



Pastor Vern's Message for January

Obstacles

Everybody wants to be in the right, or even if only one person wants to be in the right, it is impossible to live in community. That is egotism or self-love. Touchiness, like opinionatedness, is another form of self-love.

We must seek what brings us together, what is the same for us all. We must think of others with hearts filled with love. If only we could come to the point where we recognize that we are all in the same situation, all in the same state! That we are all equal, and very similar in our situations, is quite amazing. When that becomes clear to us, much of our opinionatedness, our wanting to be in the right, and our touchiness falls away. But that is not yet all. That does not remove the obstacles.

Worst of all is what afflicts people who think about themselves the whole day long: they suffer from a widespread and deadly disease. It destroys body, soul, and spirit. People who have themselves at the center, who relate everything to themselves and see everything from their own point of view, are seriously ill. They are mentally disturbed. They are far from becoming truly human, from becoming true brothers and sisters. They are lost even in the midst of a community household.

All of these things are obstacles to community: touchiness, opinionatedness, self-love, self-centeredness. To have a higher opinion of oneself than of others is a deadly poison. Whoever still does this is completely incapable of community. He or she will not be able to experience the unity of the great cause. This is what is crucial. Of course, it is a help to think of others and of their situation and to look for the best in them. That will help us not to think of ourselves as better than others, but it is not the main thing.

God's cause is a cause for which we are not needed. ... It is not just that I am unimportant; I am an obstacle.

We are still inclined to see the shortcomings of others far out of proportion and thus forget that we ourselves are weak human beings. We should not always try to improve on what another does wrong. We must become reconciled to people's imperfection.

This self-centeredness is a lying spirit; it is out-and-out false. People who have such a high opinion of themselves that they cannot admit a mistake are living in the deepest untruthfulness and insincerity. Egotism must be condemned, not just because it does not fit well in community or because it is morally wrong, but because it is lying and death. It is poisoned through and through and brings destruction. It is the mortal disease. The quarrelsome spirit that destroys community comes from this mortal disease of the soul. Self-centered people are mortally sick. They must be redeemed.

Those who turn around themselves do not know that Christianity has an objective content, that it is actually a cause for which we can completely forget ourselves with our own little egos. Self-importance ... leads to a hypocritical attitude. We must be freed from all posing, from all affected holiness, otherwise we are utterly lost. The people who are most endangered are the artificial saints who take such pains, yet just these efforts are the root of their hypocrisy. They see God from their own point of view and make God relate to themselves. That is their undoing, because it is utterly untrue. For I am not the truth, and because I am not the truth I cannot and may not place my own person – not even as a Christian – in the center of my thoughts. I would simply make myself an idol. The great cause must be in the center. We must come to true faith in God and the church.

Redemption from the life of self – from wanting to be in the right, from imposing our own ways, from our unfitness for community, from this deadly disease that will be our ruin – can come only

through a cause that exists completely outside of our own selves. God's cause is a cause for which we are not needed. We are not indispensable. It is not just that I am unimportant; I am an obstacle. I am an adversary of the cause. Redemption cannot begin until we each recognize this and see ourselves thus in the light of the cause – as adversaries, especially in our own piety. Until that happens we are merely deluding ourselves with our own cramped efforts.

We human beings can recognize light only in contrast to shadow and darkness. We can grasp the cause only through an awareness of its opposite and of its adversaries, for we are not gods but mere mortals. Why do torches give us so much joy? Because they are lit in the night and we become an illuminated circle in the dark. It is the dark background that makes the shining circle of our common life visible at all and allows it to speak to our hearts. Those who are still in love with themselves cannot recognize the cause, nor can those who are still in love with their own religious experience, with their own conversion and rebirth. Not until we see the great cause against the wretchedness of our own little being will we grasp its greatness.

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In the early church the Holy Spirit came to those who finally recognized themselves as the murderers of the longed-for Messiah-King, as adversaries of the holy cause for which they had always striven. We are afraid of this awful awakening, especially if we have sought for years or decades to live in a certain holiness and suddenly must recognize ourselves as murderers and adversaries. That is hard but necessary. Paul was blinded when the Spirit came upon him, and it was no subjective exaggeration on his part but his deepest conviction when he said, "I am the worst of all sinners," because he had been personally responsible for the persecution of the church of Jesus Christ and for the

murder of the Christian martyrs. That was Paul's experience, this tremendous contrast. He was a persecutor of the church of the Messiah, a persecutor of the kingdom of God. Not until he recognized this could he become an apostle of God's cause. That same contrast helped the early Christians to realize that God's cause is very different from what they had imagined; they would have never grasped it in any other way. Karl Barth says rightly, "The kingdom of God must strike us as being totally other, or it remains closed to us."

This cause, which is totally other from what we ourselves are, alone can free us from our self-centeredness and touchiness. It can free us from our opinionatedness and our quarrelsomeness, from all that we complain makes us unfit to live in community. Unless we recognize ourselves as adversaries – even in our own piety – we will never grasp the greatness of this cause.

From *Called to Community: The Life Jesus Wants for His People*. by Eberhard Arnold



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Jingle Bells....Jingle Bells!!!! December 17th found twenty one brave souls wrapped in warm clothing, mittens and hats excitedly gathered at the church parking lot for a fun outing. Calvin Wood had hooked his hay wagon to the John Deere (in lieu of reindeer) to take us around the village for Christmas Caroling. We had fun as we serenaded the residents of the Senior Housing, after which we went to various other residences in town, singing the familiar carols. Afterwards, we were welcomed at the Parish House by Carol Clendenning and her helpers, where we warmed up with hot chocolate and cookies. Thanks to all of you who participated. We hope to make it an annual event. (Maybe we will do it in August next time....just kidding)

Bonnie Ziegler

Calendar of Events for January 2017:Sunday

Each Sunday: 9:30 SS classes

11:00AM Worship

Each Tues. 7 am - Prayer in Pastor Vern's office

2nd & 4th Sat. - Men's Breakfast: 8 - 10 am

Midwinter Worship - Sat. Jan 21 @ Summit

Church, 21 Lincklaen St. Cazenovia, NY - 1-5 pm

Featuring Musicians:

Rolling Hills Quartet,

Ryan Zarbatany,

Dave Schneider,

Russ Martin & Friends

Featured Speakers:

Dan Schallmo

Vern Groves

Damon Gagnier

Mike Harris Jr.

Event is free -- Refreshments will be available

The Wednesday evening prayer time has been postponed till February. We will keep you posted as February draws closer.

Each Tues. afternoon from 3-4, beginning Jan. 10th, is the **After School Program** run by Dan & Janette Rhoda from Cortland Bible Camp. It is @ the DeRuyter School Cafeteria and is a time for these young 'uns to get a foundation of Jesus Christ and the gospel.

Our Local **Food Pantry - Clothes Closet** is open each **Tues. & Thurs. from 9-11 am**. There is a strong staff there who have the right heart motives. They are there to serve those who come in with the basic needs of feeding & clothing their families.

Each **Tuesday night 7:30-9** the **Community Choir** meets at the United Church of DeRuyter to rehearse for their Easter Concert. They are always looking for additional members. Do you have a voice? Are you interested in singing with a group who love God and want to glorify Him with their voices? This may be for you. They begin Tues. Jan 10th.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION – JANUARY 2017

Happy New Year

At Church December 18th, the PK-12th performed the Christmas Play "God's Gift to Us".

The kids did an awesome job and had a lot of fun making the scenery.

The congregation joined us in singing Christmas hymns with refreshments following provided by the Adult Sunday School.

Thank you to the teachers, students, parents and congregation for making our program possible.

We are blessed with the children that come to Sunday School and ask for your prayers for 2017 to bring more kids to learn about Jesus.

Sunday School resumes January 8th.

In His Service Maurine



Didn't the Sanctuary look beautiful during the Christmas season? What a joy to decorate the Lord's House for the celebration of His birthday. Many thanks to the folks who came to help, and to Pastor Vern, who hung the overhead greenery. It's going to look a little barren now, but we surely did enjoy it while it was there.

Bonnie Z

Mission News- January 2017

Mission checks totaling \$3,800 went out to the following at the end of November in accordance with our 2016 Mission Budget: 1. DeRuyter Free Library, 2. DeRuyter Community Services, 3. Cortland Bible Club Camp, 4. Hospice of CNY, 5. Syracuse Rescue Mission, 6. Radio Bible Club, 7. Independence Christian Alliance(Haiti), 8. Carlos & Caryn Benitez with Wycliffe, 9. Rick & Betsy Chiesa with Wycliffe, 10. Special Situations/ Vern for local families in need, 11. Daniel & Jeannette Rhoda/ DCS after school bible program , and 12. Clear Path for Veterans.

Thanksgiving news from Rick and Betsy Chiesa included Rick's safe arrival home from Ethiopia on Nov. 23rd after meeting several new translators and Ethiopian leaders and making progress on several new and existing projects. They are thankful for Kayleen & Joe expecting a son in February, Scott's engagement to Amanda next November, and Theresa's employment at Wycliffe this year.

DeRuyter Community Services/Food Pantry sponsored by our Church has had a very busy holiday season. Due to the generosity of our congregation and the whole DeRuyter Community, in November we were able to provide 85 local families with a special Thanksgiving turkey and dinner bag and in December a ham dinner Christmas bag (and many free gifts provided from generous donors) for a record number 93 local families! Thank you everyone for your continued support of this greatly appreciated local mission. I wish you all could see how thankful these families are as we do every week.

Our church participated in the Annual Christmas Mitten Tree project along with Citizens Bank and St. Lawrence Catholic Church once again and 19 special Christmas gift bags were delivered to

DeRuyter Central School from our church on Dec. 20th to make 19 children's Christmases a little brighter.

Lastly, our new Spiritual Board selected Clear Path for Veterans in Chittenango to be the recipient of our Christmas Eve offering to provide the \$300 necessary for the cost of a dog for the dog/veteran training program. We are happy to report that \$635 was collected to be sent to Clear Path and this will provide two dogs!! Thank you to all who made this possible.

Jean Whalen



M&M's

The M&M's meet on the first and third Wednesday of the month at 10:00 am. The study for this winter will be on Prayer using Phillip Yancey's book "Prayer: Does It Make any Difference?" The next meeting will be on January 18th at the home of Joan Ball. We begin each meeting with light refreshments and a time of fellowship. We would be glad to have you join us!



Spiritual Committee Report- January 2017

In September 2016 after long discussions by the Administrative Board members over many months, it was approved at the Annual Church Meeting to combine all the former committees of the Church into the following two main committees: An Administrative Board and a Spiritual Board. This change encompassed within the new Spiritual Board/Committee the former: Diaconate, Pastoral Relations, Missions, Music Team, Women's Fellowship and Christian Ed committees. Because this is such a big change from our past way of doing things, our first meeting in November was an organizational meeting to devise how this new committee would function with our goal of providing spiritual leadership and growth within the Church. There will be more members now to complete the combined tasks of all these former committees. We will be focusing on Vern's vision of UP, IN, OUT: UP- to schedule events in the church that focus our eyes upward to God, IN- to have more fellowship together, and OUT- to reach out to the community. Many ideas have been discussed on how we can reach out to the whole community and we welcome yours as well.

You will be seeing a variety of new greeters in Church as our whole committee will be sharing this joyous privilege of welcoming you on Sunday mornings. We want you to feel welcome from the moment you walk through the doors until we see you again the next week.

We are working on a variety of ideas to reach out in the community and show our love of the Lord every day of the week and not just on Sunday. You will be hearing more about this in the months to come as we work out how all these committees can work together to the glory of God. Jean Whalen

Birthdays & Anniversaries~~January

- Jan 2 ~~~Ed Sautter
- Jan 8~~~Carl Wightman
- Jan 10~~Kyle Paladino
- Jan 10~~Lois Damon
- Jan 11~~Tim Etter
- Jan 12~~Marleah Marshall
- Jan 13~~Shanley Nicholas
- Jan 15~~Barbara Lidell
- Jan 15~~Michael Furlough
- Jan 16~~Elliott Millet
- Jan 16~~Ted Bolton
- Jan 21~~Isabella Travis
- Jan 21~~ Brooke Wood
- Jan 21~~Scott Chiesa
- Jan 22~~Bruce Ziegler
- Jan 22~~John Mauzy
- *Jan 23~Bruce & Bonnie Ziegler
- *Jan 24~Ed & Kristine Sautter
- Jan 25~~Melvin Coon
- Jan 26~~Rosalie Laris
- Jan 27~~Naomi MeKeel
- Jan 28~~Lisa Springer Travis
- Jan 28~~Foster Cameron Wood
- Jan 29~~Rick Chiesa

Ladies Community Breakfast

Over seventy ladies gathered at the Parish House on December 10th for our annual Ladies Community Christmas Gathering. We enjoyed a tasty morning fare of fruit, muffins, scones, sweet rolls and beverages, followed by a program presented by members of our Women's Fellowship. There was a time of sharing and plenty of Christmas music. Lovely centerpieces were given to the lucky ladies who won them. We wish to thank each and every lady who helped in any way, our speakers and song leader and pianist. It was a very successful event and we sincerely thank all who attended. We look forward to our Springtime gathering and hope to see everyone there. Thanks to those who decorated the Parish House for the event.