

Trinity Reformed Church of Northwest Connecticut

Biblical, Traditional, Congregational

Lord's Day Worship for

February 15, 2026

"And no one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was." – Hebrews 5:4



trinityreformedct.org

“*” = Please stand if you are able.

Welcome, Greeting & Announcements

Call to Worship – Deuteronomy 16:1-6

Leader: Observe the month of Abib (late March–early April)

People: And celebrate the Passover to the Lord your God,

Leader: Or in the month of Abib

People: The Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night.

Leader: You shall sacrifice the Passover to the Lord your God from the flock and the herd,

People: In the place where the Lord chooses to establish His name.

Leader: You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste),

People: So that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt.

Leader: For seven days no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory, and none of the flesh which you sacrifice on the evening of the first day shall remain overnight until morning.

People: You are not allowed to sacrifice the Passover in any of your towns which the Lord your God is giving you;

Leader: But at the place where the Lord your God chooses to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset,

People: At the time that you came out of Egypt.

Prayer of Invocation and Confession

Gospel Absolution Text – Romans 16:24-27

***Hymn #580** – “Lead On, O King Eternal”

Scripture Reading – Ephesians 5:19-33

[Note sacramental language of washing in v.26, nourishing in v.29, and the mystery in v.32.]

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 #114A** – “When Isr’el Went Forth”

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 – Westminster Confession, 27.4.

There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained. (Matt 28:19; 1Cor 11:20,23; 4:1; Heb 5:4)

Ministry of the Word

Prayer of Illumination

***Sermon Text** – 1Corinthians 4:1

***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 – “Clergy?”

A Topical Sermon Series on the Lord’s Supper

***Hymn #252** – “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”

***Benediction**

Everyone is welcome to Coffee Hour Fellowship downstairs after church today

Announcements

- Pastor Doug and Verna would like to take all those who helped out filling in today.
- **Wednesday Night Study** (6:30 – 8:00 PM, at Pastor Doug’s house) is starting a new topic:
 - On the 2nd & 4th Wednesday (when Gen-Alpha meets) we will be studying 1st & 2nd Thessalonians.
 - On the 1st, 3rd & 5th Wednesdays will be a general discussion, so bring any questions!
- **Ladies Fellowship** will meet at the Aldrich home on Saturday, Feb 28th, at noon. We will be discussing The Dawn of Redeeming Grace by Sinclair Ferguson. Lunch will be served. A sign-up sheet will be downstairs during Coffee Hour.
- TRC needs volunteers for two **support ministries**:
 - 1) Those willing to provide meals for temporary needs, such as emergencies or a funeral reception.
 - 2) Those willing to do casual/friendly visitations of shut-ins.If you are interested in volunteering for either, or both, please contact: Kim Simmons (860-309-9975; kimsimmons7@optonline.net)

- ii) Any Christian? Any Christian with the church's blessing?
An elder in a local church? Only the clergy?
- 4) Our Congregational, Reformed and Protestant forefathers gave a clear answer: Only the clergy.
 - a) Those with "Rev.", for "Reverend", in front of their names.
 - b) Our Reformed, Puritan, and Congregational Creeds, are clear:
 - i) Westminster Confession, 27.4 – *"There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which may be dispensed by any, but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained. (Matt 28:19; 1Cor 11:20,23; 4:1; Heb 5:4)"*
 - ii) Cambridge Platform, 6.4 – *"Of Elders (who are also in Scripture called Bishops) some attend chiefly to the ministry of the word, as the Pastors and Teachers. Others, attend especially unto Rule, who are, therefore, called Ruling Elders. (1Tim 2:3; Phil 1:1; Acts 20:17,28; 1Tim 5:17)*
 - c) Early frontier colonial churches would not take the sacraments until a member of the clergy could attend and perform the signs and seals of the covenant of grace.

Clergy Defined

- 1) The New Testament is very clear that a local church is to be governed by elders. Acts 14:23; 20:17,28; Phil 1:1
1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1Pet 5:1-3
 - a) There seems to be two type of elders: Acts 20:17,28; Rom 12:6-8; 1Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11-12
1Tim 5:17; Heb 13:7,17; James 3:1; 1Pet 5:1-3
 - i) **Teaching & Preaching Elders**, or Pastors, who focus on leading worship, teaching, pastoring, and also governing.
 - ii) **Ruling Elders**, who focus on governing.
 - b) Are those Teaching & Preaching Elders, however, also "clergy"?
- 2) Clergy: Are a group of men set apart, consecrated, ordained, to the service of God in the church.
 - a) They are equal in power with regards to governing with the Ruling Elders.
 - b) But they have authority over the "Ministry of the Word." Acts 6:4
 - i) This especially means preaching and the administration of the sacraments.
 - ii) Which alone they can give and have control over.
 - iii) Which a local congregation, or the Ruling Elders, cannot force, deny or go around.
 - iv) Though a local church, by congregational vote, can always fire any pastor.
 - v) And historically, the catholic church (from Protestants the denomination) can "defrock" a pastor, i.e. remove his "clergy" standing.
- 3) Historically, the Protestant churches believed in clergy, and only the clergy can administer the sacraments and at the very least control the pulpit.
- 4) You should be asking: Where is this in Scripture?
 - a) The word "clergy" is not found in any verse.
 - b) The concept, however, I would argue, is found in Scripture.¹

¹ Matt 28:18-20; Luke 22:19-20; Acts 2:41-42; 8:12-17; Rom 10:14-15; 16:25; 1Cor 4:1; 11:20,23; Eph 3:3-6; 5:26,29,32; 1Tim 3:1-5; 4:14; 5:22; Titus 1:5-9; Heb 5:4.

- c) That there are officers in the church who have been specially set aside for the “Ministry of the Word.”
- d) If I had to choose one verse to illustrate this, it would be: 1Corinthians 4:1.

1Corinthians 4:1

- 1) In 1Corinthians 4:1 Paul is dealing with factionalism.
 - a) The Corinthians are claiming various church leaders as their factional head, including (falsely) Christ Himself. 1Cor 1:12; 3:4-6,22
1Cor 4:6; 16:12
 - b) Paul corrects them, that the apostolic (i.e. appointed by Christ) leaders are not party heads but stewards of the mystery of the Gospel.
 - c) 1Corinthians 4:1 – *“Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”*
 - d) Let’s carefully go through this verse.
- 2) Paul is speaking to Christians.
 - a) **“Let a man”** means in particular Christians, especially in the Corinthian church. 1Cor 1:1-2; 3:4-5; 4:6
 - b) So, all Christians should hold to what Paul is teaching.
- 3) Paul wants Christians to consider the **“us”**.
 - a) Clearly apostolic leadership.
 - i) Which includes Apostles, in the narrow sense. Matt 10:1-4; 19:28; Mark 3:13-19;
Luke 6:12-16; 22:28-30; Acts 1:21-22
 - Those original twelve handpicked by the Lord Jesus.
 - Who are called “the Twelve.”
 - Which includes Matthias who replaced Judas. Acts 1:26
 - And Paul, one who was “untimely born.” 1Cor 1:1; 15:5,7-8
 - They had unique universal authority in the church.
 - Their writings became Scripture, the New Testament.
 - ii) It also includes those directly associated with one of the Twelve.
 - Such as Mark who is closely associated with Peter.
 - Or Luke, who is closely associated with Paul.
 - iii) Or anyone officially sent out by the NT church, such as Barnabas, James (?), Silas (?), Andronicus, Junia (?), and Timothy(?). Acts 14:14; Rom 16:7
Gal 1:19; 1Thes 2:6
 - iv) Included in this authority will be those who hold limited apostolic authority in the local church called Teaching & Preaching Elders, or Pastors, or the Clergy.
 - b) There is a particular way Christians are to view this group of men **“in this manner . . .”**
- 5) **“Servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”** – 1Corinthians 4:1b
- 6) The word here for **“servant”** (ὑπηρέτης, *hypēretēs*) is not the generic word for “servant.”
 - a) It is an attendant, a helper.

- b) It is usually translated as “officer.” John 7:32,45-46; 18:3,12,18,22,36; 19:6
Luke 1:2; 4:20; Acts 5:22,26; 13:5; 26:16
- c) It originally literally comes from “under-rower”.
i) One of the oarsmen on a galley.
ii) One who rows under direction.
- d) It comes to mean a subordinate officer, an attendant acting under authority.
- e) An authorized subordinate carrying out a superior’s commission.
- f) This is someone with special responsibilities and powers.
- 7) In this case, because they are “**officers of the Christ.**” – 1Corinthians 4:1b
- a) Of course, the Lord Jesus is “King of kings” and “Lord of lords.” Deut 10:17; Ps 136:3; Dan 2:47
1Tim 6:14-15; Rev 1:5; 17:14; 19:16
- b) But, where is the King now?
- c) The Lord Jesus is ruling and reigning enthroned in heaven, at the right hand of His Father. Ps 2:6-9; 8:6; 45:6-7; 110:1-2; Dan 7:13-14
Matt 26:64; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33-36; Eph 1:20-22
Heb 1:3; 10:12-13; Rev 3:21; 5:6-14; 17:14; 19:16
- d) Governing His church through the present, active and powerful indwelling of His Holy Spirit. John 14:16-18,26; 15:26; 16:7-15
Acts 1:2; 20:28; Eph 1:22-23; 4:11-16
- d) And currently, He is activity putting all His enemies under His feet. Ps 110:1; 1Cor 15:25-27; Eph 1:20-22
Heb 1:13; 2:8; 10:12-13
- e) So, our Lord was not passive back when 1Corinthians was written.
i) He is not passive now.
ii) Does He not promise at the end of the Gospel of Matthew: “*I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*” – Matthew 28:20b
iii) And He will only become more active when He returns with power and glory at the end of this age, establishing His perfect reign. Dan 7:13-14; Zech 14:5,9
Matt 24:30; 25:31-34; Acts 1:11
1Thes 4:16-17; Rev 11:15
- f) In particular He governs through those whom He appoints in His church.
Ephesians 4:11-12 – “*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*”
- 8) These servants have a special role, they are “**stewards of the mysteries of God.**” – 1Corinthians 4:1b
- a) Stewards (οἰκονόμος, *oikonomos*) are managers of a household. Luke 12:42; 16:1,3,8
i) An administrator who has authority and responsibility for something. 1Cor 4:1-2; Gal 4:2
Titus 1:7; 1Per 4:10
ii) Like a treasurer of a city. Rom 16:23
- b) These stewards, administrators, of “the mysteries (μυστήριον, *mystērion*) of God.”
- 9) *The million dollar question:* What are the mysteries of God here in 1Corinthians?
a) If you go and read the text before 1Cor 4:1, the context is clear, it is the Gospel.
b) Which is now entrusted to apostolic leadership to proclaim, administer, and protect. 1Cor 1:18-24; 2:7-10

- c) It is a mystery in the sense that it was once hidden and is now being revealed.
 - i) The mystery is that God’s redemptive plan is fulfilled in the crucified Messiah, which is scandalous to the world.
 - ii) It was hidden for thousands of years and given to only one people but is revealed in the Apostles’ time with the incarnation of Christ.
 - iii) And that God the Father has ordained such seemingly weak things, by earthly standards, to bring forth His Kingdom.
- d) It is interesting to note that “mystery” in the Bible is not usually something inherently incomprehensible.
 - i) The way we use it, such as over things as the Trinity, election, the problem of evil, etc.
 - ii) The Bible focuses more on something that was once hidden in God’s redemptive plan and now revealed in Christ
 - Rom 16:25-26
 - Eph 3:4-6; Col 1:2
 - iii) As we read at the very end of Romans: *“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.”* – Romans 16:25-27
- 10) There is a special class of servants/officers who are stewards of the mysteries of God, which are directly about the Gospel.
- 11) Therefore, we need to define the Gospel.

The Gospel Defined

- 1) The Gospel in one sense is very simple: The proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ.
 - a) It is also extremely deep and profound.
 - b) That is why the Reformed confessions and creeds do not give a simple definition.
- 2) My favorite short definition is Romans 1:1b-4a,16-17.
 - a) I have printed it below with the highlighted parts being the text I use to define the Gospel.
 - b) However, I want to read the bits around it, so you notice there are men “set apart” for Gospel service.
 - c) ***Romans 1:1-6,16-17***
 - 1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for **the gospel of God,**
 - 2 **which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures,**
 - 3 **concerning His Son, who was born of a descendant of David according to the flesh,**
 - 4 **who was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,**
 - 5 **through whom we have received grace** and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name’s sake,
 - 6 among whom *you* also are the called of Jesus Christ; . . .

- 15 So, for my part, *I* am eager to preach the gospel to *you* also who are in Rome.
- 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.
- 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

Clergy & Conclusion

- 1) Though Apostles no longer exist today, and their authority is found in Scripture, there is still a class of officers who have been set aside by the church to administer the Gospel. Eph 2:20; 4:11-12
Acts 1:21-22; 2Tim 2:2
Titus 1:5; Jude 3
- 2) The Apostles equated themselves with the elders. 1Pet 5:1; 2John 1; 3John 1
 - a) The Apostles, narrowly defined, have been set aside to administer the Gospel, and are subordinate to Christ, and we receive their authority found in their writings: i.e. the New Testament.
 - b) Clergy have been set aside to administer the Gospel, and are subordinate to Christ and His apostles (i.e. the Bible).
- 3) But there still is a ministry of the Word, which has officers set aside to proclaim the Gospel.
 - a) We read that in Ephesians 4:11-12.
 - b) As Paul told the young pastor Timothy: "*Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching. Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the presbytery.*" – 1Timothy 4:13-14
- 4) It is true the medieval church turned clergy into something way beyond Scripture.
 - a) Clergy are not closer to God simply because of their office.
 - b) Clergy do not have special magical abilities.
- 5) Belief that there is such a thing as clergy is not contrary to critical Protestant doctrines, such as:
 - a) The Priesthood of all Believers: Ex 19:6; 1Pet 2:5,9
Rev 1:5-6; 5:9-10
That all Christians are priests.
 - b) The Sanctity of All Callings: All lawful Gen 1:28; 2:15; Eccl 3:13
1Cor 7:17,20,24
Col 3:23-24; 1Thes 4:11-12
callings (i.e. jobs, work, etc.) are lawful,
good, and of equal worth in God's sight.
- 6) Being clergy is similar to being a doctor, lawyer, policeman or electrician.
 - a) Does being a doctor, lawyer, policeman or electrician, solely because of the position, make you a better citizen? Or a better person? No.
 - i) Are some callings more important than others? No.
 - ii) We are all equal under the law.
 - iii) And we are all justified by faith alone.
 - b) Those professions require special education and licensing.
 - i) Because they can do great harm if done incorrectly.
 - ii) Thus society gives them special powers and privileges.
 - c) It is good for society to have a high degree of trust which comes from knowing such people have been trained, tested and vetted.

- 7) Yet, our current society is known for its incredible low distrust of institutions.
 - a) A distrust that has certainly been earned and warranted.
 - b) Most institutions are very corrupt.
 - i) Not in the narrow sense of being staffed by criminals.
 - ii) But in the sense of being godless.
 - c) Especially in the church.
 - i) Arguably the first institution to go corrupt in the West was the church.
 - ii) As I argued in my mini-series on Congregationalism, we lead the way.
 - iii) Theological Liberalism won the day by the 1920's.
 - iv) And over the next 100 years all the other institutions of society increasingly followed the lead of the church and became corrupt.
 - Why did the courts come to believe the law is just up to the private interpretation of a judge instead of following the letter of the law?
 - From theological liberals thinking the Bible can be interpreted by their own worldly opinions and needs to be updated.
- 8) Here in the church, however, we are concerned about the church.
 - a) We do not serve Caesar, we serve Christ, and His Kingdom is not of this world.
 - b) This sermon wasn't really about clergy but about how important the teaching, preaching and sacramental office is.
 - c) The solution is not to give up on the institutional and professional church – which is commanded by Christ and found clearly in Scripture!
 - d) But to remain faithful.
 - e) Which is especially critical if you are congregationally governed.
 - f) Just because there is corruption and counterfeits doesn't mean there isn't legal tender.
 - g) And our Lord has promised that He will be with His church until the end of the age.
- 9) That is why the elders are going to a policy where only clergy can give out the sacraments.
 - a) Because the pastor has control of the worship life of the church.
 - b) Again, the pastor is not above the law – the local church can fire the pastor.
 - c) But it shows the seriousness of the office, because the Word of God is that critical.
 - d) And that is the main biblical guard against heresy and corruption according to Scripture.
 - i) It is not really about good statements of faith, or bylaws, or policies on paper, though they are helpful.
 - ii) The real guard is godly leaders.
 - e) Thus the next verse from our sermon text: *“In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.”* – 1Corinthians 4:2
 - f) Thus 1Corinthians 4:17 – *“For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.”*