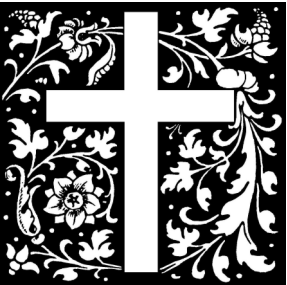




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Christ Redeemer Church

Grace. Truth. Community.

Summer 2018

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BEING TRUTH IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD

Pastor Don Willeman, Th.M.



On the header of this newsletter you'll see "Grace. Truth. Community." We believe that grace and truth are the indispensable ingredients to genuine community, but of these, perhaps, "truth" is the most challenging in our cultural moment.

fellow Americans use it" (*The Atlantic Monthly*, September 2017). In other words, relativism seems appealing. However, in a truth-less world we are left with only spin and social pressure—propaganda and power—not shared community.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 15	Father-Son Campout
July 11	Community Service Day
July 17-20	Summer Celebration Camp (VBS)
July 23	Annual Picnic at Storrs Pond
Aug 6-11	Ocean City Youth Retreat
Aug 18-19	Father-Son Campout
Sept 10	Sunday School Breakfast

Most social commentators have noted that the very concept of "truth" has fallen on hard times. In 2016 the *Oxford English Dictionary* selected "post-truth" as its "Word of the Year," which it defined as "denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief."

Kurt Andersen in his new book *Fantasyland: How America Went Haywire* laments that America has descended into "full Fantasyland." He suggests that this "was the product of two momentous changes. The first was a profound shift in thinking that swelled up in the '60s; since then, Americans have had a new rule written into their mental operating systems: *Do your own thing, find your own reality, it's all relative.*"

The second was the arrival of digital information technology (the internet, social media, etc.), which created an environment for this relativism to flourish. He concludes, "Today, each of us is freer than ever to custom-make reality, to believe whatever and pretend to be whoever we wish.... Truth in general becomes flexible, personal, subjective. And we like this new ultra-freedom, insist on it, even as we fear and loathe the ways so many of our...

A self-described "liberal atheist," Andersen goes on to suggest that in many ways the church has contributed to this corruption of truth. I agree. The gospel has been sacrificed on the altar of personal experience, political expediency and popular opinion.

However, such fragmentation and twisting of the truth for personal or tribal gain is utterly contrary to the good news of Jesus. At the core of classical Christianity is the God who is the creator of all reality, the God of all Truth. And, far from using "truth" for personal gain, this God came and gave his life away for us (the cross)—for the very one's who were twisting the truth. And this God did so gladly, because he loved us so. Truth is not obsessed with "doing its own thing" or with merely winning arguments but with serving and dying for those that disagree. In this way Truth is way more absolute and way more accommodating than we could possibly imagine. Truth is real. Truth is a person. Truth loves us so.

According to the Bible, to the degree that this truth becomes the animating principle of our souls, then to that degree we become persons of truth...and grace. To that degree real community is possible.



SPIRIT-FILLED INTELLECT

Is the diligent use of the mind contrary to being a disciple of Jesus? Isn't it a truism that the more educated a person is the less likely they are to be a follower of Jesus? Isn't it the strategy of the devil to get us thinking too much? Shouldn't we therefore be suspicious of learning and relying too much on our minds? After all a simple faith in Jesus is all that really matters, right? God wants us to have a heart-knowledge of Him not a head-knowledge, doesn't He? As a matter of fact, the phrase "head knowledge" just sounds bad.

Well, if you want to be a follower of Jesus, you don't have the option between head, heart and hands. You must love him and serve him with all that you are. We are commanded by Jesus to love him with all our heart, mind and strength! The same God that made your emotions made your mind, as well. Just as His

Spirit should fill our hearts, so should His Spirit fill our heads. The net result of such filling is not less thinking but more and better thinking.

One author put it this way: "In our quest for the fullness of the Spirit, we have sometimes forgotten that a Spirit-filled intelligence is one of the most powerful weapons for pulling down Satanic strongholds" (Richard Lovelace).

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

³*For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.*

⁴*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. ⁵We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.*



2018 Men's Retreat



7 REASONS I AM NOT SKIPPING CHURCH

Lara Mather

Last night I wondered, “Should I go to church tomorrow?” I could take a ‘mental health day’ and skip it. “Or, maybe I’ll get lucky and wake up with a headache.”

But, it’s 4AM on Sunday morning and I stumbled out here by the woodstove to write down my reasons for going. I smiled when I sat down in my chair and saw the full moon shining down at me through one of the loft windows. As I consider how the church loves like moonlight- a gentle reflection of the full sunshine glory of the love of God, I will write and tell you the reasons why I’m not skipping church.

1. My pastor has been working all week on his sermon. He has lost sleep and time with his family and fought personal battles we won’t see when he’s preaching. Those forty minutes he’ll be standing in front of us are the condensed blood and sweat of the long hours spent studying and praying and the squeezing of his own heart. And, this man is thinking about us, specifically. This isn’t a message he’s come up with to share his smarts with the world. This is a message for the people he’s prayed over and wept with. This is a message for me. I could listen to a great online sermon, by a super mega-church preacher. That would be like heading to McDonald’s for dinner when a home-cooked meal, made with love and thinking about my tastes and nutritional needs, had been placed on my very own table. I’d be crazy to leave what has been prepared for me, with great sacrifice and love, to eat alone food that’s mass produced. So, I’m going to go local, pull up a chair and listen with ears to hear to what this man has to say.

2. My kids need to be there. They need to hear their daddy and mommy’s voices singing, together with the church, their love to the One who is bigger and stronger and wiser than us. They need to see us pray. They need to see us be hugged and give hugs. Our children have seen our church. They’ve seen meals being shared and babies passed around and wood being stacked and boxes moved. And, they have seen, for al-

most every single Sunday morning of their lives that we gather together on Sunday mornings. That this is more important than resting up for Monday or running those errands we didn’t get to on Saturday. My kids have the security that comes with being connected to, and part of, something bigger than just us. Here are people they trust and will go to for help or advice when they get older. Every Sunday reinforces that they are loved and called to love big because they are part of a really big family.

3. My church connects me to historical, Biblical Christianity. We still recite creeds and confessions of faith at my church and some of them date back to the early centuries of the church. Something happens in me when I stand up and hear our voices speaking the truth that has been spoken by those that have come long before. It grounds me. I’m small. But this is so big. I’m drawn up into that great cloud of people who have been and still are confessors of God’s mercy and grace.

4. Also, I am a natural born idolater. I have one limited mind that filters truth through my own personal experience and knowledge of the world. If left to myself, I’d create a god that fits with what makes sense to me. When I go to church, I’m brought in contact with teaching that has been confessed by many other people, living in different cultures, times and places. And, my ideas are also challenged by the contemporary believers. Those sitting and standing around me during our morning service, with lifestyles and politics and parenting methods and perspectives on the world that are different from my own. The church isn’t like a club where we pull in the people we have a lot in common with and keep out the people who make us feel insecure. It’s more like the emergency room, where we find ourselves stumbling in with a diverse group of people sporting their own aches and pains. We’re brought together by our need for the same Physician.

5. People will know if I don’t show up and I’d have some explaining to do. That week after week showing up, and being known, means that I have accountability in my life. It means if I’m struggling, and would like to stay in bed with the covers over my head, I can’t do it in secret. I’m going to church

because if I skip it I’m just prolonging the question, “How are you doing?” and will have to answer for it anyway. This hasn’t always been true. In college, before marrying ‘the man who will never skip church,’ I was less consistent. I would bounce around some and take little church sabbaticals. I’d head to the ocean with my Bible and call it good. Call it better even. But, that meant that people weren’t always tuned in to where I was and I could hide out, under the radar. And the funny thing about hiding is that it starts out feeling safer than being known, but it ends up feeling like you are forgotten and uncared for.

6. Going to church is a way that I love others. I need to be there to notice and see the faces of this church family. If they are going to experience a hug, and tangible love, it has to be with arms that are present to embrace them. If they are going to hear a word of greeting and encouragement, there needs to be a voice there to speak it. My arms and my voice and my eyes are needed there.

7. Going to church is a way I experience the love of Christ and renew my faith. Our church passes the bread and cup every single Sunday. It makes the service ten minutes longer. Every week. It means I’m trying to balance a cup of grape juice and trying not to spill it while handing crayons to my restless kids. Every week. But I need this. Every week. This broken body of Christ, for us. This new covenant in his blood that speaks a better word, for us. Every week, I ask myself a question. “Is this really true? Can this really be for me, Lord?” And it’s by faith that I give thanks. It’s by faith that I take this bread and juice in my mouth and swallow it into my own flesh and say “Thank you, Lord, this is for me.”

Now, as I still sit by the fire, that full moon is setting red and rich behind the hills to the west. The sun will soon be rising. And, before long, I’ll be off to church.

Lara Mather is a member of Christ Restoration Church. She's been married to her husband, Jonathan, for close to two decades and she's a mom to three girls and four boys. She enjoys writing about life, history and faith at laramather.com.

Friends in Focus

KATHARINE OTTO

Christianity wasn’t a significant part of my life when I was growing up in England. However, I came to faith in Christ a few months before graduating university. After a multi-year roller coaster of seeking God and then running away from Him, I was finally boxed into a corner. God had changed my heart from an academic knowledge to a faith-filled trust in Him, and then He challenged me to stand for what I knew had happened. I had to trust God, and that He had a plan – as Jeremiah 29:11 still reminds me: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”



After getting on my feet a little before leaving England, I truly began to build the foundation of my faith in a small church in New Jersey. They welcomed me to the church, to their families, to their lives, and showed me how their faith interacted with all that. All the while God was also morphing my heart so I could see, hear and absorb slowly the examples that surrounded me. It wasn't an easy time to start a foundation while the rest of my life was still rather chaotic, but God led the way.

After finishing my Masters, God nudged me toward Vermont. I’d never been there, but He kept throwing interesting examples of planning work across my path, and found me recommendations of a few good churches. So I moved to Vermont to become a transportation planner and I settled in another church where new families took me under their wing – teaching me about life in Vermont and how to live my faith. Then in 2012, I moved to CRC – greeted first by the young adult bible study, and then by the wider church.

So what is my faith today? Let me run with endurance... fixing my eyes on Jesus... (Hebrews 12:1-2) Overall it is about seeing God and Christ more clearly – through the experiences and knowledge of others, and putting it into practice in my own life, and sometimes nudging a friend on the road next to me. Often it means stepping out of my comfort zone, such as reaching out to new people, but it can also be the quieter times when I dig into a bunch of books or explore God’s creation through my camera lens. It’s not always easy, but I can't imagine doing anything else. I don’t always “feel” energized or enthusiastic, but even on the days when I just plod along I know deep down He is there.

Katharine Otto is a member at CRC, attending our new location at The Quechee Church, and works for the Southern Windsor County Regional Planning Commission in Vermont.



Students in the Spotlight RYAN ROEGGE

Until my freshman year of high school, I would have told you that I believed the Bible to be the truth, but I was not willing to commit to having a relationship with Jesus. To me this meant: admitting that I am not even close to as worthy as I think I am, praying to God that I want to follow his plan for my life rather than my own, and investing countless hours into reading the Bible. I was afraid to step out and commit.

However, the Bible soon became more than just words in a book to me, and I wanted to know Jesus for myself. I began to feel the reality that God loves me for the sinner that I am, and Christ died to save me from my sins. I began to read through most of the New Testament, spent time in prayer daily, and talked with members of my church. My sophomore year of high school, I committed my life to Jesus and was baptized in order to publicly confess my faith. As I grew in God’s grace, I wanted to share it and tell others of his forgiveness, and desire for us to love one another.

It has been a challenge to learn to live out my faith in a new context here in Hanover, but that has also made it stronger. CRC has been a place where I felt God’s love through Scripture and fellowship with believers, and I attribute my lasting relationship with Christ through college to God’s overwhelming love. God has given me the faith and discipline to cling to His word and His plan in my life’s darkest moments.

Ryan Roegge is a Dartmouth College Sophomore, majoring in Geography. His favorite CRC experience has been serving as a Sunday School teacher last winter.

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