

**The Evangel**  
**Newsletter of Community Presbyterian Church**  
**Lake City, Colorado**  
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† Centered in Christ

† Cultivated in Community

† Called to Care



**PASTER RICK'S MESSAGE**

**“I Got So Much Stuff, I Can't Find My Stuff Because Of All The Stuff Stuffed Around!”**

As I sit here typing this out, I am reminded again that the sole reason I am going back to Massachusetts on the morrow is to finish cleaning out the house. Faye has borne the burden much of this time, while I have only gone back once. This time settles it all...the house will be cleaned out. My plan is go through the house pretty much like General Sherman went through Atlanta. If after being back in Colorado for a year, we haven't needed something...well guess what that tells me? So...on with the story

Recently I was looking for something - not Massachusetts related. Now, in our household we understand completely that nothing is ever lost...we just can't always find it at the time we look for it. How about you? Too much stuff? I can't find my stuff because I have too much stuff and when I go looking through the stuff, I can't find the stuff I need to find because of the stuff I have to go through to find the stuff! Sound familiar?

Did you know that now you can actually hire people to help manage your overflowing personal collection of “stuff”? They are called “personal organizers” and they can charge up to \$100.00 per hour. They come into your home or business, look at your “stuff”, and suggest solutions on how to deal with your stuff, and then give you a bill to add to your stuff. Need to assemble more efficient storage racks? Can do. Need to throw out that lifetime collection of National Geographic? (Donate them instead to a small library with a small budget for book acquisitions.) One personal organizer identifies herself on the website as “a clutter therapist.” She recognizes correctly that the problem is not the clutter itself as the mental state that makes it difficult to throw things away. For more information see [cluttertherapy.com](http://cluttertherapy.com).

Now, understand me completely, I fully realize this is not easy. It is hard, very hard. I have sat with enough elderly people and have heard many of their stories as they are forced to go through the stuff of a lifetime and condense it down to what will fit in one or two rooms in a retirement center. That's twenty miles of hard, very hard, road. How do you breakdown a life into two rooms? I remember when my parents did it. Both of them wished they had been doing it through the years, instead of waiting until it had to be done. They did it, it was hard, but it was done. And, a lot of people benefited from their furniture, clothes and house hold utensils.

In Native American cultures today, as has historically been the case, if I died today, Faye, within a year or less, would announce to the reservation that there was to be a “give-away” in remembrance of me. She, of course, could keep whatever she wanted of me. The rest would be given away freely to members of the community. No cost. No charge. Come and get it. Remember Rick with what you take. Not a bad idea is it? Could we take that outside the Native American culture? Probably not. It works. I have seen it on several reservations. “Take this in remembrance of me.”

May I suggest something in this season of cooler days when you can prowl around your closets and garage? Matthew 10:8b says “Freely you have received, freely give.” “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus: it is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35b). Let us begin to live those words. They are not hard to do; it just takes a committed effort. Examples?

- old books – take them to a nursing home, a VA hospital, a homeless shelter; my father used to do this all the time.
- those old sweaters lying around, many people would love to have one sweater, take them to a homeless shelter or a clothes pantry
- children’s toys – take them to a doctor’s office, a pediatric ward, a children’s hospital
- old clothing of any sort: again, a clothes ministry, a homeless shelter
- toiletries that you take out of the room at Holiday Inn or Hilton or whatever; most states require them to be disposed of anyway when you leave because they can’t tell if you have opened the container or not, take them to a homeless shelter, or a church providing street ministry.
- E-Bay, they take anything and everything that is legal.
- place furniture outside your home on the corner and place a “Free” sign on it; I confess I have been in all 50 states and have never seen this done anywhere except Massachusetts; score one for Massachusetts, good job here, folks
- look at the collections you have of whatever it is you collect, and do a web search to see the market, you can probably find a fellow collector who would love to have what you have.
- organize your pictures and memorabilia into something that can be comprehended; it is easier to have 10 albums, than 20 boxes.
- too many dishes and plates and cups and saucers and glasses and all that stuff?; no problem. Replacements, LTD in Greensboro, NC will take all of that stuff off your hands and turn it around and put it in their collection to sell to others who are looking to replace their kitchenware glass/ china with your same pattern.
- stuffed animals?; easy, children’s hospitals. When I was a Chaplain in PICU (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit), children would light up when stuffed animals boxes would come in. We take our teddy bears for granted, some children have no stuffed animals. Did I say children? I cannot remember the last time I went through an airport anywhere in America and did not see teddy bears going through the airport with adults in tow. Yes, I said “adults”.
- stuffed animals, again! Be aware that many police and fire departments collect stuffed animals, place them in patrol cars or fire trucks and give them to children

involved in an accident, a fire, a domestic dispute or another situation where a stuffed animal is the best comfort in the world for a child

Remember a simple adage: one man's trash is another man's treasure. If you can't use it any longer, the high probability is that someone else can. What you throw out, someone will take it (probably gladly). Be creative. I am sure you can think of something better than I did above.

I remember strolling through a flea market once in North Carolina. I came across a man who had been to McDonald's. Remember when McDonald's had the "Happy Meal" toys? Now, I know you can remember when they had the single toy, just one toy. Then they went to multiple toys like "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" where you had to go to McDonalds eight times to get all the toys. Their all time best was the "101 Dalmatians" promotions, where, you guessed it, 101 trips to McDonalds, 101 Happy Meals would net you the entire collection of 101 Dalmatians. What this man had done at the flea market was gone to McDonald's and gotten 50 Happy Meals with 50 of the same toys, and put them on sale, knowing that people would get 6 of the 8 dwarfs and he (for a price) would be glad to provide them with Dopey and Grumpy or whatever two they had missed. The food? He took it to a homeless shelter in town. That is called being creative. Be creative with what you can do with your stuff! It might even be fun!

Wander through your stuff this fall season. Take inventory. Are you keeping stuff because you *want* to keep stuff? Are you keeping stuff because you *need* stuff? How *imperative* is your stuff. Can you give the stuff away so that someone else can benefit from your stuff? An old country song says, "I ain't never seen a hearse with no luggage rack on top." True.

In another time, in another place, at another Church - In Colorado we had two members of our Church who were ranchers. I married both of their granddaughters on the rolling hills of their ranch with horses strolling through the fields. We were talking one day on his ranch and he was telling me that he had a dumpster coming out the next week. He and his wife, Barbara, were going to go through their stuff, get rid of stuff, clean stuff out, and take what they could to someone who could use it and get rid of the rest. He said he was getting older and wanted to simplify life and just get by with what he needed to get by with. He also said, "Well, the truth of the matter is, Rick, that one day when I die, someone is going to come here and go through all this stuff and just toss it away. I figure while I am still alive I might as well have something to say about what goes where, and what can be used by someone else and what can't be." Well, Dale, now sleeps "under the rich soil of the western sky," but I have never forgotten either him or his wise words on that day a few years ago. He died and began his journey on the Red Road of Harmony (a Native America picture of the road that leads to Heaven) with a good heart and a clean house. That's not a bad legacy. Not bad at all. Barbara still lives on the farm.

### **What Is Halloween All About Anyway?**

It is once again that time of the year when the witches, ghosts, and goblins make their annual appearance on the streets of cities, towns, villages and hamlets throughout the United States. Yes, it is Halloween once again.

To be honest, I have not encountered the same level of hostility in Colorado and Massachusetts against the observance that I have run into in some other states.. I have fond memories of Halloween as a child. It was a night that we looked forward to weeks before it actually arrived. It was the one night of the year (and days following) to absolutely pig out on candy of any color, shape or size. It didn't matter. It was candy and a lot of it, so what else could possibly matter? The kids in our neighborhood in Greensboro had fun, and we always managed to stay out of trouble.

So what about now? It is easy - almost a brush-off to say that times were different then. Were they? Have times really changed all that much? Or have we as individuals and a society changed. Never once in my childhood did any of us ever entertain for one minute the thought of taking our candy to the hospital emergency room to have it X-rayed before we ate it. Now, in many parts of the country that is a common practice, almost a community service. What happened?

Let's look briefly at Halloween. Halloween has a history and a meaning related to All Saints' Day, a liturgical day in the Church Year calendar. Indeed, the evening before Halloween, All Hallows Eve, marks the beginning of two continuous liturgical days of celebration in the Church Year. Harper's Bible Dictionary refers to the word "hallow" as "to make holy or to set apart for special service." Immediately, we have a strong clue as to where the word "hallow" is going. We often speak of "hallowed ground" when we speak of a cemetery, especially a military cemetery. There is a strong sense of reverence and respect assisted with the word, especially when "hallowed" is used in respect to God's name. (What is the second line of The Lord's Prayer?" Today's Bible Dictionary defines the term "hallow" as "to render sacred, to consecrate (Exodus 28:38, 29: 1) This word is from the Saxon and properly means "to make holy".

Lest we think, the Bible dictionaries have put a theological spin on the word, Webster's New World College Dictionary defines "hallow" as follows: "to make holy or sacred; sanctify; consecrate, to regard as holy; honor as sacred; venerate." This same dictionary, an excellent source for word studies, tells us that middle English form of the word is "halowen" derived from the Old English 'halgian" or "halig"; at that point Webster's tells you to cross reference to the word "holy." A couple of words down in the same dictionary we come across "Halloween" which is defined as "the evening of Oct. 31, which is followed by All Saints' Day, or All hallows. Halloween is now generally associated with fun-making and masquerading." Again in this definition of "Halloween" the word "halig" appears with, the urge to cross reference to the word "holy" and then the following note: "in sense 'holy person, hence saint'".

The theological connotations associated with All Hallow's Eve are undeniable. But, granted, something has happened along the way. Perhaps, once again, as so often happens, **the holy has been profaned** by society. Remember the last part of the Webster's definition of Halloween? - "Halloween is now generally associated with fun-making and masquerading." Perhaps, therein, lies a clue. The sacred has been lost through time, and the party-going aspects are what the day is now associated with.

The book, Holy Words: What Do They Mean? Key Words of Faith," by David Rebeck, (CSS Publishing Company, Lima, OH, 1997) has this to say about Halloween: "Halloween - hallowed (holy) eve: Halloween has a history and meaning related to All

Saints' Day of the Church Year. In the Middle Ages, October 31 marked the end of the Celtic year - their "new year's eve." On that day, and especially evening, white-robed Druid priests gathered around sun-oriented monuments, such as Stonehenge, to appease the spirits of that year's dead. It was believed that on this last day of the year, the spirits of the departed would roam about, playing tricks on those left behind. To appease these spirits, potions and food were left out - 'treats' given to avoid their 'tricks.'" As the Christian Church grew in Europe, it tried to Christianize this new year's eve pagan festival by celebrating eternal life for those who had died, and thus dated All Saints' Day on the first day of the new year, November 1. The Sunday following All Saints' Day is also observed as "All Saints' Sunday" to give thanks for the victory over death Christ has won for his faithful." So, where does all of this bring us?

October 31 is set aside as All Hallows Eve. A hallowed or holy evening the evening before All Saints' Day, a day set aside by the Roman Catholic Church to honor all saints in a common feast. All Saints' Day began, naturally enough, with a commemoration of individually martyred saints, beginning with the apostles. In time, there were so many of the saints, that one day was set aside to honor all of them. Pope Boniface IV moved some relics of the saints from the catacombs to the Pantheon consecrating a building on May 13, 610, under the title of All Martyrs and All Saints and of Our Lady. In the year 835, Pope Gregory III dedicated a chapel in The Vatican Basilica in honor of All Saints and at that time the date was changed to where it now is, November 1.

All Hallows Eve leads to All Saints' Day and All Saints' Day leads to All Souls Day, a commemoration of all the faithful departed on November 2. This was a day to pray for the "ordinary" saints, people like you and me. According to the Dictionary of the Liturgy, "Most Christians felt that besides funeral or anniversary rites, there should be an opportunity when the ordinary people, good Christians but not canonized, could be prayed for. It was the hope that God would allow them also to share in the victory of the risen Christ. At the funeral service Christian hope gives a strong testimony in the anticipated blessed resurrection." Before the start of the 11<sup>th</sup> century various dates were celebrated in various localities for All Souls Day. Around the start of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Odilo of Cluny chose November 2 as the date for the commemoration in all the Cluniac houses. All Souls Day spread from there and was eventually adopted by Rome in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Today most non-Roman denominations have combined All Saints' Day and All Souls Day into a single festival. This has also to a great degree happened within the Roman community.

That is where we are: All Hallows Eve, October 31, was a hallow evening "to make holy or sacred; sanctify; consecrate; to regard as holy; honor as sacred; venerate" (Webster). This led to Halloween, the former name for All Saints Day on November 1, which, in turn, led to All Souls Day on November 2.

As we said earlier, the theological imprint on the season of Halloween is undeniable. Yes, the Church, did place religious festivals in direct opposition to pagan festivals during the Middle Ages.

So, what happened? We have seen how the Church placed a strong religious emphasis and obligation on this three-day period. What has happened since then?

I think it may be important to note that many Christians over the years, abandoned Halloween, ignored it, and began to speak against the day. Here are just a few questions I would urge you to think about. Did, we the Christian Church, in fact, surrender the day? Did we give up that day and allow culture to define the day, what it was, and how it should be celebrated? Is that a reflection of the violence and evil charges that some now level at Halloween? Have we given up other days? Remember when Americans had either Good Friday or Easter Monday or both off as a holiday? Do we now? What day is next? Have Christians surrendered the high holy ground in observing some holidays. These are questions to think about questions to consider.

Have, we in fact been sitting on the sidelines and not pointing out the strong, undeniable religious connotations of All Hallows Eve and the days following, allowed secular culture to define the day(s) while we, the Church, just sat around doing and saying nothing?

The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally celebrated these days. The Protestant Church, to varying degrees, has also celebrated these days, more and more so in recent years. All Saints' Day is on the Presbyterian Church Year liturgical calendar as a Day of Observance.

Perhaps the Church universal could have done a better job of telling the world what All Hallows was all about. Maybe we should have been more faithful in our church attendance around the celebrations of that time of the Church liturgical calendar. Or if we had been bold enough to speak up when distortions and misrepresentations were presented as fact, perhaps, we would not presently find ourselves in the predicament of where we now are in when people with an agenda, fear, or distortion or misrepresentation spread information highlighting the profane over the sacred.

In some churches, more and more each year, there is a pumpkin in the Sanctuary. The Christian cross was emblazoned on the bright orange pumpkin reflecting the principal symbol of our Christian faith. That is only one example of how we, Christians, can reclaim the truth of what has always been present.

Knowing all of this now, what has the day become? Why is that? What has happened? Who is responsible? How do we handle Halloween? We go trick or treating. I am not willing to deny our children the pleasures Faye and I knew as children. I am willing and do tell them the origins of the day, what it meant to me, how I think it should be celebrated and, above all, the strong religious connotations of the day for Christian saints and martyrs to the faith.

I do not think Halloween should be celebrated as pageants of gore and silence. We have far, far, far, too much of the real thing in American society. Costumes commemorating such characters as Jason from the various "Friday the 13th" movies or the Freddy Krueger from the various "Nightmare on Elm Street" movies or anything like that. Neither do I in any form advocate the various pranks that are sometimes associated with Halloween.

How then should we celebrate? With cartoon characters, other movie characters, Bible characters or historical figures. Go out with your friends. Have fun. Pig out on all the candy you can get. After all, the night only comes once a year, so enjoy the night. Safely. Sensibly. Sanely.

And, yes..above all..remember..and tell everyone that there are strong religious origins to this celebration whether our society wishes to acknowledge them or not. Perhaps, our failure to acknowledge these issues have led us into the confusion and trouble we now find ourselves in when we seek to explain Halloween.

Perhaps it is not too late to turn things around. Redemption, after all, is always possible. No less than God Himself proved that to each of us. Let us hope, and let us do our part.

I guess the final question for Halloween is not, "Is Halloween bad?" It's not according to Church history. However, maybe we have allowed society to re-define Halloween for us, to make Halloween in the violent image of the world, and to reshape what it is all about. If that is so (and I think it is, we have committed a grievous error.) Maybe we should tell what the days around Halloween are really about in the eyes of the Church. Maybe Easter has fallen into that image. When I was a child I had school holidays for Easter Monday. Do we now? Is Easter about more than fuzzy bunnies and chocolate candy or we have let society re-define that one also? Is Christmas next? Will you ever have to work on Christmas now as you do on the days around Easter? Maybe it is time we told our own story, instead of letting the world tell us what to believe.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

#### **All Saints' Sunday – November 6<sup>th</sup>**

The Commemoration of the Dead and The Tolling of the Bells  
The Celebration of the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper

#### **The Hanging Of The Greens – Sunday, November 20th, 2011**

Volunteers will be decorating the sanctuary and exterior of the church. Always a fun event, please plan to join us.

#### **The Season of Advent begins on November 27th, 2011**

Advent is a time of preparation for the birth of the Christ Child. It is a time to prepare to journey again to Bethlehem to behold the miracle of what we now call Christmas. Yet, it is not just a time of looking backwards into a moment in history; it is also a time of looking forward to the future and preparing now for the Second Coming of the Christ who is no longer a child. Advent calls us to wait, to expect, to hope, and to look backwards and to look forward. Advent calls us to experience what God has done, is doing, and will continue to do. Advent is not a time to rush head-long into Christmas, rather, Advent is a time to wait expectantly, prayerfully, and hopefully. Advent ends on Christmas Eve.

**Advent Study Series : *The Journey: Walking The Road To Bethlehem* by The Rev. Adam Hamilton**

This study begins following Worship and Fellowship on Sunday, November 20th, 2011  
Come walk the road with Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and other people along the way as we encounter Christmas yet again, maybe, for the first time.

**Upcoming this winter:**

***The Gilligan's Island Bible Study: The Seven Deadly Sins*** (if you think about it, it makes perfect sense: What was the great sin of Mr. Howell expressed over and over throughout the series?).

Other learning opportunities as well, including:

***A Christmas Carol: The Christian Meanings***

**Advent Sermons:** a four part series dealing with God's ability to redeem and restore

**Christmas Eve Candlelight Service : A Service of Carols and Readings –**  
December 24th, in the Sanctuary