

A Theological Framework for Christian Reflection on Artificial Intelligence

*The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom.
Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
– Proverbs 4:7*



Dear Trinity Presbyterian Church Members & Friends,

For those of you who are church history buffs like me, you might be aware of an event that took place clear back in the year 43A.D. sponsored by Empress Theodora of the Byzantine Empire. If you simply cannot recall this momentous event, I'll tell you what happened . . . During what was called the Feast of Orthodoxy that commemorated the official restoration of the use of icons in worship, the Empress ended a long period of disputation in the Byzantine Church known as the "iconoclastic controversy." Icons, as you may know, are pieces of sacred artwork that are used in the practice of worship in the Greek Orthodox Church. In the middle ages those who opposed the use of icons claimed that it violated the Second Commandment, which forbids the use of idols, and that it heretically attempts to circumscribe the ineffable transcendence of God. Proponents of icon use pointed out that icons are not idols because they are not worshiped. Rather, icons are "venerated," meaning that they are highly valued or revered, as "windows into heaven;" icons are not understood to be God, but rather are a means to reflect on God and be viscerally drawn into the presence of God.

In many ways, things like icons are actually pieces of technology. They represent the application of knowledge to solve a problem – in the case of the Byzantine Church – the problem of how to worship God – which, because problems exist in God's created reality, inevitably draws on creaturely media. In other words, technology involves novel techniques and tools that interact with the world around us. Faith, as we have come to know in our long and proud Presbyterian Heritage over many decades, has never really existed apart from technology because our faith lives in the midst of a people who must interact with the world. Hence, this is why in our 21st Century church we employ the use of electronic organs, digital amplifiers, big screen TVs, YouTube videos, along with other multimedia instruments, all of which are used as tools to enhance our worship experience together. Interestingly, faith and technology have always had an up-and-down relationship, and the examples aforementioned, I think, are apt examples.

GOOD NEWS OF TRINITY

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April 2024



The more we think about this, we know from our own church experience anything new that affects our rich Presbyterian heritage is, more often than not, adopted critically. New technologies are no exception; it can take years of careful theological deliberation to garner the wisdom as to how best to employ the introduction of any particular technology to our faith tradition. If you will, notice that in the iconoclastic controversy in the Byzantine church, the use of icons was neither denigrated nor affirmed based on their novelty, but rather on deeply held theological convictions.

In recent years, artificial intelligence has emerged more rapidly than any other technology in history. The phenomenal rate of development and adoption of AI has meant that our digital wisdom is still catching up. It seems to me that for us as Christians, this digital wisdom must include theology, and what we have to say about God and the world from the perspective of faith. And to me it seems that theological reflection on AI is currently in dire need as this new technology becomes more and more ingrained in our everyday lives at what appears to be lightning speed!

In much the same way we might say that technology ineluctably develops as humanity interacts with the world around it, we might also say that theology ineluctably develops as Christians interact with the world around them. After all, Christianity did not begin as a bundle of theoretical propositions. Instead, Christianity began with a group of people following Jesus, coming to believe in him and his teachings about the Kingdom of God. While it is certainly true that what Jesus had to say to his disciples included doctrinal ideas, they were often ambiguous, usually analogic, and, as we all know, frequently misunderstood. God did not reveal much theologically to Moses at the Burning Bush when the divine name was given to him; “YHWH” merely means “I am who I am.” It took Moses many years of following God’s direction and trusting God’s promises for him to discover more about who God is, what God says about the world, and what God wanted of him and his people. In the same way the disciples mostly did not understand who Jesus was during his lifetime; it was only after his resurrection that they came to understand more clearly who Jesus was, what he had to say about the world, and what he wanted of them. Likewise, it took many years after the time of Jesus for Christians to come to understand more clearly who God is in light of Christ.

In fact, the text of the New Testament might be seen precisely as the work of Christ-followers as they worked out, in thought and language, their theology in consideration of questions that came up, or they believed would come up, in their interactions with others. The Gospel of Matthew appears to be written by a Jewish Christian, explaining in terms of that culture and religion about the person and work of Jesus. Likewise, the Gospel of Luke is striking for its Gentile character, explaining Jesus within that cultural milieu. Paul, you may recall, famously spoke on the Areopagus to the Athenians, connecting their beliefs and questions to an understanding of the God of Jesus Christ. Moreover, the many epistles from Paul and others work out who God is, what God has to say about the world, and what God would have us do in light of what is going on in different contexts. It’s when we encounter new contexts that new questions emerge that demand theological reflection. This is what is meant by the dictum: mission is “the mother of theology.” So we now see a new opportunity: As we begin to embrace God’s mission in a world of AI, it seems to me that we all must begin theologically to grapple with this new means of technology.

The theological questions before all of us in what is now the digital age are pressing, to say the least! What does God think of AI? Is AI good or evil? Will AI save us? What sort of future will AI give us? I think in order to find some sense of balance through our many many questions regarding AI, it will be vital as we move evermore into the digital world to remember that neither we nor our awesome AI tools are God. The extent to which this new technology participates in the inbreaking of God’s eschaton, albeit, is not clear at this point. Still, we rely on the providence of God to bring about the reign of God in times, places, and means that we cannot dictate as his children. Thankfully, as God leads us forward into his future, we know that we all can rely on the process of mind, heart, and will, coupled with our faith, will come to know God as we are known; knowing that our knowledge (despite the advent of AI) is grounded in God’s knowledge, which we perceive only dimly trusting in the Word of his one and only Son, Christ Jesus.

Women of Trinity – March 20, 2024 meeting



Our meeting was held at Tomasino's Restaurant in Dallas.

We opened our meeting with prayer.

Thank you to Allyson Lord for hosting us at her home last December.

Greeting Card Ministry report was given by Betsy Fairchild.

Treasurer's Report – we now have \$526.00 in our checking account.

In early January, we sent a check for \$465 for 2023 to the Presbytery: \$140 thank offering; \$215 birthday offering; \$100 Fellowship of the Least Coin.

Fellowship of the Least Coin offering will be re-started today for 2024.

We voted to donate \$100 to the church's "Special Offering for Heating."

We voted to do the Bakeless Bake Sale later this year.

Do voted to host a second Sunday reception this summer.

Our church rummage sale is Friday, June 7 and Saturday, June 8. The women were asked to plan to help with their time and donations of items to sell, and to save their good stuff! Pre-sale for members is Thursday evening, June 6 from 6pm to 8pm. Volunteer sign-up sheets will be posted in late April.

Back Mountain Memorial Library Luncheon – Sunday, April 21 at 12:30 at the Appletree Terrace in Dallas. See Kate Pitkat for reservations - \$30.00 per person.

A volunteer sign-up sheet was passed around to host a women's luncheon meeting at member's homes this year. Three people signed up so far.

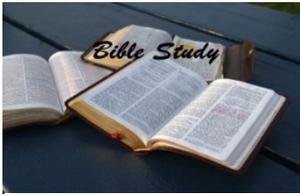
Thoughts and prayers for our members, our families, our country and our world.

Our Church Prayer List: Nancy Thomas, Betsy Fairchild, Kathy Stevens, Connie Page, Mary and Walt Chappell, Ron Pavlick, Doug Stevens, Rich Burkhardt, Jim Snyder, Mary and Neil Morrison, Allyson Lord's sister Bonnie, Shirley Wolfkeil, Rev. Roger Griffith, Bette Handley, Barbara Jones, Karin Thompson's sister Jeri Kane, The Thompson's daughter Jeanette and great-great niece Wren Hopper, Nancy Williams and her son Richard.

Our next meeting will be Wednesday, April 17 at noon at Lum's in Dallas.



Rowan Yurko received a Bible from Rev. Murray Thompson on behalf of the congregation of Trinity. Rowan is a daughter of Kevin and Erin Yurko and a granddaughter of Harry and Debbie Cooper.



Our next Bible study will be April 21th following morning worship for an hour of learning. We'll begin that day an in-depth study of the **Book of Acts Chapters 5 & 6** in the New Testament.



Annual Church Rummage Sale - June 7th and 8th

The rummage sale committee at Trinity has set Friday, June 7 and Saturday, June 8 for our annual gigantic rummage sale in the fellowship hall and parking lot here at the church. Residents of the Back Mountain and surrounding areas eagerly look forward to our sale every year, and we are pleased to be able to bring it to our members and loyal customers.

The sale will take place from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Friday, June 7, and from 9:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, June 8. Saturday will be bag day: all you can stuff into a large brown grocery bag for only \$2. Please join us as we bring to the public this much-anticipated annual bargain hunting event.

And don't forget to attend the pre-sale event for church members on Thursday evening, June 6, from 6:00 pm to 8:00 p.m.

The Miracle Building will be set up for the sale on Saturday, June 1. Please wait until Sunday, June 2, to begin bringing in your donations. You can also bring them in on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday of that week. Then on Thursday morning, the final sorting and pricing will continue to get ready for the three days of the sale.

Your help is needed for the sale. Please sign up on the charts in the hallway when they are posted in early May . There are many jobs to do, and we would appreciate everyone's help. We would also appreciate your donations of clothing, household goods, jewelry, etc. Thank you in advance for helping us make this a successful fundraiser. All proceeds will benefit the general operating budget of the church.



It's that time of year to start thinking about the rummage sale. That means it's time to get your jewelry that you never wear out of your jewelry box and give it to Allyson Lord as soon as possible. Also, if you have small jewelry gift boxes that you won't be using, bring them along also. Allyson will be accepting jewelry and small boxes until further notice. Thank you in advance for your donations.

On Saturday April 13th @ 830 a.m. Lum's Fernbrook there will be a meeting. All men are invited and encouraged to attend.





On March 24th we celebrated the 90th plus birthdays of five of our cherished members. The Outreach Committee hosted a birthday party in the Miracle Building for our special honorees who have much to celebrate. And oh what changes they have seen in their lifetimes! From left: Clarence Givens, Emily Jenkins, Pastor Murray, Nancy Williams and Jack Dunn. Shirley Wolfkeil was unavailable for the photo.

Trinity Helping Hands will be doing an insert in the bulletin on Mother's Day. We will be providing forms for you to complete in order to include those special women in your life, either in memory of or in honor of. These could be your wife, mother, grandmother, aunt, sister or just someone who has helped fill this special role in your life. We will be asking for a donation to include your special lady/ladies in the special insert. This is a simple way to say thank you to those special women in your life and at the same time help to increase the general account of Trinity Presbyterian Church.



The forms and an envelope will be available on the table in the hall and Nicole will include the form in an email for those of you not able to make it to church. All forms will need to be submitted and received by Monday, May 1st. This is necessary so that the insert can be typed up and added to the Mother's Day bulletin. Please make your **check payable to Trinity Presbyterian Church**.



Trinity Presbyterian Church would like to recognize children or grandchildren who will be graduating this Spring from high school or college. We would like to recognize them on a given Sunday early in June. They should let you know **no later than the middle of May. Please contact the church office with your graduates information by phone 570-675-3131 or email: trinitypress@frontiernet.net**

The Mission/Outreach Committee is very grateful for the donations they have received so far for their Samaritan's Purse "Operation Christmas Child" Project. So far, we have collected hats, gloves, scarves, socks, toothbrushes, combs and hair brushes. For the month of April they are looking for donations of bar soap and stick deodorant. Thank you for your generosity. Our next meeting will be Monday, April 8th @ 7:00 PM.



Thank you all for giving me cards to use for Trinity Greetings for birthdays, get well, sympathy, anniversary and some just a note to say hello. If you know of someone that needs a card you can email me at bettyb693@myyahoo.com. I also want to say thanks to the Deacons for letting me share my "hobby" with everyone at Trinity. Bette Handley

Deacons News:



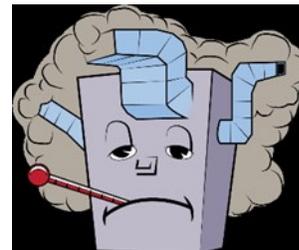
Board Of Deacons: President – Beth Davis

Members:

Chuck Borland	Josh Coy	Megan Davis
Nicole Fleschut	Bette Handley	Michele Steele
Kathy Stevens	Karin Thompson	
Treasurer – Debbie Cooper		

The Deacons have delivered 174lbs. of food to the food pantry. The Deacons also sent a \$30. Monetary donation as well. Thank you to everyone who donated.

“Special Offering for Heating.” This offering is truly a special offering that will be dedicated to the heat and electric bills. The congregation will be kept apprised of the results of this Special Offering. Please consider giving as generously as you can. For your convenience, we will place special envelopes on the table outside the entrance to the sanctuary. If you place a check in the offering plate, please write in the memo section “Heating Fund.” You may also mail your check to the church office. Thank you for considering this request. We all want to be warm and comfortable when we attend worship services and events at our church. Your “Special Offering” will be greatly appreciated.

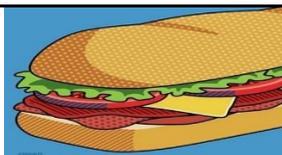


Subscribe to our Email list for updates - Be sure to be in the know about all that is happening at Trinity Presbyterian Church by joining our email list. Use the QR code next to this announcement to join (take a photo of it with a smartphone and the webpage will open) or go to <http://www.dallastpc.org/join-our-email-list>

Meals on Wheels~ If you would like to volunteer for Meals on Wheels on any open dates, please call Meryl Davis @ (570) 310-1556.



April 4, 2024	Beth Davis & Nancy Thomas
April 18, 2024	open



J & J Deli
3101 Memorial Highway
Dallas, PA 18612
570-675-6139

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

HOAGIE SALE

J&J Deli is offering any 8” Sub UP TO \$8.50.
For each hoagie sold, J&J Deli will return \$2.00
to Trinity Presbyterian Church.

Hoagie coupons do not expire and are redeemable at
J & J Deli. Please see any member of the Helping Hands
Committee to purchase your tickets.



April Anniversaries

04/03	Neil & Mary Morrison
04/10	Windsor & Meryl Davis
04/17	Michael Salvati & Beth Davis



April Birthdays

04/04	Cindy Mulloy
04/06	C. Don Kocher
04/06	Karin Thompson
04/08	Ella Fleschut
04/09	Mari Johnson
04/20	Nancy Williams
04/21	Carl Sgarlat Jr.
04/30	Jennifer Sgarlat

May Birthdays

05/07	Nicole Fleschut
05/07	Harry Cooper
05/13	Alice Kocher
05/15	Zach Coy
05/28	Kurt Williams

PRAYER CONCERNS

Members of Trinity:

Rich Burkhardt Pavlick	Mary & Walter Chappell	Bette Handley	Neil & Mary Morrison	Maria
Jim Snyder Wolfkeil	Doug Stevens	Nancy Williams	Phil & Leona Walter	Shirley

Friends of Trinity:

David Brobst – stroke- Friend of Alice & Don Kocher
Richard Burns – friend of Barb Rinker, lung cancer
Neil & Jennie Carlson - Friends of the Thompson's
Max Dreher – nephew of Janice Russell
Carol Gumienny- Stroke- eyes & balance- Nancy Thomas's sister
Sara Heil – Marianne Williams sister
Wren Hopper – Murray & Karin's great-great niece.
Barbara Jones – Betty Handley's sister
Jeri Kane – Karin Thompson's sister
Marlene Kubosky – Health issues – Friend of Ken Jones
Sean McHale – Friend of Wayne & Marianne – serious illness
Bill Morrison – poor health – Neil's brother
Fred and Fran Moody
Sandi Morris
Tommy Nice- Friend of Ken Jones
Nancy Owens- Friend of Bette Handley
Claudette Partington - medical issues – Friend of Allyson Lord
Ron Pavlick
Ann Roberts – Friend of Ken Jones
Susan Rose – friend of Barb Rinker, health issues
Bob Sands _ Friend of Ken Jones
Bob and Barb Thomas
Amy Wert – paralyzed from accident – daughter of Janie Millers co-worker
Gary Vincelli- Friend of Wayne Williams