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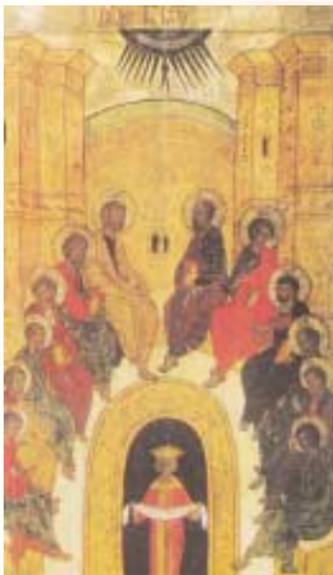
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THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES

From Pentecost Sunday to the Orthodox Church Down the Street

“Parthians, Medes, and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; Cretans and Arabs.” Recognize these Christians from Acts 2? The Eastern Orthodox family of Christian churches celebrates its birth on Pentecost when people from these parts of the Roman Empire were converted by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of Peter. The Orthodox Church today sees itself as the faithful bearer of this apostolic faith.

It's a long way from that Pentecost Sunday in Jerusalem to the Orthodox



THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. THE USE OF ICONS LIKE THIS ONE IS A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF ORTHODOX CHURCHES. SEE PAGE 4 FOR MORE.

Church down your street. How did it happen?

East Versus West

Picture the Christian Church as a tree. For a thousand years it is a single, thick trunk firmly rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. But as the tree stretches out, its trunk splits in two, forming an Eastern branch and a Western branch.

Why did the one, holy, catholic Church split in two? For lots of reasons, including differences in geography, culture, language, and theology. All of these led to different ideas about

how the church should worship and govern itself. By 1054, these differences had become so heated that the pope in Rome and the patriarch in Constantinople excommunicated each other and declared each other heretics! The division was sealed in 1204 when the Western armies of the fourth Crusade invaded Eastern Constantinople (now Istanbul) and took it hostage instead of helping defend it against the rising Muslim Empire.

With Christians to the west and Muslims to the east and south, the churches of the former eastern half of the Roman Empire expanded to the north. Missionaries were sent to the lands of the Black Sea: Bulgaria, Romania, Armenia, and Serbia. The peoples of Russia adopted the Orthodox faith when their emperor, Vladimir, chose to be baptized into the church in 988. In all these areas with differing languages and ethnic customs, the Orthodox Church encouraged new Christians to worship in their native dialect, to translate the Bible into their own languages, and to accommodate their own traditions within their worship. This approach to missionary work was distinctively different than that of the Western Church in northern Europe, which used only Latin as the language for worship and recognized only the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible.

From Russia, the Orthodox faith followed that empire east across the continent of Europe to Asia and the shores of North America.

The Orthodox Church Comes to North America

Unlike other Christian churches in North America, which were established by immigrants from Europe settling on the eastern shores of the continent, the Orthodox Church came mainly from the West. As Russian traders and naval explorers began to trade



THIS IS WHAT THE CHRISTIAN WORLD LOOKED LIKE AFTER 1054. THE RED SQUARES INDICATE CITIES THAT WERE CENTERS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.

with the peoples of the Aleutian Islands, they saw a new mission field. In 1737 the first Orthodox worship service was held in North America on board a Russian ship. But it wasn't until about fifty years later, with the arrival of ten Russian Orthodox missionaries, that real missionary work began.

In time, a North American diocese (regional group of churches) was organized under the first Orthodox bishop in the region we call Alaska. As in the past, Orthodox missionaries helped new Aleut Christians translate the Bible into their own lan-

guage and encouraged them to worship in familiar ways. Many Orthodox churches in the region, for example, embraced both totem poles and crosses.

Other Orthodox immigrant groups were also landing on the shores of the New World in the East. Greeks, who came to fish for sponge in Florida, trade for goods in New Orleans, and find work in New York, established churches in those cities. These Orthodox groups settled in close-knit communities that maintained their traditions from the “old country.”

At the turn of the century, heavy immigration from Central Europe and Russia into Canada and the United States brought large groups of Orthodox people to settle in farming communities like Regina, Saskatchewan, where the first Russian Orthodox Church in Canada was organized in 1902.

The early years of the twentieth century were difficult ones for these Orthodox immigrants as they tried to adapt to their new homelands and preserve ties to the old. Especially difficult were the years after the Russian Communist

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Worldwide, about 170 million people hold to the Orthodox faith; about 5 million live in the United States and Canada.
- Orthodox churches are a large family of churches found mostly in Eastern Europe. They include several different groups, of which the Eastern Orthodox Church is the largest. Eastern Orthodox churches are organized around the spiritual leadership of the four patriarchs of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Constantinople (Istanbul).
- The Orthodox churches in North America date back to the 1790s, when the Russian Orthodox Church sent missionaries to establish a new church in what is now called Alaska. Today, Orthodox churches in North America include the following:

Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America
 American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church
 Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America
 Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church
 Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America (the largest church)
 Orthodox Church in America (www.oca.org)
 Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA
 Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America under Bucharest (www.roea.org)
 Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia
 Serbian Eastern Orthodox Church in the USA and Canada
 Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch
 Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA
 Ukrainian Greek-Orthodox Church in Canada (the largest in Canada)

Worship: Inside an Orthodox Church

One meaning of Orthodox is “true glory,” and the Orthodox take great care in worship to honor God with true glory. A worship service in an Orthodox Church is unlike worship in any other Christian tradition.

Orthodox worship engages all the senses—the whole person is involved. The paintings on the interior walls, icons, candles, and priestly vestments all call to the eye; the incense quickens the nose; the songs, chanting, and liturgical responses awaken the ear; the taking of bread and wine involves the tongue; and the whole body is involved through kneeling, kissing the icons, lighting candles, and making the sign of the cross. Worship brings the worshiper into the presence of God and celebrates the mystery of God’s love.

The Liturgy

Don’t look for seats. Most Orthodox churches won’t have any, since the proper posture for worship is standing in the presence of the King. If there are seats, don’t expect to sit in them for long—you will stand for most of the service.

The liturgy helps worshipers reflect on two almost opposite ideals of faith: how completely different and “other” God is from us and, at the same time, how close and personal God is in the person of Jesus Christ. This is one of the great mysteries of the Christian faith.

Much of the liturgy is sung by a small choir or chanted by the priest. The congregation also

(not shown)
A SMALL ENTRY OR NARTHEX represents the old, sinful world from which we were called out to enter the kingdom of God; the baptismal font is located here to symbolize rebirth through baptism into the kingdom of God.

AN ICON OF CHRIST
as Pantocrator—Ruler and Redeemer of the universe—surrounded by the angels who serve him, at the topmost point of the roof (often a dome). The rest of the ceiling often includes scenes from the redemption of the world and pictures of notable saints.

AN ICON OF MARY
at the eastern end of the ceiling above the altar. The link between the Creator and the creation, Mary is the one whose obedience made Christ’s incarnation possible.

A CHANDELIER
hanging from the dome, signifying the light of the sun, moon, and stars.

THE FOUR FIGURES OF MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, AND JOHN
at the four corners of the roof. Through their writings, the gospel was brought to the four corners of the world.

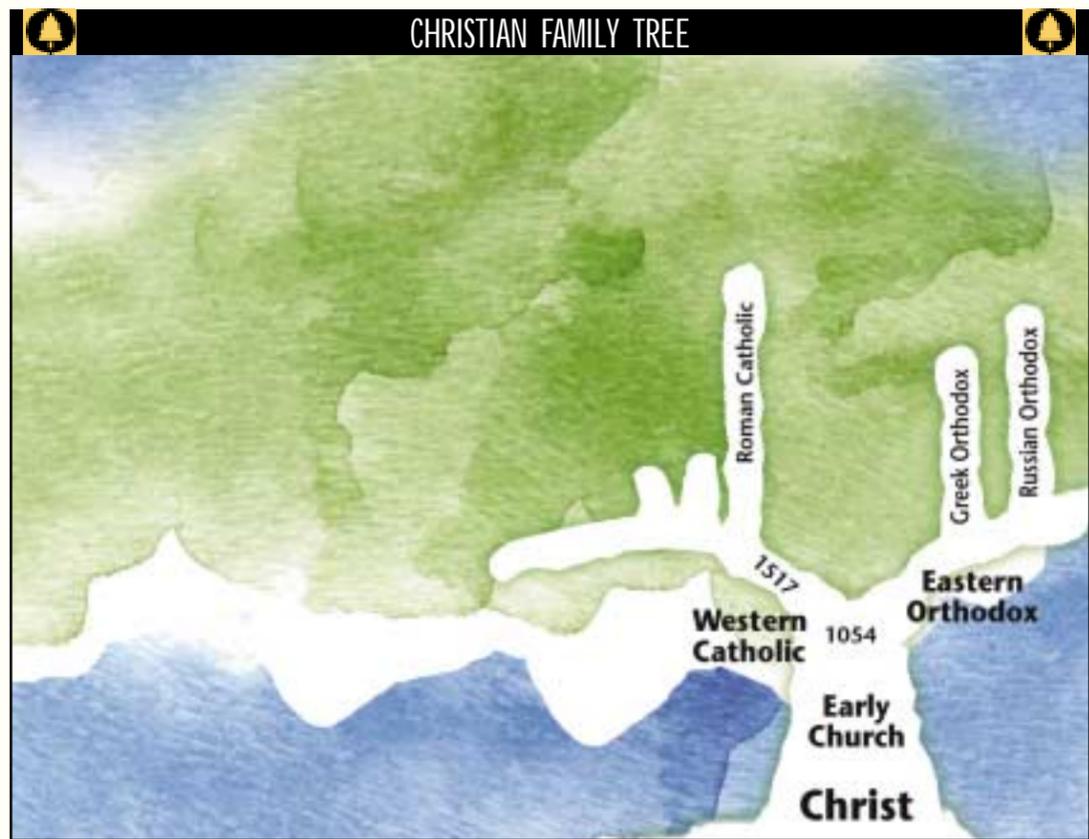
THE SANCTUARY
where the altar is placed (behind the icon screen). Above the altar hangs an eternal light, which testifies to Christ as the light of the world. Beside the altar are two circular sculptures on which are engraved six-winged angels representing the angels that surround the throne of God. Along with the tabernacle on the altar, which holds the body and blood of Christ as represented in the elements of communion, is a gold-covered gospel book. The presence of both of these on the altar reminds worshipers that Jesus is both the Word of life (the gospel) and the bread of life (the Eucharist). Only the priest and other ordained clergy are allowed in the sanctuary.

A SCREEN HOLDING SEVERAL ICONS
at the front of the nave. This is the *iconostasis*, which separates the worship of the congregation in the nave from the sanctuary. Like the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the temple, it reminds worshipers that God is too holy to be completely understood. Two large candle stands are placed in front of the icon screen. Before taking a place for the service, worshipers approach the screen, honor the saints in the icons by kneeling, kissing them, crossing themselves, and then lighting a candle. The candles represent the presence of God filling the church and remind worshipers that they are also called to be the light of the world. The two gold doors in the middle of the screen are the royal doors. When the communion elements are carried from the altar to the nave, Christ the King enters through these doors.

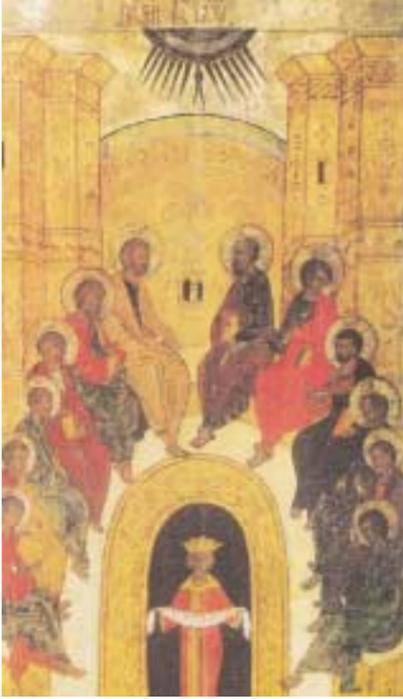
sings some responses and prayers. Music is an integral part of the worship service.

The two liturgies that Orthodox churches use are very old. According to tradition, they were written for the church by church fathers John Chrysostom and Basil the Great. The Orthodox Church follows the liturgical seasons of the church year—Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Each day of the year is also a saint’s day. The saint being honored on Sunday is noted in the worship service.

The liturgy is divided into two parts. The first half focuses on Jesus as the Word of God. The gold-covered gospel is brought forward, blessed, and read. The priest preaches a sermon on a text. The second half of the liturgy focuses on Jesus as the bread of life. The holy Eucharist is celebrated as a joyful feast. Only baptized Orthodox Christians of all ages may participate in the Eucharist. The elements are served by spoon from a chalice where the bread and wine have been mixed. At the end of the liturgy, all worshipers, regardless of their faith tradition, are offered a piece of blessed bread called the *antidoron* as an expression of Christian fellowship and love. ■



Icons: A Door to Heaven



If you attend a worship service in a Greek Orthodox Church, you can't help but notice the *iconostasis* in the front of the sanctuary. This large screen divides the sanctuary into two areas and is hung with a vivid display of icons—images of Christ, Mary, biblical scenes, and saints. These icons are a unique feature of Orthodox worship and are used in prayer.

Think of the icon as theology in color, a portrait that intends to show what it is to be filled with the

Holy Spirit. Icons are idealized figures that serve as a bridge between the physical and spiritual worlds. Unlike a photograph, which accurately presents the image of a person, icons convey through physical means the spiritual essence of the figure.

You will notice that Orthodox Christians kneel, kiss, and pray before the icons as they enter the church. They aren't worshipping the icons; rather, they are honoring the person depicted in the icon while they pray to God. The icon is meant to link the human and the divine in a mystical encounter that puts the worshiper in touch with God.

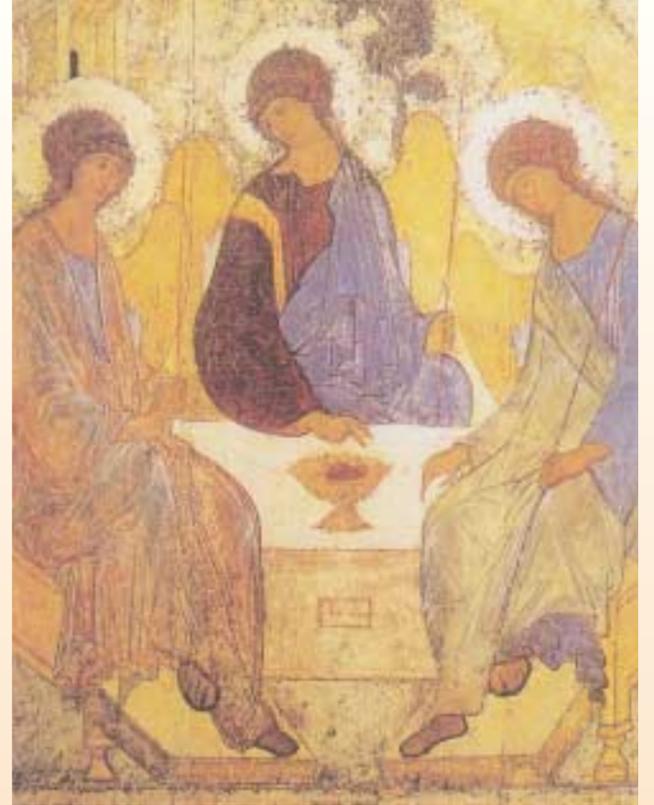
Why icons? Orthodox Christians will explain that the first and truest icon is Christ himself. As a human being, he was a physical representation of a spiritual truth—God. When we “see” Jesus the human being, we see through him to his spiritual essence, the second person of the Trinity.

Orthodox believers say that human beings too can

be icons. Created in the image of God, we serve as icons to the world; when others see God at work within us, we are windows of God's likeness, doors into heaven. That's why in an Orthodox service, the priest not only blesses the icons on the screen, but also turns and blesses the congregation.

Icons are created by specially trained artists, usually monks, who dedicate their lives to this task and who approach their calling as an act of worship. They must follow carefully prescribed guidelines for their work. Icons must use only certain subjects, such as Mary, or they may present particular biblical scenes, such as the second coming of Christ. Each icon contains symbols and small details that convey important truths about the image in the icon.

For Orthodox Christians, icons are both a way to experience spiritual truth and a means for guiding prayer. They offer worshipers an open door into the very presence of God. ■



An Icon Up Close

Andrew Rublev, a Russian Orthodox artist, painted this icon to portray the Trinity. The scene is the appearance of the three messengers of God to whom Abraham offered hospitality “under the shade of a tree” in Genesis 18. Notice how they are gathered around a table. The open side faces the front, inviting the viewer to take a seat with them around the food in the chalice before them.

Do you see that the figure on the right looks one way and the two others look toward him or her? (The figures, as angels, have no gender.) This indicates that this figure is the first person of the Trinity. The second person of the Trinity faces the viewer, the third person of the Trinity is on the left. Their hands indicate this as well: God the Father's hands are raised in blessing; God the Son is pointing to the chalice, reminding us of the Eucharist; and God the Holy Spirit points to the front of the table, which is an altar, as indicated by the open space on its front.

The tree is painted to connect with Christ's staff and draw the viewer's eyes downward in a vertical line, while the three heads form a horizontal line that intersects it. At the center of this icon is a cross that forms the axis around which this circle is gathered.

What else do you see as you reflect on this icon? In what ways does it speak to you about who God is and what God has done? What does it mean to you that space at the table is left open for you to join in the fellowship of the Trinity? ■



PAUSE BUTTON



If you look in the back of your church's hymnal, you will probably find a copy of the Nicene Creed. It's a creed that's honored by most churches in the Reformed tradition. What you may not know is that this creed was the result of a great council called by the Eastern part of the Christian Church in the fourth century to resolve the issue of how Jesus could be both human and divine. The Nicene Creed is the official belief statement of the Orthodox churches and is regularly recited as part of their worship services.

*We believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.
Through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
he became incarnate by the Holy Spirit
and the virgin Mary,
and was made human.
He was crucified for us under Pontius
Pilate;
he suffered and was buried.*

*The third day he rose again, according to
the Scriptures.*

*He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the
Father.*

*He will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead.
His kingdom will never end.*

*And we believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life.*

*He proceeds from the Father,
and with the Father and the Son is wor-
shipped and glorified.*

He spoke through the prophets.

*We believe in one holy catholic and apos-
tolic church.*

*We affirm one baptism for the forgive-
ness of sins.*

*We look forward to the resurrection of the
dead,
and to life in the world to come. Amen.*

An Orthodox Prayer

*My hope is the Father, My refuge is the Son,
My protection is the Holy Spirit,
Holy Trinity,
Glory to Thee.*

THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED TRADITION



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THE CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL IN GARDEN GROVE, CALIFORNIA, IS ONE OF THE LARGEST AND BEST-KNOWN CHURCHES IN THE WORLD. PART OF THE REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA, THE CHURCH HAS OVER 10,000 MEMBERS. ITS WEEKLY HOUR OF POWER WITH PASTOR ROBERT SCHULLER IS INTERNATIONALLY TELEVISED.

A New Faith Tradition and a Young Continent

Picture two churches. One is the immense “Crystal Cathedral” in Garden Grove, California, known by its television program to millions around the world. The other is a small church in your home town with “Reformed” or “Presbyterian” or “Congregational” or “United Church” on its sign. Probably not known by many folks, definitely not on TV every week. What do these two churches have in common?

Among other similarities, both are churches in the Reformed tradition. Both trace their roots back to a city in Switzerland and a pastor who lived there hundreds of years ago.



“ALL OUR WISDOM, INsofar AS IT REALLY DESERVES THE NAME WISDOM AND IS SURE AND RELIABLE, COMPRISES TWO BASIC THINGS—THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF OURSELVES.”

—JOHN CALVIN, FROM THE INTRODUCTORY SENTENCES OF THE INSTITUTES

A New Book and Its Young Author

In 1536 a book—just six chapters—was published in Basel, Switzerland. The author was a twenty-seven-year-old French law student who had fled to Switzerland from Paris when authorities decided to silence the Protestants at the university. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* was his attempt to spell out in clear and concise language the theological teachings of a new movement called Protestantism. The book became a best-seller in Europe and caused its author, John Calvin, to become a leader of the Reformation. Historians today consider the *Institutes* the most important book of the Reformation.

Calvin’s career centered on the Swiss city of Geneva, where he was invited to lead the city in its new role as an independent, Protestant city. Under Calvin’s leadership, Geneva became one of the most important cities of the time. A haven for persecuted Protestants, including the Huguenots of France, Geneva was also a center for religious scholarship. People (like John Knox of Scotland) came from all over Europe to study at Geneva’s new academy. They returned to their own

cities and countries with new resources and strength for continuing the Reformation back home.

The new churches founded and led by these students of Calvin adopted the name “Reformed,” meaning a church that came out of the Protestant Reformation. They called their theology “Calvinism” after the author of the *Institutes*. Using the biblical principles for church organization that were adopted in Geneva, they called their system of government “Presbyterian” after the new church office called “elder” or “presbyter.” By the close of the sixteenth century, Reformed churches had been established in Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary, England, Ireland, and Scotland.

A New World and Young Churches

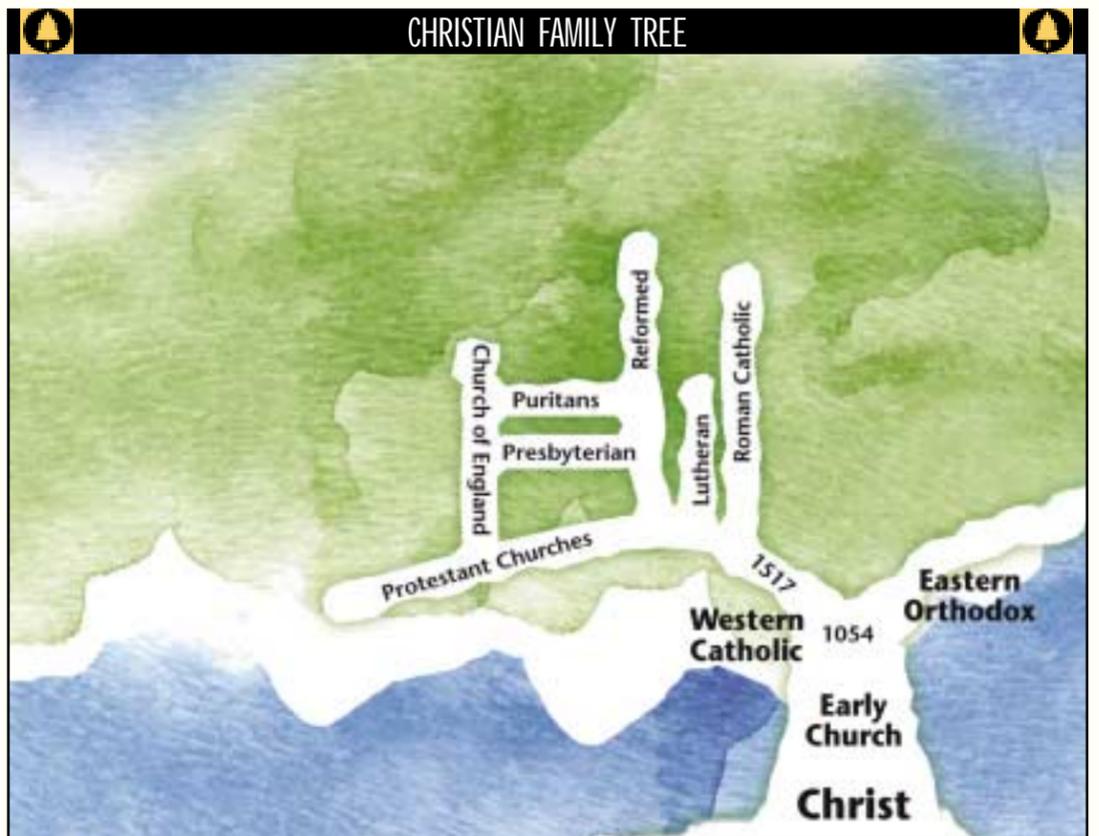
Reformed Christians from all these European countries were among those who took to the Atlantic Ocean in small and cramped ships, who rode out storms at sea with their terrified families, and who worked endlessly to build homes and churches and schools and towns in the New World.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

FACTS AND FIGURES

- Churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition have a wide variety of names, but all trace their beginnings back to John Calvin (1509-1564) and the Reformed churches of Switzerland. See “Sound Bites” for what *Reformed* means.
- Today there are over twenty Reformed denominations with a total of about six million members. Some Episcopal and Baptist denominations are also Reformed in their theology. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was founded by Presbyterians who wanted to create a denomination that looked more like the New Testament church (see “A World of Change,” p. 2). They total about 2.5 million members.
- The newest churches in the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition are Korean.
- Churches in the Reformed tradition include the following denominations in North America:
 - Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church
 - Bible Presbyterian Church
 - Christian Church
 - Christian Reformed Church in North America (www.crcna.org)
 - Church of Christ
 - Church of God, General Conference
 - Cumberland Presbyterian Church
 - Disciples of Christ
 - Evangelical Presbyterian Church
 - General Assembly of the Korean Presbyterian Church
 - Hungarian Reformed Church in America
 - National Association of Congregational Christian Churches
 - Netherlands Reformed Church in America
 - Orthodox Presbyterian Church
 - Presbyterian Church in America (www.pcanet.org)
 - Presbyterian Church of Canada
 - Presbyterian Church (USA), the largest of this tradition in the United States (www.pcusa.org)
 - Reformed Church in America, the oldest continuous Protestant denomination in the United States (www.rca.org)
 - Reformed Church in the United States
 - Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America
 - Second Cumberland Presbyterian Church
 - United Church of Christ (www.ucc.org)
 - United Church of Canada, the largest Canadian denomination (www.uccan.org)

- **French Huguenots** were the first to arrive. Settling in Florida in 1562, they were killed off by the Spanish in 1564. But other Huguenots settled in Quebec and became the first Protestants in Canada. Later immigrants joined existing Reformed, Presbyterian, or Anglican churches in Nova Scotia and the American colonies.
- **Puritans** (later known as Congregationalists) were the second major group to arrive on the scene. Calvinist in theology but members of the Anglican Church, they tried but failed to reform the Church of England. Eventually they fled to the New World for religious freedom. The pilgrims of the *Mayflower* were the first group to arrive in 1620; by 1633, over ten thousand Puritans had made their homes in the area called the Massachusetts Bay Colony. During the American War of Independence, many Puritans moved to Canada and established new churches in Nova Scotia.
- **The Dutch Reformed**, a third major group, began a colony on the island of Manhattan in 1628. They called it New Amsterdam and immediately organized a Reformed Church. (This congregation, the Collegiate Reformed Church in New York City, is the oldest continuous Protestant church in North America.) As the colony expanded up the Hudson River, more churches were planted in what came to be called New York and New Jersey.
- **Scottish and Irish Presbyterians** were the final group to arrive in the New World around 1700. Over half a million had fled from forced “conversions” to the Anglican Church and the authority of the British government. Groups settled in all the new colonies, especially the Carolinas and Ontario, and by the time of the American War of Independence, Presbyterians were established in every English colony in North America.



Growth and Power

As these Europeans became North Americans, their churches grew and flourished. By 1800, the Congregational churches of the North Atlantic states, the Reformed churches of New York and New Jersey, and the Presbyterian churches of the Middle Colonies formed the most influential base of religious, academic, and political power in the new United States, just as the Pres-

byterian churches would later shape Canadian culture in the nineteenth century.

- Their colleges educated North America’s leaders.
- Their churches claimed Presidents, senators, and judges as members.
- Their ministers were some of the most powerful voices in the nation.

The way we live in North America today was—and still is—shaped by this strong legacy of faith from the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition.

A World of Change

During the last three centuries, Reformed churches in North America changed, often in response to events that were occurring in society at large.

- An eighteenth-century religious revival called the Great Awakening featured “fire and brimstone” preaching and called for people in the established churches to become more passionate about their faith. Two new denominations were born when several Presbyterian ministers inspired by the revival decided to “restore” that denomination to a model more like the early church described in the New Testament. They called themselves Disciples of Christ or Christian churches.
- The Presbyterian church split over the issue of slavery, which came to a head during the Civil War in the nineteenth century. The Congregational Church fought to end slavery.
- Also during the nineteenth century, a new wave of Reformed immigrants arrived from Europe. Along with the settlement of the North

American prairies, that led to an increase in the number of churches in the Reformed tradition. Several new denominations appeared on the scene—including the Christian Reformed Church in 1857.

- The twentieth century brought heated theological discussion among the leaders of this faith tradition about a variety of issues: biblical inerrancy, evolution, women’s rights, prohibition, missions, and social justice. Often these discussions divided the church.

- On the other hand, the twentieth century also saw major reconciliation and unity. In 1925, the various Presbyterian, Congregational, and Methodist denominations of Canada merged to form the United Church of Canada. The United Church of Christ was formed in 1957 when four Reformed denominations, including the Congregational Church, combined. The Civil War split was healed in 1983 when the Presbyterian Church (USA) was created by the merging of several Presbyterian denominations.

Reformed churches will always be marked by changes like these. And that’s the way it should be, say its members. After all, if the church doesn’t change—if it doesn’t reform itself—it really can’t be effective in bringing a message of hope to a changing and sinful world. ■

SOUND BITES

- **Presbyterian:** Reformed churches of Scotland became known by the name that describes its form of church government: guidance through elected elders or *presbuteroi* (Greek).
- **Reformed:** Churches that followed the teachings of Swiss reformers Calvin and Zwingli came to be called Reformed after Queen Elizabeth of England remarked that these churches were “more reformed” than the Lutherans.
- **Congregational:** The local church or congregation is the basis for this name for the Reformed churches of the New England colonies. These churches wished to make clear that they would be self-governing and not under the authority of the bishops of the Church of England. Today this term describes the system of church government in which each local church is autonomous, that is, it is responsible only to itself rather than to a denomination or regional church official.
- **Puritan:** Calvinists in the Church of England in the 1600s earned this name for their efforts to purify the state church. Many Puritans left England for the colonies in order to practice their faith in their own churches. The pilgrims of the *Mayflower* were Puritans.
- **John Calvin (1509-1564):** French lawyer turned theologian who wrote the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the single most important book of the Reformation. Calvin was asked to lead the city of Geneva, Switzerland, on its path of reform. Along with Luther, he became an influential leader among the Protestants.

- **John Knox (1513-1572):** Known as “the father of Presbyterianism,” Knox was a student of Calvin who returned from Geneva to his home in Scotland and led the Protestant reformation there. Knox’s Scottish-Irish followers brought his brand of Calvinism to the New World. Led by missionary Francis Makemie, they established churches throughout the colonies. ■



JOHN KNOX (1513-1572)

Worship: Centered on the Word

How is the church to worship if it doesn't worship like the Roman Catholic Church? That question needed to be answered during the Reformation. Luther decided that any worship tradition that didn't hinder faith or contradict the Bible could stay. Calvin took a different approach: only those worship elements that were clearly biblical should be allowed.

This answer may have been extreme, but it resulted in worship centered on the Word of God. "Wherever we find the Word of God preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there, it is not to be doubted, is a church of God." Out went the stained glass, the vestments, the images of saints, the paintings, and the Latin. What was left? A simple service of prayer, psalm singing, and sermon in a modest, undecorated church.

If you worship in a Reformed or Presbyterian Church today, the kind of service you have will depend on what kind of church you attend. Services may be very similar to the services in Geneva—no musical instruments are used, only psalms are sung, and there are no decorations in the sanctuary. Or they may differ—perhaps the congregation is led in singing by a praise team, watches a movie clip, and breaks into small groups for prayer.

One element, however, will never vary: the main part of the service will be a sermon or message explaining a passage of Scripture. God speaks to us most clearly, Calvin taught, through Scripture, so the central part of our worship is hearing God's Word for our lives. The songs and prayers before the sermon prepare us to hear it, and those after it help us respond to it. That's why worship is centered on the sermon, and that's why the most prominent piece of furniture in the sanctuary is the pulpit. The celebration of the sacraments—baptism and the Lord's Supper—is also an important part of worship in the Reformed tradition.

Reformed worship is always focused on God, centered on the Bible, and connected to our world. ■



THE INTERIOR OF SEYMOUR CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH IN GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN. NOTE THE DOMINANT POSITION OF THE PULPIT, SYMBOLIZING THE CENTRALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD IN WORSHIP AND IN LIFE.

Want to Read More?

- If you've haven't read any of Katherine Paterson's books yet, pick up a copy of *Jacob Have I Loved* or *Bridge to Terabithia*. If you've already read those, try *Lyddie*, one of her other novels for young adults, or her collection of Christmas stories, *Angels and Other Strangers*. Paterson is a Presbyterian minister who has a great gift for storytelling.
- Another Presbyterian pastor with this gift is Frederick Buechner. Buechner's books range from fiction to re-tellings of Bible stories to autobiography to theology. Try the whimsical *Peculiar Treasures* or the autobiography *Sacred Journey*. Buechner's primary message in all his writing is to urge his readers to listen to God speaking in their lives.
- Kathleen Norris, a Presbyterian lay pastor, is a poet who writes honest accounts of her faith journey with humor and grace. Start with *Dakota: A Spiritual Geography*.
- If you'd like to read more about Reformed theology but are afraid it would be stuffy and boring, you might surprise yourself with Cornelius Plantinga's *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, a good book about a bad thing—sin.
- Finally, if ethical questions and issues of Christian living are topics you like to explore and discuss, try one of the many books by Lewis Smedes. Smedes has a talent for asking questions and exploring answers to life's knotty problems in a clear and fresh way. Try *Sex for Christians* or *Mere Morality*. ■

"[God] put each of us here to take care of something. And what he asks of us is that we be faithful in taking care of it. Something there is in life for each of us to care for. [God] does not ask that we be flawless, only faithful; not fantastic, not fabulous, only faithful. Being faithful means to find out what you are here to take care of and then to give it your best shot."

—LEWIS SMEDES, *HOW CAN IT BE ALL RIGHT WHEN EVERYTHING IS ALL WRONG?* (HARPERCOLLINS, 1992)

Know Any of These People?

North American history and culture wouldn't be what it is today without the influence of these Reformed/Presbyterian Christians. Know any of them?

- **John Witherspoon** was the only minister to sign the Declaration of Independence. He was a Presbyterian who just happened to be the president of the Presbyterian college that would become Princeton University. He also wrote a book on how Presbyterian church order could be a model for a country's government. One of his students who read this book was **James Madison**, who wrote the Constitution of the United States, which just happens to lay out a system of government of elected representation not unlike a church session and presbytery.
- And let's not forget **Paul de Rivoire**, the Boston French Huguenot whose family later changed its name to Revere, or other Huguenots like the "Swamp Fox" **Francis Marion**, a hero of the War of Independence (check out *The Patriot*), or the guy on the United States \$20 bill, **Alexander Hamilton**, or the famous nature artist **John James Audubon**.
- Then there are all those presidents from the Reformed/Presbyterian tradition: **Jackson, Van Buren, Buchanan, Garfield, Cleveland, Harrison, Roosevelt, Wilson, Coolidge, Eisenhower**. Noted Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King was a Presbyterian, although he also dabbled in the occult.
- How about these famous writers: **Nathaniel Hawthorne, Emily Dickinson, Harriet Beecher Stowe**, all people you've probably met in American Lit class.
- Then there was **Andrew Carnegie**, the giant of the Industrial Age, and **Alexander Graham Bell**, whose invention you really can't live without for long. Ring a bell?
- OK, sports fans, here's one more. Ever hear of **Rev. Chester David Hantranft**, pastor of the Second Reformed Church in Brunswick, New Jersey? The Big Ten, the Heisman Trophy, the NFL, the Super Bowl and the Steel Curtain—none of these would exist today without Pastor Hantranft. Way back in the 1860s, he introduced the (male) Rutgers students in his church to a rough new game called football and organized them into a team. To make it more fun, he decided to see if any other colleges in the area might like to play against his team. A group from Nassau Hall—Princeton, as it came to be called—took up the challenge. On November 6, 1869, at 3:00 p.m., the two schools met in the first game of intercollegiate football ever.

A crowd of about a hundred people paid nothing to watch the first match-up of a three-game series: Reformed versus Presbyterians. A highlight of the game occurred when two players ran offside into a fence on which spectators were sitting and sent everyone crashing to the ground. Game one went to the Reformed, game two to the Presbyterians, and perhaps in a spirit of Christian love, the teams decided not to play game three.

Reaction by the college community was mixed. The editor of the local paper pointed out that it was far more important that a student be able to translate Greek than to be able to kick a football. Despite these disparaging editorials, Princeton was declared the champion of the first season of intercollegiate football with a record of 1-1-0. The games expanded to include teams from Harvard and Yale. An Ivy League was formed, and the rest, as they say, is history! ■

PAUSE BUTTON

A Petition for the Christian Life

Grant unto us, O God,
the fullness of thy promises;
Where we have been weak,
grant us thy strength;
Where we have been confused,
grant us thy guidance;
Where we have been distraught,
grant us thy comfort;
Where we have been dead,
grant us thy life.
Apart from thee, O Lord,
we are nothing.
In thee and with thee, we can do all things. Amen.

—FROM *SERVICE BOOK FOR THE USE OF THE PEOPLE*, THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA, 1969, P. 299. REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION.