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# THE LIGHT

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH OF CLIFTON AND PASSAIC

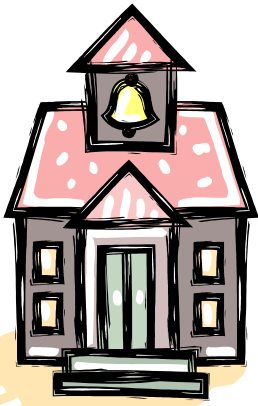
"A Church UNITED in faith, hope, & love!"

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## I LOVE THIS BAR (CHURCH)

After 17 years of absence, Country Music has come back to the New York metropolitan area. Radio station 94.7, which Harold Camping used to broadcast the imminent end of the world, is now a Country station singing about life in all its glory and brokenness. Country music is full of drinking and broken hearts, good women and low lifes, faith in God and tender family moments, but at its heart, it celebrates the essential goodness of life. Daryl Worley gets it right when he sings—"I love this crazy, tragic, / Sometimes almost magic, / Awful, beautiful life." As a preacher, all I can say is "Amen."



*It ain't too far  
Come as you are*

The other day, I happened to hear Toby Keith sing, "I Love This Bar." Now I do not frequent bars, but the lyrics struck a responsive note in my heart.

*We got winners, we got losers / Chain smokers and boozers  
And we got yuppies, we got bikers / We got thirsty hitchhikers  
And the girls next door dress up like movie stars.  
Hmm, hmm, hmm I love this bar.*

*[Chorus:] I love this bar / It's my kind of place  
Just walkin' through the front door / Puts a big smile on my face  
It ain't too far, come as you are  
Hmm, hmm, hmm I love this bar*

My first response to the song was, "Wow! This is similar to God's vision for the church." Now don't get me wrong, I don't think God wants to turn our Sunday worship services into a drunken party. However, I think God has a place for every kind of person, good or bad, in the church.

In God's eyes, our differences and our pasts don't matter. As the Apostle Paul says, "In Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith... There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:26-28) If you are looking for a place where you will be loved as you are, then we invite you to come and join us on Sunday morning. It's not quite "happy hour" but it will fill your heart with joy and you will leave with a smile on your face. I love this church.

In Christ's love,

*Pastor Mike*