Dear Wendy,

Jesus Died Today in NYC.

When I arrive at my church, the first thing I do is usually check my messages. Last week a young woman left a message that said "I am looking to join a church and want to know about yours". "What do I tell her?" I thought to myself as I dialed her number. On the other end of the phone was a woman who explained to me that she was looking for a church that would welcome her and her new found belief about something she had read in the Bible that made sense to her. She could not find a church that believed or taught the particular clear teaching of the Bible on that particular subject.

There is no purpose in getting into what she had found, but what followed next in her statement truly troubled me. She said, "I went to a church a few weeks ago and people..."
were so cold to me. No one said 'hello". She was expecting a welcome, perhaps a smile. It really turned her off, since she had heard so much about how Christians were supposed to act.

This church had a belief in the particular doctrinal point she had just become familiar with after studying the Bible and was excited to visit the church to learn more. She had a belief in Jesus, but wondered if the people she had just met had a relationship with Him. In that church, Jesus Died that day for this woman.

A young man I study with in classes I am taking in Pastoral Counseling and Pastoral Care shared with us how he was abused by a minister and verbally insulted constantly by this ministers attitude and superiority to others. "How dare you question my authority?" The minister was running more of a family business, than a loving and inviting house of prayer.

My colleague is still broken by the way this "Man of God" treated him. He is still reeling from the abusive nature of the continual confrontation experienced and has a difficult time believing in God, oddly due to a member of the clergy. In a very real sense, Jesus died that day to this young man, who desperately wants to believe in Jesus once again.

When someone enters our fellowship, or our space, they have a right to expect Jesus Christ living in the hearts and actions of people who say they are followers of Jesus. If they see actions that are opposite from the characteristics of Jesus Christ, they have a right to be disappointed. In a very not so subtle way, it shakes the faith. the glimmer of hope, the tinge of light that they are looking and seeking for in a faith community that calls themselves "Christians".

I am shaken when I view "Christians" picketing with signs that are insulting to those with a different sexual orientation. Hate filled signs that reflect an image of God and of Jesus Christ that is a complete turn-off to onlookers, who must say "These are Christians?" Comedians, news anchors, documentary film makers have a field day showing this kind of sickening behavior. It helps to kill Jesus in the minds of many.

There is now a sea of politicians who suggest they follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, who pledge for political treasure their support of this or that to the Christian Right or is it the Christian left? Politicians who show up in a church setting for a photo op, who know little of what they are talking about and who they say they believe in. When thinking people see this clear hypocrisy, only one thing comes to mind. Jesus died today. The effect is numbing and makes it is so much harder to portray Christ as a truth since there is so much falsehood about Jesus all around us.

Then there is the "political church" that goes around trying to use their political muscle to strong arm government to see things there way, not realizing that their own religious vestments are stained with the hypocrisy of deficits and trauma that their own clergy have left on the lives of untold thousands of children. Entire cities turned off to belief in a Jesus that many times the organized church does not even know.

Jesus died today. Killed by politics, hate, religiosity, hypocrisy, and spiritual neglect to the needs of others.

Clearly, you may not agree with what I am saying here, but as I speak to people in private sessions about their lives, their hopes and their faith, they share how much hurt they have suffered at the hands of "church members" who gossip, ridicule and exhibit harshness to each other instead of the forgiving grace that Christ offers to each of us.

Jesus dies a little each time an image of hate, a word is spoken against someone, a poster is written with words that have nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus Christ.
Those who carry these white cardboard placards in protest against someone or some group they do not agree with are false witnesses of a God of love and acceptance.

Perhaps someone or some thing, or some event has caused Jesus to die in your life, but the truth is, Christ lives today and His love is still available to each of us. Do not be fooled by false witnesses. Do not be discouraged by the hypocrisy you see all around you. Do not be comforted by stone images of saints that someone has falsely suggested you need to pray too. Let your faith in a living God not be defused by religious political hacks or from the legion of other annoying ticks that bite their way into your faith journey.

Christ lives. He is loving. He is mighty to save. He is the Word made flesh. He is kind and gentle and accepting of our frailties and brokenness. His truth is real. He is risen and available without appointment to hear our prayers.

Let us praise those caring disciples of Christ who minister around the block and around the world, who care for the sick, who share the healing power of Christ to the broken hearted, who bring comfort to those who morn, who feed those who are hungry.

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, (and sisters), be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. For, 'Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech. He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.' Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. 'Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.' But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord." - Ephesians 3:8-14 (NIV)

Christ lives! Don't let anyone or any religious system kill him in your life.

May God bless you and give you peace.

Best regards,

Tony Romeo, Pastor / REACH-NYC

P.S.: Below (please scroll down) you will find some worship and study opportunities available to you this weekend, to learn more about God and the teachings of Jesus Christ as found in the Bible.

Friday night, TONIGHT at 7 p.m., we meet at Cafe Reach, 232 West 11th Street, NYC in a relaxed and judgment free zone, where we share in some good conversation on spiritual matters. Candle light and round tables make it a great atmosphere to be yourself and to make new friends.

Saturday mornings at 9:30 a.m. we are now serving breakfast at Cafe Reach, at Historic Manhattan Church, 232 West 11th Street, NYC in what we call Bible With A Bagel. We study the Bible with a nice warm breakfast enjoyed with a hot drink, in a home-like setting. We have freshly made oat meal, fresh fruit and a New York City whole grain bagel. I would love to meet with you as we study the Bible together and share the Word.

Special Event this Saturday afternoon at 3:30 p.m.: We are meeting for study and sharing of the Gospel in a small group study at Seafarers International House, 123 East 15th Street, NYC between Irving and Third Ave. in the Union
Square area of NYC. The Chapel at Union Square - A group of us are gathering once again for Bible study and discussion in the Mezzanine section of this venue. Take the elevator to the second floor and make a right. Enjoy some good discussion and some simple food.

No matter what your faith tradition, you are invited to join us for study at a time and place convenient to your schedule. We are all part of God’s family.

Join us
Friday, February 10, 2012

CAFE REACH
232 West 11th Street
at 7 p.m.

Cafe Reach meets at Historic Manhattan Church in the West Village, New York City
Cafe Reach is a REACH-NYC sponsored event. Members of all faith based traditions are welcome.

Bring a poem to share, a story to tell or an instrument to play. Come meet in a relaxed and candle lit atmosphere. A warm welcome, good food and hot drink will be waiting for you.

Help us design a new and dynamic concept to learn about God and to share peace and joy in this great city!

Saturday morning February 11, 2012
9:30 a.m.
FREE Breakfast With The Word.

Join us for a nice warm breakfast, a healthy whole grain NYC Bagel, Oat Meal, fresh fruit, a hot drink and
wake up your mind with the study of God's Word.

This is a relaxed setting where all are invited to join in no matter what your faith tradition.

We meet at Historic Manhattan Church in the West Village at Cafe Reach 232 West 11th Street, NYC Just one and a half blocks west of Seventh Ave.

Saturday Morning's at 9:30 a.m.

See you for Bible With A Bagel. Invite your friends.

Breakfast is served at 9:15 a.m.

This free breakfast is sponsored by supporters of REACH-NYC and we thank them.

This Saturday afternoon, February 11, 2012 at 3:30 P.M. Small Group Bible Study and Conversation at The Chapel At Union Square in the Mezzanine Section / Library Seafarers International House 123 East 15th Street, NYC Corner of Irving Place.
Donations to REACH-NYC help us in our efforts to reach out to the people of New York City. REACH-NYC is a recognized tax-exempt corporation by the IRS and all contributions are fully tax-deductible.*

Contributions can also be made by check and sent payable to: "REACH-NYC" and mailed to: REACH-NYC, P.O. Box 651, North Salem, NY 10560.

Thank you in advance for helping the REACH-NYC ministry!

*A receipt will be sent recognizing all contributions at the end of the year for tax purposes.
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