

Newsletter for March 2019

Dear Church Family,

There are two subjects I hope to express in this newsletter. The first is the phrase that is on each week's bulletin cover: "**Evangelical and Reformed Baptist**"

The phrase expresses how, after all these years, we see ourselves. "Evangelical," because we see our work to be that of Gospel proclamation, and that done *boldly*. The sermons for the first Sundays in March and April will be on this theme. We know that by "evangelical" we are not using it in a political manner but rather in the biblical manner of being witnesses for Christ. The sermons on the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in March and April both carry forward this theme.

Evangel means Good News or Gospel, all having to do with presenting to the world at large the person and work of Jesus Christ. This is why we do our publishing and television work, which, by the way, is merely at a starting point. Due to the advancement in technology in terms of communications, we can actually reach out to the world. The books Earthen Vessel publishes are available world-wide. Some of these we have given, at no charge, to other publishers in other parts of the world. Some books are sold every day, either electronic versions, like Kindle or other download mechanisms, or hard copies. We manage several YouTube channels, one for each of our three television programs, plus a newly formed one for the church and its services and other offerings. They are available worldwide. (Some of the players at the high school have told me they have seen a program or two on local Marin TV or online. Every year this happens. Plus, folks at the Jewish Community Center Fitness Center where we go three days a week see these.)

Reformed has to do with the underlying theology that is expressed in Romans 8:30. We are not strictly Calvinistic, but we are reformed in that we see that the Holy Spirit does the work of conversion. Thus, we are not strictly "decision based" either.

Baptists because we are among those essentially independent churches that see the Lord's Supper and baptism not as saving events but as acts Jesus called us to observe. We refer to them as ordinances. They remind us of the core of our faith. And Baptists are the original Protestants who were at the forefront of the 16th century reform movement that was only started by Martin Luther but not taken far enough. These early Baptists were persecuted heavily by both the Roman, Lutheran, and Calvinist churches. Baptists left northern Europe and went to Britain and from there to America. We remain the largest evangelical body in the world. You will learn more of this as time goes by.

Now secondly, here is more on **A Church For Those With No Church**. This idea was planted in our thinking by Don Harris more than 20 years ago. At that time there was no clear and real way to bring such an idea into reality. But now is the time. Other churches, many of them small like our MAC, have an online presence in addition to the

brick and mortar kind. More Christians do not attend any church than actually show up in person at a local church. There are many reasons for this. For instance, those who are physically unable, perhaps emotionally unable, or financially unable. There are those who have tried often but have failed to find a congregation where they feel comfortable. Perhaps they could not find a church that was theologically or methodologically compatible. Then I thought of those with service or comfort animals, those who are deaf, and the list goes on.

Where are we right now? For one thing, our capacity to film a quality-enough morning service is almost complete. A few glitches need to be ironed out, but we are close. Then we will add other things like webinar Bible studies and praying and counseling with pastors online via Skype, Zoom, and other platforms, and who knows what else. Already I have two pastors, one in South Carolina and one in Texas, who will be available for ministry over the net. We will be able to do our divorce recovery workshop this way as well. The possibilities are deep and wide and will develop in the coming years. Many of us will be involved. We hope to have other languages spoken as well as signing for the deaf. Katie and I already do deliverance ministry using Skype. We will issue certificates of membership and find a means for folks to participate in the ongoing affairs of the church. And there will be a way to send tithes and offerings as well, using Pay Pal, EasyTithe, or other means. It is not going to be easy or smooth, but we are seeing our way forward a bit at a time.

Soon we will begin discussing this with all who wish to engage on the topic following Sunday service.

Kent