky Parks
5 - Megan McDowell
11 - Ken Coeling
15 - Percy Woods, Jr.
17 - Merribeth Fannon
21 - Don Coutchie
22 - Marcia Schuur
25 - Kathy Burggraaf
25 - Brayden Hawkins
25 - Ron Schuur
26 - Ryan Faasse
27 - Ruth Meendering



2013 Missions



Thank you to everyone who was faithful in financially supporting our missions each month this past year. If you feel led to be more involved in our missionaries, see Tom Boehm, Noreen Reitsma or Ruth

Meendering - your mission committee.

Jeff & Lisa Boehm in Thailand,
Youth With A Mission

\$1,996

Mission India

\$1,272

Bruce & Jan Smith in Orlando
Wycliffe Associates

\$1,043

Words of Hope

\$1,799

Joel & Marilyn Van Dyke in Guatemala
Christian Reformed World Missions

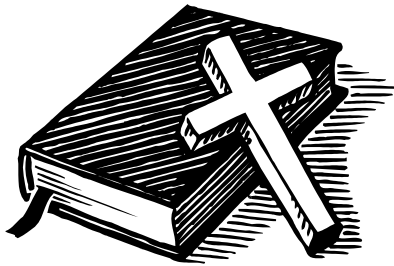
\$2,043

New City Neighbors

\$2,976

"And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ..." - Colossians 4:3

Reformed Church Heritage - From Dutch to English



For over a century after the English takeover of New Netherland, the Dutch language continued to be almost exclusively used in Reformed Church worship, keeping its users both a cohesive and peculiar group during the colonial period. In locations where Dutch was spoken by a large majority of the population, many non-Dutch adopted the language as their own.

Dutch language preaching was used by most Reformed pastors, many of whom were born, raised and trained in the Netherlands. Schools that used Dutch as the language of instruction, administered by local consistories, kept the mother tongue before the children. In 1726, the New York consistory declared that *The true doctrine of comfort in life in and death is preached in the clearest and most powerful manner, in the Dutch tongue.*

Occasional attempts at English preaching dated back to New Netherland days when Rev. Samuel Drisius occasionally used it. Eventually, English replaced Dutch as the language of commerce and everyday life, leaving Dutch for little more than Sunday use. In some locations, the Dutch language had become tainted by adding English words and phrases. Those accustomed to the Dutch-English dialect often found it difficult to understand preachers who used the unadulterated version. Together with other reasons, the continued use of Dutch was blamed for a large exodus of Reformed Church members to English speaking churches.

Around New York City, a movement began to introduce the English language into the church. Dutch religious works translated into English by Rev. Lambertus DeRonde first appeared in 1763. The same year, the New York consistory authorized the publication of an English language translation of the Psalms set to music using Dutch musical scores.

The New York City church authorities approved the calling of a Reformed pastor who would preach exclusively in the English language. Rev. Archibald Laidlie, a Scotsman who had been serving an English congregation at Vlissingen in the Netherlands, was ordained by the Classis and preached in New York for the first time on April 15, 1764. Before and following Laidlie's arrival, hardcore opponents of English preaching vainly attempted to block its use by appealing to the New York consistory, Classis Amsterdam and the colonial government. Classis Amsterdam fired back, insisting that the *Everlasting Gospel* could be preached just as effectively in one language as another.

In spite of this controversy, the number of people coming to hear Laidlie continued to grow. Although new galleries had been built just before his arrival, the church had become too small within three years and had to be replaced. He was later joined as an English language minister by Rev. John Henry Livingston who, as we have seen, played the major role in healing the Coetus-Conferentie split. Dutch services in New York City were phased out, ending on a regular basis around 1803.

Over time, English language preaching spread elsewhere. Change often came slowly for such reasons as local resistance or the inability to obtain an English-speaking pastor. Dutch language worship remained the norm in many areas for many years. The ability or inability of a pastor to learn a certain language proved significant at times. An established Dutch speaking pastor serving a congregation desiring English could be faced with the possibility of either learning English or moving elsewhere. Conversely, an English speaking minister might be called upon to learn Dutch, so he could preach in it on certain occasions. Article 36 of the Constitution of 1792, required that a ministerial call state the expected frequencies of Dutch and English preaching.

Although the Dutch language gradually faded from use, it would again one day prove to be vitally useful. Beginning in the late 1840's, a new wave of Dutch immigration began which profoundly impacted a later period of Reformed Church history. Meeting the immediate needs of these new arrivals were Reformed pastors who still knew enough Dutch to effectively communicate.

- Eric O'Brock
Next - Queens College (Rutgers)
and New Brunswick Seminary



Fortunately, the weather on December 16 was frosty and clear, and the coming ice storms at the end of the week were unheard of. Most of our Special Friends were able to join the girls for a memorable evening. The room was filled with excited chatter as many of the girls met their Special Friend for the first time. First, we created a Christmas tree made with greens inserted on a clothespin and decorated with a multitude of tiny ornaments, a snow baby and some cotton snow all cemented on a clear glass base. A special thanks to Betty Webster for your donation of the materials!

After the craft, we decorated some cookies with frosting. A special thanks to Becky Berrevoets for baking the cookies and getting things ready. The girls were eager to decorate an extra cookie for their special friend. While the frosting hardened, we proceeded to our costumed narration of the Christmas story which was repeated from last year by the request of the girls. Parts were assigned by lot so there were no complaints, and all turned out perfectly. Thanks to Connie Scherpenisse for writing the script for this play.

Next came eating the cookies. What a delight to see the pride as they munched the cookies together with Special Friends, admired crafts and then opened a small gift given especially to them. We thank our Special Friends for making this evening possible.

With a little time left, Beth Sowers lead us in singing some Christmas carols. The grand finale was a wacky rendition of the 12 days of Christmas where we were randomly assigned a day to "sing". Nancy Aukeman and Dawn Faasse took center stage with their rendition of three French hens, and started to get a little loopy by the end of the song. We all ended up giggling in the merriment of the evening. Before long, it was time to go. We closed with our benediction, *Go Now In Peace*.

- Laura O'Brock

When Tim and I opened our front door to welcome our "patrons" to the *Crazy Christmas Café* on December 8, little did we know just how crazy the evening would be!

The kids began the night ordering items from their menu for their four courses. They soon found out that if you ordered *Jacob's Well*, *Liquid Snow*, *Bubbles* and *Dentist's Friend* you ended up with 3 drink items and a toothpick for one of your courses. It was amusing to observe how some managed to get food into their mouths when no utensils were available for a certain course. Thank you to our sons for frantically trying to get plates ready for each course!

While Tim quickly searched the internet for ways to remove red jello stains from the carpet, the rest of us proceeded to play a game similar to Pictionary using Play-Doh instead of paper and pencil. It was great fun trying to form different holiday/Christmas words for our team to try and guess.

Below, you see the winning snowman team photo. That's Avery with the carrot nose! Given toilet tissue, construction paper, scarves and tape, snowmen were created in short order. It looked like we had a layer of "snow" all over our living room floor before it was over.

We ended the evening opening white elephant gifts. Some kids were happy with their gift and some went home with a true white elephant gift, but all had fun.

After all the fun and games, Tim refocused our hearts and minds to the reason we celebrate Christmas. Reminding us what's really important in the crazy month of December.



After everyone left, Tim and I cleaned up and locked the door on the *Crazy Christmas Café*. The big spots on the carpet still remind us of the delightful time we all had together that evening!

- Ruth M.

