

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for

April 13, 2025

"And He (Christ) put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all." – Ephesians 1:22-23



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“✠” = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – John 17:18-23

Leader: *As You (the Father) sent Me (the Son) into the world, I also have sent them (the Apostles) into the world. For their sakes I sanctify Myself,*

People: **That they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.**

Leader: *I (the Son) do not ask on behalf of these (the Apostles) alone, but for those (Christians) also who believe in Me through their (the Apostles') word;*

People: **That they may all be one;**

Leader: *Even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us,*

People: **So that the world may believe that You sent Me.**

Leader: *The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one,*

People: **Just as We are one;**

Leader: *I in them and You in Me,*

People: **That they may be perfected in unity,**

Leader: *So that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them,*

People: **Even as You have loved Me.**

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Gospel Absolution Text – 1John 1:3-7

***Hymn #1** (red hymnal) – “All People That on Earth Do Dwell”

Scripture Reading – Acts 15:1-35

Ancient Creedal Proclamation – Apostles Creed (pg#845 in the red hymnal)

Offerings Presented

[Please put your tithe/offering in the plates before or after the service – Thank you!]

[Gifts labeled “Deacon’s Fund go to aid those in need in the congregation.]

***Doxology #731** (red hymnal)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host: Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***Prayer of Dedication**

***Sung Psalm #96A** – “O Sing a New Song”

Prayers of the Church & Lord's Prayer (sins)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Reformation Creedal Reading – Cambridge Platform of 1648 AD,

Chapter 15 – “Of the Communion of Churches One With Another”, various sections.

Leader: *Although (local) churches be distinct, and therefore* Rev 1:4
may not be confounded one with another, and equal, SoS 8:8
People: **And therefore have not dominion one over another;** Rom 16:16
Leader: *Yet all the Churches ought to preserve Church communion* 1Cor 16:19
one with another, Acts 15:33
People: **Because they are all united unto Christ,** Rev 2:1
Leader: *Not only as a mystical, but as a political head;*
People: **Whence is derived a communion suitable thereunto.**
Leader: *The communion of Churches is exercised in sundry ways (abridged).*
1) By way of mutual care in taking thought for one another's welfare.
2) By way of Consultation one with another, when we have occasion to require the judgment and counsel of other Churches, touching any person or cause, wherewith they may be better acquainted than ourselves . . .
3) . . . by way of admonition, to wit, in case any public offense be found in a church . . .
4) . . . by way of participation: the members of one Church occasionally coming unto another, we willingly admit them to partake with them at the Lord's Table, it being the seal of our communion not only with Christ, nor only with the members of our own church, but also of all the Churches of the Saints . . .
5) . . . by way of recommendation, when a member of one Church has occasion to reside in another church; if but for a season, we commend him to their watchful fellowship by Letters of Recommendation . . .
6) . . . in case of need, to minister relief and succour (aid) one unto another, either of able members to furnish them with Officers, or of outward support to the necessities of poorer churches . . .

SoS 8:8; Acts 15:3,6,22,23; Ezek 34:4; Gal 2:11-14 Matt 18:15-17; Gen 18:25; 1Cor 12:13; Rom 16:1; Acts 18:27; 11:22,29; Rom 13:26,27

Chapter 15 – “Of the Communion of Churches One With Another”, various sections.

Leader: *Although (local) churches be distinct, and therefore* Rev 1:4
may not be confounded one with another, and equal, SoS 8:8
People: **And therefore have not dominion one over another;** Rom 16:16

Chapter 16 – “Of Synods”, 2.

Leader: *Synods being spiritual and ecclesiastical assemblies, are therefore* Acts 15:2-3,6-7
made up of spiritual and ecclesiastical (church) causes. The Acts 23,31
next efficient cause of them, under Christ, is the power of the Acts 16:4-5
churches sending forth their Elders and other messengers,
who being met together in the name of Christ,
People: **Are the matter of a Synod;**

(continued . . .)

Leader: And they in arguing, debating and determining matters of Religion,
People: According to the Word,
*Leader: And publishing the same to the churches it concerns, do put forth
the proper and formal acts of a Synod;*
People: To the conviction of errors, and heresies,
Leader: And the establishment of truth and peace in the churches,
People: Which is the end of a Synod.

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

***Sermon Text** – 2Corinthians 8:18-24

***Gloria Patri #735** (red hymnal)

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning,
is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.*

Sermon – “Denominations”

(A Mini-Sermon Series on Denominational Heritage & Direction)

***Hymn #342** (red hymnal) – “Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation”

***Benediction**

All are welcome for Fellowship & Food downstairs after Worship

Announcements

- There will be **no Coffee Hour** after church on **Easter**, April 20th.
- TRC is **organizing visitation/meal ministry** that will provide friendly visits, especially to shut-ins, either in-person or by phone. Also, this group will provide temporary meals to those in need or special occasions. If you are interested in either volunteering to help, or know someone who would like a visit, please contact Leona [bklejeune@gmail.com - (860) 480-0370].
- TRC is putting together a simple **Photo-Directory** for members and friends of the church.
 - It will include the following information: First & Last Name, Address, Phone Number, Email Address. (Children will be listed individually next to parents.)
 - If you don't want to be in the book, or to have some of your information not listed, then please email: trc.photobook@gmail.com by **4/13/2025**. Otherwise, we will assume that you are approving of all of the information above being included in the Directory.
 - We would like to include pictures. You can email in a picture you like or you can have your picture taken on a Sunday by Bryan & Kim Simmons. To email in a picture, please send it to Sheryl Gabelmann directly at: sgabelmann058@gmail.com as she will have to upload the photos individually into the software. If you opt to have a photo taken by Bryan & Kim Simmons, they will email your photo to Sheryl after you have approved of the final version of it. To schedule a Sunday to have a picture taken, email: kimsimmons7@optonline.net
 - We hope to have all the information in by Easter (April 20th).
 - There will be a review copy to check before we publish the Directory.

Upcoming Events

- **Easter** is on **April 20th**. There will be a baptism!
There will be no Coffee Hour afterwards.
- **New Members** will be joining on **Pentecost**, Sunday, **June 8th**.
(Zoom classes will be starting soon.)
- **Sermon Schedule:**
April 20th Luke 24:1-9 (Easter!)
April 27th Sermon Series on early ministry of Samuel, in 1Samuel 1-8, starts.

Regular Weekly Events

<i>Sunday</i>	9:00 – c.10:00 AM	Sunday School Children's curriculum: KVB Publications Women's Study: Baucham's <u>Expository Apologetics</u> Adult Study: Westminster Larger Catechism Worship (Lord's Supper on the 1 st Sunday of the month) Coffee Hour Fellowship
	10:30 – c.11:40 AM c.11:40 AM	
<i>Tuesday</i>	10:30 AM – Noon	Tuesday Study (Evangelism in Acts) at Pastor Doug's house
<i>Wednesday</i>	6:30 – 8:00 PM 6:30 – 8:00 PM	Wednesday Study (on Exodus) at Pastor Doug's house Gen Alpha Club (Tiny Theologians) - 2 nd & 4 th Wednesdays at Pastor Doug's house
<i>Friday</i>	6:30 - ??? PM	Young Adult Discussion Group at Pastor Doug's house (1 st & 3 rd Fridays)
<i>Saturday</i>	morning	Prayer Group at the Gabelmann's. (Please call Sheryl to confirm if the group is meeting that day, 860-309-7250.)

ONLINE RESOURCES

TRC's Webpage:	TrinityReformedCT.org
TRC's Facebook Page:	facebook.com/people/Trinity-Reformed-Church/61554974150922/
TRC's Youtube Channel:	youtube.com/@TrinityReformedCT
Pastor Doug's	youtube.com/simplyreformed
Youtube Channels:	youtube.com/@PilgrimsOfPlunder

INTERNET PRAYER CHAIN

If you have any prayer requests for our prayer chain, please email them to Donna Ensminger at:
trcnwprayer@gmail.com. (If you would like to join the Prayer Chain, also see Donna.)

LEADERSHIP

Elders:	Rev. Douglas Aldrich, pastor	860-379-1147	douglas_aldrich@sbcglobal.net
	Bob Ensminger	860-485-8738	robert.ensminger@arthurgrussell.com
	Rich Gabelmann	860-605-7852	rgabelmann0415@gmail.com
	Rev. Jonathan Haulenbeek	203-709-0784	jhaulenbeek@icloud.com
Deacons:	David Mattson (chair), Carl Bierce, Caleb Goodell, Mason Goodell, Dean Winters		
Sunday School:	Verna Aldrich, Mason Goodell	Music Coordinator:	Cindy Rines
Clerk:	Sheryl Gabelmann	Treasurer:	Cindy Rines

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Worship Starts At: 10:30 AM (9:30 AM in the summer)

Sunday Worship At: Winchester Grange (100 Newfield Rd; Winchester Center, CT 06098)

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 343; Riverton, CT 06065 – *Phone:* (860) 238-7399

Webpage: trinityreformedct.org – *Email:* trinityreformedct@gmail.com

Sermon Notes

2Corinthians 8:18-24

"Denominations"

A Mini-Sermon Series on Denominational Heritage & Direction

April 13, 2025

Introduction

- 1) Today, we are finishing up a mini-series on denominations.
- 2) Thank you for your patience. Talking about denominations might not be the most exciting thing in the world but it is necessary.
- 3) We have looked at our biblical, conservative, creedal puritan Congregationalism as represented by the Cambridge Platform and the Savoy Declaration of Faith.
- 4) We have pondered Congregationalism's historic collapse and looked at its closest cousin, conservative Presbyterianism in order to have a working knowledge to begin a conversation about how to:
 - a) Remain faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ, which is our supreme concern.
 - b) Understanding our tradition, because we think it is the best expression of biblical Christianity. (While having charity to our brothers from other traditions who disagree with us, e.g. Lutherans, Anglicans, Baptists, etc.)
 - c) Discern that maybe the best way to remain Congregationalists is to flirt with? Have loose ties with? Join a Presbyterian denomination?
- 5) This brings us to questions that many ask:
 - a) Why do we even need denominations?
 - b) What benefits do we get from joining a denomination?
 - c) And the best question: Where is "denominations" in the Bible anyways?

Definition – "Denomination"

- 1) The word "**denomination**" is from the Latin and means "*to name*" or "*to call by name*."
 - a) In the broad sense it's about the act of naming / labeling.
 - b) In specific it means "*A class, society or collection of individuals, called by the same name; as a denomination of Christians.*" (From Websters' 1828 Dictionary.)
- 2) A denomination is not just labeling a theological tradition but is an official binding together of like-minded believers into an organization.
 - a) Those who claim to come from Congregationalism are the UCC, NACCC, CCCC and EARCC, though none of them doctrinally prescribe to historic Congregationalism.
 - b) There are numerous conservative Presbyterian denominations in the USA, with several of them affirming a soft form of presbyterian government that is congregational-ish such as the PCA, OPC, ARP, VP, etc.
 - c) Denominations are organizations that local churches, and clergy, belong to coming together under a shared theological tradition and organization.
 - i) Denominations can affirm congregational government with the worst thing the denomination can do to a local church is to have them leave the denomination or be very top down like the Roman Catholic Church.

- ii) Denominations usually have a headquarters, official seminaries, missionary organizations in older times such things as hospitals and colleges.
- 3) For the first 300 years after the time of the Apostles and the New Testament (1st century AD) there was no division within the church.
 - a) Yes, there were heretical groups (e.g. Gnostics) but there have always been heretics since the time of Cain, there always will be until the end of the age.

Gen 4:5ff
 Matt 7:15
 Rev 16:13ff
 - b) From the beginning there was a high degree of support and organization between local churches. (As we will see below when looking at the New Testament witness.)
 - c) In the 4th century AD the church went from being persecuted by the Roman Empire, to tolerated and then the official religion of the Empire.
 - i) This was a mixed blessing. Again, “nothing fails like success.”
 - ii) It’s good that the church is no longer persecuted and that Christianity will produce a much more advanced civilization.
 - iii) It’s bad because now the church will be much more tempted by worldly power and influence.

Luke 16:13; 22:25ff
 John 18:36
 - d) It is not surprising that soon after splits, denominations were created.
 - i) In 431 AD the **Church of the East** was created.
 - ii) In 451 AD the **Oriental Orthodox Church** was created.
 - iii) In 1054 AD the “Great Schism” happened splitting the church into the **Roman Catholic Church** in the west and the **Eastern Orthodox Church** in the East.
 - iv) In 1517 AD the Western Church split into **Roman Catholic** and **Protestant**.
 - v) In 1529 AD the first major split happened in Protestantism between **Lutheran** and **Reformed**.
 - vi) In the late 19th century the **Old Catholic Church** split from the Roman Catholic Church.
 - vii) In 1936 the Presbyterian church in the USA split between the older and liberal Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (**PCUSA**) and the newer Orthodox Presbyterian Church (**OPC**)
- 4) Up until the post WW2 era denominations where the norm in Christianity.
 - a) The idea of a local church would have no official formal fellowship with other churches would be completely alien to Christians throughout the ages up until very modern times.
 - b) Since World War 2 there has been a rapid decline of denominations.
 - i) In fact, there has been a rapid decline in joining any social organization. (Boy Scouts, Grange, Daughters of the American Revolution, etc.)
 - ii) Instead of doctrine, discipline and fellowship that guides churches it is now marketing and entertainment techniques catering to the individual, whose emotions and experience are all important.
 - As seen by that idiotic slogan: “I’m spiritual not religious.”

- c) What passes for church this day and age is some unconnected mega “worship-center” run by a celebrity-CEO “pastor” that offers valet parking and a mini coffee bar so you can enjoy your double whipped latte espresso while listening to the “worship team” (i.e. the rock band) in the “sanctuary” that use to be a basketball arena in an “all-denominational evangelical” mega “church”, which would have been laughable throughout the history of the church until only a few years ago.

The Church is Catholic

- 1) I am going to say a bad word: We are part of the “catholic” church.
- a) The word “catholic” is a very good word, it simply means “universal”.
 - b) All Christians are part of the “catholic” church because the Lord Eph 1:22-23; 5:23-25
Jesus created one catholic/universal church. Col 1:18,24
 - i) The Lord Jesus created His church by saying, *“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock (Peter’s confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God) I will build My church (singular); and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.”* – Matthew 16:18
 - ii) The Lord Jesus prayed for His church *“that they may be one.”* – John 17:22
 - iii) 1Corinthians 12:12-14 – *“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body (baptism doesn’t make us a member of a local church but a member of the catholic/universal church), whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.”*
 - c) Protestants, historically, have no problem with the word “catholic”. Our problem is with the word “Roman” – that a bishop in Rome thinks he is the vicar of Christ on earth and supreme head of the church.
 - d) We affirm it every Sunday when we say the Apostles Creed – *“I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints . . .”*
 - e) Just look at our Savoy Declaration, 26.1 – *“The catholic or universal Church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the Head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”* (Eph 1:10,22–23; 5:23,27,32; Col 1:18)
- 2) The Bible is clear, the local church is called to be in fellowship, and association with, other like-minded churches.
- 3) Local churches have officially gathered throughout the history of the church. Acts 20:17,28
- a) In Acts 15, the first universal church council gathered to discern that the Gospel was for the Gentiles and one didn’t have to become Jewish to be a Christian (i.e. be circumcised and keep the civil/ceremonial law).
 - b) Churches throughout history have gathered in councils, assemblies and/or synods to make official pronouncements.¹

¹ To list some of the major ones:

- The first seven ecumenical councils of the early church: First Council of Nicaea (325 AD), First Council of Constantinople (381 AD), Council of Ephesus (431 AD), Council of Chalcedon (451 AD), Second Council of Constantinople (553 AD), Third Council of Constantinople (680-681 AD), Second Council of Nicaea (787 AD).
- Second Council of Orange (529 AD).
- The Westminster Assembly (1643-53 AD).

- 4) Throughout the New Testament we read that local churches acted together as a catholic/universal church.²
- a) Acts 18:17 – “*And when he (Apollon - not one of the Twelve Apostles) wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace.*”
 - i) This is a great verse because it is both congregational and catholic.
 - ii) Congregational because the authority of the local church is respected.
 - iii) Catholic because the universal church is acting together.
 - b) In Romans 15:26-27 we read that the churches in Macedonia and Achaia took a collection to help the poor in the church in Jerusalem.
 - c) In 1Timothy 3:15-16 the catholic church (singular) is called “*the household of God*” and she is “*the pillar and support of the truth*”.
- 5) 1John 1:3-7, today’s Gospel Absolution Text, teaches the church catholic has fellowship with each other.
- a) The word of “fellowship” (*koinōnia*) is not some generic word about feelings.
 - b) It is about close mutual association, 1John 1:3; 1Col 1:9
 having shared participation with each other, 2Cor 8:4
 and a willingness to contribute to each other. Rom 15:26
 - c) 1John 1:7 – “*but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship (koinōnia) with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*”
 - i) The “fellowship with one another” has several layers of meaning.
 - ii) First, between Christ and His catholic church. 1John 1:6
 - iii) Second, between the Apostles (whose authority is found 1John 1:5
today in the Bible) and Christians.
 - iv) Finally, between churches, for the epistle is addressed 1John 2:12-14,19;
to all Christians, i.e. the catholic church. 3:1; 5:13

The Catholic Church in 2Corinthians 8:18-24

- 1) Paul has sent with Titus (the “him” in 2Cor 8:18) an unnamed brother who 2Cor 8:18
 was famous for his service of the Gospel throughout “*all the churches.*”
 (Note the plural.)
- a) The famed brother was “*appointed by the churches*” to travel with Paul. 2Cor 8:19
 He brings accountability with the financial gift they carry with them. 2Cor 8:20-22
 because he has been “*tested and found diligent in many things*” and has
 great confidence in the Corinthian church.
- b) There are other brethren with Titus who are “*messengers of the churches.*” 2Cor 8:23
 (Again, note the plural.)

• The Saybrook Synod (1708 AD).
 • International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in Chicago (1978 AD).

² Matt 16:18-19; John 13:34-35; 15:17; 17:21-23; Acts 2:38,42,47; 8:14-15; 11:22,29; 15:3,6,22-23,33; 16:4-5; 18:27; 20:17,28; Rom 15:26-27; 16:1-2,16; 1Cor 4:17; 12:12-14; 16:19; 2Cor 8:18-24; Gal 2:11-14; Eph 1:22-23; 5:23-25; Col 1:18,24; 2:2; 1Tim 3:15-16; Titus 1:5; 3:12-15; 1John 1:3-7; Rev 1:4; 2:1.

- c) Finally, Paul commands the Corinthians to prove themselves to these messengers, that Paul's love and boasting of the Corinthians to the messengers is justified. This action is to be shown "*before the churches*." (Again, note the plural.)

2) How do we, at Trinity Reformed Church, do this today?

- a) How do we officially recognize a brother along with the other "*churches*?"
- b) How do we appoint a brother to a special task with the other "*churches*?"
- c) How do others "*test*" those who will have leadership in the church?
(To put it in a practical sense, where do we find the next pastor?)
- d) How do we recognize "*messengers of the churches*?"
- e) How do we openly show our piety "*before the churches*?"

3) Note, this isn't about the uniqueness of the Apostolic age.

- a) Nor does it deny congregational government. (That each church has authority unto itself.)
- b) But it does affirm the biblical principal that we are part of a catholic church.
- c) We are commanded to have fellowship with like-minded brothers, how do we do this?

4) Does a local church have to be part of a denomination?

- a) No, as Congregationalists we believe a local church,
if biblical, is part of the catholic church and a true
fellowship of believers. Rom 12:4,8; Titus 1:5
Acts 6:3-4; 14:23
1Cor 12:29-30
- b) However, being part of the catholic church, and fellowship with other like-minded churches is commanded and assumed.

Advantages to Joining a Denomination

1) Are there advantages to joining a denomination?

2) Yes!

- a) It allows us the opportunity to have humble fellowship with other churches, as commanded by the Scriptures.
- b) It allows us to help other churches in need, and for them to help us
- c) It allows us to receive, and give, advice, council & correction when needed.
 - i) Such as finding a new pastor.
 - ii) Or dealing with church splits.
- d) It helps us to stand with a common voice against the world, and make declaration about new issues and problems that might arise.
- e) It gives us a theological identity beyond a mere minimalistic statement of faith.
- f) It is part of our Congregational heritage as witness by sections 15-16 of the Cambridge Platform about "Of the Communion of Churches One With Another" and "Of Synods."
- g) Again, fellowship is commanded in Scripture.

Conclusion

- 1) Are we at TRC going to join a denomination any time very soon?
 - a) No, but the Elders are going to start looking into Presbyterianism this year.
 - b) We already have some minimal level fellowship with Presbyterianism since we use their resources, visit their churches, and they would be the best source to find a new pastor when needed.
- 2) Should we, TRC, and/or pastor Doug, officially join a Presbyterian denomination?
 - a) That is something the elders are going to start looking into.
 - b) If we do, that will require a congregational vote, which means everyone has to be educated on this issue, thus this mini-sermon series.
- 3) Which denomination do you think we should join?
 - a) Not sure, there are several, all with strengths and weaknesses.
 - i) There are concerns that some of the conservative Presbyterian denominations are drifting into theological liberalism.
 - ii) And as the history of Congregationalism has taught us, that is a very, very, easy thing to do.
 - b) This will require much prayer, research and discernment.
(Please keep the elders in your prayers!)
- 4) Pastor Doug is strongly committed that if we join a denomination, it must be congregational in government: That the final say is with the local church and the local church owns its property.
- 5) The Lord Jesus' great priestly prayer for the church in John 17 ends with: *"The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, although the world has not known You, yet I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me; and I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, so that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them."*
– John 17:22-26