



Christ Redeemer Church  
P.O. Box 5523  
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# Christ Redeemer Church

Grace. Truth. Community.

Winter 2020

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- Message from Pastor Don
- Unexpected Groove of the Gospel
- Friends In Focus: Eric & Marjie Bish
- Dartmouth Student Spotlight
- The Kingdom Perspective

## THE COUNTERINTUITIVE GOSPEL

*Pastor Don Willeman, Th.M.*



*“He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy”*  
*Titus 3:5*

deem “insiders.” In the gospel the “insiders” become outsiders, and the “outsiders” become insiders.

What is the gospel? Most basically, the word “gospel” means “good news.” When applied to Jesus, it refers to the news about Christ and his kingdom. It is the announcement of Jesus and all that he has done to save a people for himself. It is a message about what God has accomplished, and not about what we are to do.

This means the gospel is counterintuitive. It is not first for those with the proper pedigree and performance. We tend to think of religion in terms of moral performance (“I do these things to become a good person for God”) or pedigree (“I was raised a Christian, that’s why I am a Christian”).

And so, perhaps, the most significant thing about the gospel is that it is such a surprise. It is not what we would naturally expect. One who truly hears the gospel never says, “Of course,” but always “Wow!” The telling of this news should always be prefaced by: “You’re never gonna believe what happened!” To the degree that you are shocked by it, to that degree you’ve really heard it.

The Bible suggests a totally different relationship with God, a relationship that is based on grace—not based on who I am or what I do, but on who Jesus is and what he’s done for me. I don’t get into the kingdom through my works for God, but I get into the kingdom through Jesus’ work for me. This is what the Bible means by: “Christ died for our sins.” I did not pay the price of my freedom; He did. Christ came for me, and in spite of me

This is what the Bible calls God’s “grace” and “mercy.” And it means that anyone can become a child of God. If we see ourselves aright, we are all equally qualified candidates for his transforming power, precisely because none of us deserve it.

Lawyer and activist Bryan Stevenson, in his excellent book *Just Mercy* (now a major motion picture), puts it this way:

“The power of just mercy is that it belongs to the undeserving. It’s when mercy is least expected that it is most potent.”

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Jan 26	Healthcare Professional Lunch
Jan 31	Men’s Winter Conference
Feb 5	24 Hours of Prayer/Women’s Prayer
Feb 8	Annual Meeting
Feb 16-19	Service Trip
March 7	Gospel-Driven Vision Seminar

**Christ Redeemer Church, 10:00am**  
Hanover High School, Hanover, NH

**Christ Restoration Church, 9:00am**  
Colby Sawyer College’s Lethbridge Lodge  
New London, NH

**The Quechee Church, 9:00am**  
1905 Main Street, Quechee, VT



Christmas Pageant 2019



### CHESTERTON’S QUIP ON CORRUPTION

You would think that any thoughtful person could hardly argue with the biblical doctrine of sin. The fact that our corruption goes to the very core of our being is evident everywhere in the news media and all of our human interactions. G.K. Chesterton put it this way, “The doctrine of original sin is the only doctrine verified by thousands of years of human existence.” Well said.

However, why is it then that so many people want to think they are basically good or morally neutral? Excellent question! There are perhaps several reasons for this phenomenon, but the best answer is simply pride. Nobody would naturally want to think of themselves as inherently corrupt and deserving the judgment of God. Of course not! We’d like to think of ourselves as pretty good people. We are content to judge ourselves by ourselves and conclude, “I’m as good as the average Joe and that can’t be too bad.”

Well the truth is that most of us are average, but that is relative to the rest of humanity. The Bible says that when we judge ourselves by ourselves we are without understanding; this leaves us with no objective standard. Sheep look perfectly white until they are seen standing on a snow-covered hillside. Who doesn’t look pretty good standing next to Adolf Hitler, but when standing next to Jesus Christ, not one of us measures up.

Something to think about from “The Kingdom Perspective.”

#### ***Romans 3***

*<sup>10</sup>As it is written: “There is no one righteous, not even one;  
<sup>11</sup>there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God.  
<sup>12</sup>All have turned away, they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good, not even one.”*





“My name is Doug Cooper and I’m the Pastor of Christ Restoration Church.” That’s essentially what I say every Sunday morning when we gather at Colby-Sawyer College in New London, NH. We began our journey well over five years ago and represent the first church plant of Christ Redeemer Church of Hanover, NH. Now, if you had told me that this would be the case twenty-two years ago, I likely would have laughed, and called you crazy.

It was at that time, and for the first time, that I really heard the Gospel of Jesus explained to me. I was nearly twenty-one then, and in the midst of my fourth summer of following the Grateful Dead. Now if you know anything about the Grateful Dead, this is not the place that you would necessarily expect to learn about Jesus, but this is very much on par with my experience of the Gospel so far.

The Grateful Dead, in case you don’t know, were a band that formed in the San Francisco Bay area back in the mid-sixties. Their big draw was their infectious, improvisational way of collaborating. Separately, their musical backgrounds included bluegrass and folk, R&B and blues, avant-garde classical, exotic world music, jazz and a shared love of rock and roll. And so collectively, they were an unlikely, but delicious gumbo of a band!

By the time I caught up with them in the early to mid nineties, they had an unprecedented cult following. It consisted of a diverse caravan of characters that numbered in the thousands, all orbiting in unison around the band. I was enamored, and so a few years later, I eagerly leapt onto the bandwagon.

Fast forward four years, and the utopian dream had mostly fizzled. It would take a book to explain how and why, but I now found myself headed from the west coast to the east with little more than a Bible. As I read the Gospel of John, I was altogether surprised by Jesus. He was not what I was expecting. His encounters with people were radical in a myriad of ways. His followers seemed unpolished and unlikely. His words were penetrating. They were unfamiliar, yet they solidly rang my bell. I was apprehensive and intrigued all at once. And so I kept reading... and I still am.

When I did become a follower of Christ, I was convinced of two things: that I wanted to spend the rest of my life serving Him, and that I didn’t want to be a pastor. And so after I had become a lay leader at Christ Redeemer Church, and it was later suggested that I become the pastor our first church plant, I was bewildered. I felt unpolished and unlikely. But I was again reminded of His words:

**“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)**

And so at the start of 2014, a small core of us from the Lake Sunapee Region began to gather and pray. Soon we began holding “Vision Formation Meetings” at a local school one night a week. Come July we held our first publicly advertised Sunday morning worship service, and a

## CHRIST RESTORATION CHURCH

*Christ Changes Everything!*

surprising thing began to happen: as we centered ourselves upon the Gospel, slowly but surely the church began to grow and take shape. As an aside: both then and now, the support of CRC in Hanover has been critical and amazing!

Since then we’ve experienced a lot of twists and turns. Now meeting in our third location, we’ve faced some tough transitions. Meeting on campus at Colby-Sawyer these last two years has been absolutely wonderful! Please pray that this good relationship would continue. Over the years we’ve shared the Gospel of God’s grace with many, baptizing some, and seeing new faith blossom! Please pray that God would continue to work among us in these ways. We’ve celebrated new marriages and new births! Likewise, with heavy hearts, we’ve had to say farewell to dear friends, burying some. As these same joys and sorrows continue, please pray for us.

Jesus continues to surprise us at Christ Restoration Church. Like the apostle Paul, it’s the same thing that keeps pulling us in again and again: the reality that He loves us and gave Himself over to death for us (Gal. 2:20). Unpolished, unlikely us. And by God’s grace, slowly but surely, we’ve become much like a savory gumbo as a result. Together, we’ve developed into an unlikely collective with an unexpected groove. I couldn’t be happier to be a part of it. Rock on Christ Restoration Church family!

*Doug Cooper serves as the pastor of Christ Restoration Church in New London, NH. He and Leah are the parents of Sadie (13), Elias (11), Crosby (8), and Greta (5).*

## Friends in Focus

### ERIC & MARJIE BISH

Marjie and I were born and raised in Clarion, Pennsylvania. We attended the same schools and parties and shared many of the same friends. It was only after graduating high school and going off to different colleges that we began dating. Our paths converged in Columbus, Ohio at The Ohio State University. Go Bucks! On North campus we studied engineering, cheered on the Scarlet and Gray, and thoroughly embraced that down-to-earth midwest vibe (but mostly studied).

In a decision that continues to raise eyebrows, I crossed the border (some say, crossed the line) to attend graduate school for engineering at the University of Michigan. Marjie’s work as a consulting engineer kept her busy designing landfills and developing solid waste management plans. We were married in 1993, and our daughter Michaela was born in 1995. After completing my Ph.D., I chose a position as a Technical Support Engineer for Fluent Inc., headquartered in Lebanon, NH.

New beginnings can be hard, and life was often lonely for us far from extended family and familiar faces and places. Our family grew, with our son Carter arriving in 1997 and daughter Sydney in 2000. We began to consider moving back to Pennsylvania; perhaps this wasn’t the place for us after all. However, Marjie met her dear friend, Dori Willeman, a fellow sojourner from the heartland. Don and Dori had recently launched Christ Redeemer Church, and we began attending outreach events sponsored by the church. I eventually came to saving faith in Christ, and our family soon be-



came regular CRC attenders and active participants in the life of the church.

Fast forward to the present. Marjie still yells “Go Bucks!” to anyone she sees wearing Ohio State paraphernalia (I mean anyone. Anywhere. It’s a little embarrassing.) I still can’t shake the stigma of going to the Dark Side in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Our household solid waste management plan is second-to-none thanks to Marjie’s passion to Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Rot. Our children are grown up, furthering their education and making their own way in the world. Each of them is witness to their own transformative encounters with the gospel of Jesus. Marjie now teaches 3rd grade at the Ray School in Hanover, and I work as a project manager at Hypertherm and pursue my passion for teaching and mentoring at the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College.

We could not have imagined the paths our lives have taken so far. Through life’s ups and downs, triumphs and trials, happiness and heartache, the sovereign God of the universe remains forever the same. In spite of our often self-serving motives and feeble efforts to glorify Him, God has woven a tapestry of grace and love into our family’s lives every step of the way. This has been nowhere more apparent than through the gospel of His son Jesus, crucified for us, and the love and care shown to us by our CRC church family. For this we are so grateful.

*Eric serves as a Deacon, and Marjie serves as a Sound Technician at CRC.*



## Students in the Spotlight

### DREA JENKINS

As a three month old child, I had my first eye surgery. I had been born with one eye blind, and this began a childhood with lots of health problems, doctor visits, and surgeries. My loving family and my ongoing health issues were the main forces that shaped my early life.

I first learned about God and Jesus when I was eleven. After deep consideration, I became convinced of God’s reality and the truth of the Scriptures. I began to see how Christianity makes such sense of the world, integrating everything from God’s character to science and the natural world. In particular, I realized that my struggles weren’t a punishment, but were part of living in a world filled with evil.

From sixth grade through high school, I began to realize that I was apathetic to those around me, and this was not part of God’s plans for me. I prayed to feel and care for others, and, to my surprise, God answered! I learned that I could further my relationship with God in addition to prayer: through reading scripture, having real community, and simply living my daily life with God.

In my time here, God has pushed me out of my comfort zone with my emotions, stood by me through many challenges, and changed my perspective time and time again. My community, though not perfect, has pointed me back to God when I was being stubborn and demonstrated the beauty of God’s kingdom. I know that in many ways life will be difficult, but I also know that God will be my father, my best friend, and my savior through it all.

*Drea is a senior Computer Science major at Dartmouth from Longview, Texas. She is part a community group and serves on a music team.*

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## VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

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