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January 2016

“A New Year Resolution: Take Up and Read”

How are you doing with your personal reading of God’s word?

As we enter the new year I want to encourage you to make a commitment to read God’s Word in some regular and consistent way. Our monthly Newsletters contain a Bible reading schedule each month that you can use.

There are many tools out there or you can just develop your own. Every so often I have used one of those “One Year Bibles” that are laid out to read through the Old Testament and New Testament once in a year and through the Psalms and Proverbs twice. I have done this in different versions just to make it a little different. I’m not saying that the only way to read the Bible regularly is to read through the whole Bible in one year. You may just decide to read one book of the Bible for an extended time, and that’s fine. Of course what I do suggest is that you read in terms of “thought units” (paragraphs in order within their context; or a thematic chunk from Proverbs, or a whole Psalm) instead of just reading a verse here and there. It’s fine to memorize and/or meditate on one verse, but in your reading you want to cover whole thought units.

I hope you have some plan to help keep you in God’s word each day. We really can’t grow very strong in our faith merely by coming to church on Sundays to hear one or two passages read for us and one sermon preached to us (No matter how long I make that sermon ☺!). Each of us needs to spend some time on our own in God’s Word if we are to develop that closeness in relationship with our God for which we were created and for which our hearts long. After all, how close can any relationship ever get if all the communication was through a third party?

I believe there is nothing more foundational to our growth in the Lord than to spend time regularly in God’s Word. Yes, there are many essential disciplines vital to growing in Christ, such as prayer, and worship, and service, and evangelism; but I believe for those disciplines to bear godly fruit they must be planted in the soil of God’s Word. Being in God’s Word helps us to discern God’s will, and that helps to inform our prayers, inspire our worship, and direct our actions so that we can live wholly and joyfully in the Lord.

If you struggle with reading the Bible or if you want to read God’s word regularly but don’t know where to start, or what version to read, please speak with me. I would love to help you make feeding upon God’s Word a regular discipline of your life in Christ – as regular as taking in food for your body or air for your lungs.

As we read in the beginning of “Acts” we learn some important lessons about how to be the church – God’s people worshipping and serving together. And one of the things I have noticed is this need to be grounded in God’s Word. This grounding was an essential part of the church as it came to life and started to grow. And as we see in Acts chapter 6, the apostles realized that to neglect the “ministry of the word” is to put the entire church at risk.

With that said I not only encourage you to read your Bible daily, but I ask you to pray for me, that I would be faithful in my reading for my personal growth, and disciplined in my weekly sermon preparation. Pray that I would be open to the leading of God's Spirit that I might speak words that minister to your heart and life every week. And please pray that whatever I am preparing, it would speak first to my heart and mind before it comes out of my mouth – because God knows I need to hear from the Lord as much as if not more than you! (And yes, if you feel so led by God, you can pray that I would say what God gives me to say in less time ☺! After all, our God is a God of miracles☺!)

Along with reading God's word, I find it helpful to read other books (besides my sermon preparation reading or my Sunday school reading). I'm speaking in particular of devotional type books. One that I have used in the past is a book titled "My Utmost for His Highest" by Oswald Chambers (I would also suggest "Morning and Evening" by Charles Spurgeon, or the more contemporary "Jesus Today" or "Jesus Calling" by Sarah Young. You may not agree with all that such writers say, but they do give insightful views into God's Word that you may not see yourself.). Such short devotionals often consist of one or two page meditations that can get you thinking about a particular verse of the Bible. But don't let such devotionals be your only source of Bible reading because they often do only take one of two verses – often removed from their context, which makes it hard to see the bigger picture that God's Word is communicating.

I am in the process of using two such books at present, one that I have used before titled "Deep-Rooted in Christ: The Way of Transformation," and the other a daily devotion with excerpts from J. I. Packers classic work, "Knowing God". Whatever you use, after reading God's word, the occasional reading of a devotional will help inspire you in your walk with the Lord.

Now, to be sure, I struggle in my daily Bible reading and devotional reading like most everyone else. And that's okay – so don't turn it into another thing you must do. Your Bible and devotional reading isn't going to merit God's favor – He already loves you as much as is possible for an infinitely loving God – which is a lot! Follow a plan that will help you grow, not get you discouraged.

Some may find it difficult to read God's Word, feeling that at times it can be hard to understand. I know how you feel. But I also know that nothing comes easy without work – hard work. So instead of making excuses, I encourage you to do something about it. Get a "Study Bible" to help you. Often such Bible's having opening notes to set the context of each book, and notes throughout to help in you understand what you read. Those notes aren't God's inspired Word, but they can help. Also, there are some books written for the very purpose of helping people read God's Word. Three that I would recommend (Not that you need to read all three ☺!) are: "How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth" (Your Session will be reading through this together this year.), "How to Read the Bible Book By Book" (both by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart), and "Understanding the Bible" by John Stott.

God has laid it upon my heart to find the time for my personal reading of God's word, and, in my case, to be more faithful in "journaling" during those times. I am working on this and I want to encourage you to do the same because I believe to do so will lay the foundation in our church upon which God can build a mighty work for His glory. At the same time, I believe if you leave this work just to your officers or to me, we will see little fruit for God's glory. As "Acts" makes clear, we are the church together, and if we are to stand strong and grow we will need to do the work of the church together. And that begins with turning to God's Word for spiritual nurture and direction. So let's get into God's Word together, and if I can help please ask. After all, equipping you for service to our God is my primary calling and the thing I most enjoy doing! (Acts 6:4; Eph 4:11-12)

May the Lord bless you as you open your heart to the Lord by opening your mind to His word!

Love in Christ Jesus,

Pastor John

PS: As you consider your role in nurturing your soul let God's Word below encourage and motivate you (all from the NIV).

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” (Joshua 1:8)

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2:15)

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17)

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

PSS (or is it PPS?): As we enter the New Year I thought, for your reading pleasure and reflection, I'd leave you with a “Top Ten Ways You Can Tell a Church is ‘Spirit Filled’”. I came across this list several years ago and thought it was amusing and insightful. . . enjoy!

1. When the congregation proclaims to one another, “The peace of Christ be with you”, and mean it.
2. When the pastor closes the sermon, the chant erupts, “We want more! We want more!”
3. When the Trustees have to put a limit on how much each person can give to the church!
4. When every member regularly buys a new bible to replace their worn out one!
5. When there is an influx of people “pleading” with committees to give them something to do!
6. When people willingly give up their seats for guests to help guests feel welcomed!
7. When the weekly prayer meeting becomes the most heavily attended event in the life of the church!
8. When the congregation douses the pastor with a cooler of Gatorade at the end of the service! (Don't do this -- even if Spirit led☺!)
9. When believers aren't ashamed of the Gospel but live it out with conviction in loving service and passionate proclamation!
10. When the congregation participates in worship with their eyes fixed upon Jesus instead of the clock!

PSSS (or PPPS): I want to thank all of you for your faithful service together and generous giving of your time and resources over the past year. I also want to thank you for your generous Christmas gift given on behalf of your Session. And I pray for many more years of faithful service together – Soli Deo Gloria!



Remember in Prayer...

Our Shut-ins at home:

Tillie Herman, Jack and Dolores Robb,
Marcella Goard, June Giles, Dot McGann

At the Eddy: Dot Multunas, Edna Wells

Those dealing with health issues:

Stan Bentley, Doris Calamaras, Joshua
Valerio

Our Church:

Pastor John and the Session

Our Community:

Those who don't know the Lord
Those dealing with financial difficulties
That our schools would be places of safety

Our World:

Missionaries serving around the world
Open doors for sharing the Gospel message.
Persecuted Christians around the world

January Birthdays

1/10 Mike Martin (Sr.)
1/15 Caitlin Dickson
1/18 Mary Jane Somerville
1/18 Kurt Whitman
1/19 Jessica Davey
1/20 Elizabeth Somerville
1/25 Mort Casey



January Anniversaries

1/14 Alice & Stanton Bentley



Mark Your Calendars...

Lent begins February 10th. Watch for
more details about the Lenten Soup
Suppers and Worship times.



Serving This Month

January 3rd

Worship Assistants: Natalia and Christian
Multunas
Greeters: Pat Gilmaier
Head Greeters: Rob Jensen
Nursery: Wendy Giddings
Communion: Jason Laz
Fellowship Hosts: Lois Pasinella

January 10th

Worship Assistants: Bill Multunas, Ella Miller
Greeters: Dean and Doris Calamaras
Head Greeter: Peter Laz
Nursery: Alice Bentley
Fellowship Hosts: Ofori Family

January 17th

Worship Assistants: Sue Laz, Kelly Valerio
Greeters: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski
Head Greeter: Christian Multunas
Nursery: Jen McAuley
Fellowship Hosts: Multunas Family

January 24th

Worship Assistants: Deena Dominy, Natalia
Multunas
Greeters: Alice Bentley
Head Greeter: Peter Laz
Nursery: Deena Dominy, Angelina Solomon
Fellowship Hosts:

January 31st

Worship Assistants: Kelly Valerio, Jesse Ofori
Greeters: Jen McAuley
Head Greeter: Andy Miller
Nursery: Wendy Giddings
Fellowship Hosts: Whitman Family

General Financial Update for November 2015

	Year to Date	November
Total Income	\$149,118.25	\$16,316.00
Total Expenses	(\$146,004.03)	(\$13,838.36)
Difference	\$ 3,114.22	\$ 2,477.64

General Financial Update for December 2015

	Year to Date	December
Total Income	\$166,473.25	\$17,355.00
Total Expenses	(\$160,454.07)	(\$14,450.04)
Difference	\$ 6,019.18	\$ 2,904.96

Per Capita Apportionment

If you would like to help offset the \$45.00 per member, you may use the envelopes in your offering boxes marked Per Capita Apportionment.

Share the Good News

As Christians we are commanded to share the Good News of Jesus with others. In an effort to help all of us do this, the Outward Ministry Committee has provided various types of literature that can be taken and shared with those we know who do not know the Lord. We have Bibles, devotional booklets, and other literature available in the narthex and at the top of the stairs near the church office. Please feel free to take anything that is there for yourself or to share with a friend.



Many Thanks!!

The Upward Ministry, Inward Ministry, and Outward Ministry committees would like to say big "THANK YOU" to everyone who helped to make this past Advent and Christmas season meaningful for all of us. Thanks to:

- Jerry Whitman for decorating the sanctuary.
- Andy Miller for arranging for the wreaths.
- Sal, the choir, the Red Letters and the Acoustic Worship Team for their gifts of music.
- Everyone who gave a shoebox for Operation Christmas Child.
- Jerry and Vera Whitman for planning the senior luncheon.
- Bill Multunas and Pastor John for coordinating Christmas Caroling at The Eddy.
- The kids who made Christmas ornaments to hand out at The Eddy.
- Peggy for all her work in the church office.
- Alice Bentley for coordinating the Christmas gifts for our shut-ins.
- Those who shopped for and delivered Christmas gifts to our shut-ins.
- Those who served the evening meal at Capital City Rescue Mission.

Last but not least, thanks to Pastor John for all the time and work that was put into planning and leading our worship services and other holiday ministries.

Help Fill the Shelves at Hope 7's Food Pantry!

Hope 7's food pantry serves families in need right here in our own community. The need is great and has been growing every year!

During the month of January we will be collecting Pasta, sauce and canned pasta (Spaghetti O's, ravioli, etc.)

Donations of other non-perishable food items will also be accepted.

Bible Quiz for January 2016

As we move into the New Year we will return to our study of the Gospel of Luke with questions from chapters 18 and 19.

1. How did the blind man just outside of Jericho address Jesus?
2. What did the blind man cry out for?
3. What did Zacchaeus do so that he could see Jesus as Jesus passed through Jericho? Why did he do that?
4. Fill in the blanks: "The Son of Man came to _____ and to _____ what was lost."
5. In the "Parable of the Ten Minas" what did Jesus do for the man who turned his one mina into ten?
6. In the "Parable of the Ten Minas" what did Jesus do to the man who kept his one mina laid away so that he would not lose it?
7. True or False: As Jesus was preparing for His "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem, He sent two of His disciples ahead of Him to get a magnificent white horse upon which to ride into Jerusalem.
8. True or False: As Jesus approached Jerusalem the crowds laid down their cloaks for Jesus to ride upon and sang praises to Him?
9. True or False: As Jesus approached Jerusalem the Pharisees were so caught up in the moment that they too sang out praises to Jesus?
10. Fill in the blanks: After Jesus entered the Temple area and drove out those who were selling, He said, "My house will be a house of _____, but you have made it a _____ of _____."

Update from Zambia

The many children's books that were so generously given throughout last year have been sent to Amy McAuley in Zambia. The books were shared with various ministries in Zambia -

Lusaka Central Prison where 100 women and 10 children under the age of 5 are incarcerated. Some of the children have spent their entire lives in the prison. The prison has a preschool and the books will be used in the library.

Kabwe Maximum Security Prison where women facing capital crimes and their children under 5 are incarcerated. They do not have a preschool but the books are a start.

Special Hope Network is led by an American couple and works with children and families with intellectual disabilities in several of the compounds (slums) in Lusaka.

Mercy Ministries is a school ministering to orphans, widows and the vulnerable (those with HIV/AIDS) in Chanda. The books will be most helpful for a special needs class of disabled children and the early kindergarten and first grade classes.

Mother Theresa Missionaries of Charity Orphanage and School which cares for many children of all ages.

CURE Hospital which is a mission hospital mostly handling pediatric specialty cases. Their specialties are neurosurgery, orthopedics, and ENT.

Amy writes, "Please thank the church for their generosity. Only in eternity will we know the magnitude of influence this gift will have on the children who will be encouraged and inspired by your love."

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

What we believe matters. Doctrine matters for out of our core beliefs come our actions – actions which, by God’s grace, should bring honor to God and blessing to others and ourselves. To help build a solid theological foundation out of which “God honoring works” can flow, I encourage you to spend some time reading and reflecting upon the questions below, which have been selected from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The “Westminster Shorter Catechism” is one of the catechisms included in the Book of Confessions of the PCUSA, and was originally written to supplement the “Westminster Confession of Faith” as a teaching document for younger Christians.

Q 45. Which is the First Commandment?

The First Commandment is, “You shall have no other gods before me.”

Q 46. What is required in the First Commandment?

The First Commandment requires us to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and our God; and to worship and glorify Him accordingly.

Q 47. What is forbidden in the First Commandment?

The First Commandment forbids the denying, or not worshipping and glorifying, the true God as God, and our God; and the giving of that worship and glory to any other which is due to Him alone.

Q 48. What are we specially taught by these words, “before me,” in the First Commandment?

These words, “before me,” in the First Commandment teach us that God, who sees all things, takes notice of, and is much displeased with, the sin of having any other god.

Q 49. Which is the Second Commandment?

The Second Commandment is, “You shall not make unto yourself any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: you shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate Me; and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me, and keep My commandments.”

Q 50. What is required in the Second Commandment?

The Second Commandment requires the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in His Word.

Q 51. What is forbidden in the Second Commandment?

The Second Commandment forbids the worshipping of God by images, or any other way not appointed in His Word.

Q 52. What are the reasons annexed to the Second Commandment?

The reasons annexed to the Second Commandment are: God’s sovereignty over us, His propriety in us, and the zeal He has to His own worship.

From Music and Audio-Visual Ministries...

“In the Bleak Mid-Winter”

In the bleak midwinter, frosty wind made moan,
earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone;
snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow,
in the bleak midwinter, long ago.

At least as of “press time” a week before Christmas, I’d have to say we have no business whatsoever singing THIS song! We’ve yet to see a lick of snow. I was out raking leftover leaves in a T-shirt the other day. And my pile of firewood hasn’t budged an inch. Though we’re used to significant winter weather before winter actually starts, we may yet be longing to flee the bleakness come the real mid-winter! And yet this oft-neglected carol continues to haunt:

Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter a stableplace sufficed
the Lord God incarnate, Jesus Christ.

Angels and archangels may have gathered there,
cherubim and seraphim thronged the air;
but his mother only, in her maiden bliss,
worshiped the Beloved with a kiss.

What can I give him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
if I were a wise man, I would do my part;
yet what I can I give him: give my heart.

What a profound truth at the start of that second verse--Our God, heaven cannot hold him, nor earth sustain; heaven and earth shall flee away when he comes to reign. In other words, we can run but we can’t hide! The heavens and the earth pale in their attempts to contain the Almighty One. But we know from scripture that one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord! What can we give him, asks the final verse? I think most of us can safely resist self-identifying as a shepherd or one of the wise ones. But what’s left to give is priceless. And also prominently featured in another wonderful, lesser-known carol (“Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne”)--

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee.

Happy “Ordinary Time” and see you in Lent!

With Joy in the Journey,
Sal Sceccitano



Mission Spotlight: InterVarsity at HVCC

This year we have an exciting new ministry opportunity right in our own backyard! InterVarsity is beginning a campus ministry at Hudson Valley Community College.

The Purpose of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA is to establish and advance at colleges and universities witnessing communities of students and faculty who follow Jesus as Savior and Lord: growing in love for God, God's Word, God's people of every ethnicity and culture and God's purposes in the world.

InterVarsity's vision is to see students and faculty transformed, campuses renewed, and world changers developed. Their vision is reflected in the lives of InterVarsity Alumni who go on to serve God's purposes in the world.

To learn more about InterVarsity you can visit their website at www.intervarsity.org.

The Outward Ministry Committee met with Nate Smith, the young man who will be leading that ministry at HVCC, in November. We were very impressed with Nate and his desire to reach out to college students with the good news of the Gospel. He shared with us his own faith journey and his hopes and plans for his ministry here in Troy.

The committee then decided to partner with Nate in his ministry. We will be supporting him financially and will be looking into other ways to assist in his work at HVCC. We look forward to getting to know Nate and supporting encouraging him in his service. Please pray for him as he moves to Troy, finds a place to live, and begins his work at Hudson Valley.

Nate writes, *"Thank you so much for your kindness, generosity, and support. I am blessed by your generosity as a church and so excited about what partnering with you will look like in the future. I am also excited to get to know your congregation better in the coming months. I can't wait to be there working alongside you!"*

Please remember our other mission partners – Capital City Rescue Mission, Hope 7, Ronald McDonald House-Albany, Peter Halder in Bangladesh, Gideon's International, Medical Benevolence Foundation PC(USA), Capital District YFC, InterVarsity at RPI and Sage, Horizons, Voice of the Martyrs and our sponsored children – Emerson in El Salvador and Anyelo in Guatemala - in your prayers.

Information and updates on all of our mission partners can be found in the binder in the church office and on the bulletin boards in fellowship hall.

SESSION MEETING-THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-DECEMBER 14, 2015

ACTION ITEM - A motion was made and carried unanimously to approve the proposed General Fund Budget for 2016.

CLERK'S REPORT

- Next Communion will be served: January 3rd (Epiphany Sunday) by Jason Laz.
- Average attendance for November 2015 was 51 (thanks to Peter Laz).

PASTOR'S REPORT

- Conducting Worship Service at The Pines at Heartwood has been discontinued.
- New book for business meetings in January: **How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth** by Gordon D Fee and Douglas Stuart. We will read together one chapter at each meeting

WORSHIP & PRAYER

- Thanksgiving Breakfast and worship was held on November 26th. Thanks to the Men's Group for

providing breakfast, to Jason Laz for leading the music.

- We have provided CD players for shut-ins that requested recordings of the Sunday sermon.
- Advent has begun. Thanks to Jerry Whitman for decorating the sanctuary.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

- Thanksgiving cards were sent to our shut-ins. Christmas gift bags will be put together and will be distributed to our shut-ins.
- Family Dinner and Game Night scheduled for February 6th. Time and other details TBD.

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

• YOUTH MINISTRY

- Urbana 2015 Mission Conference upcoming from 12/27-12/31.
- Dan and Abby McAuley are attending.
- Dan and Abby will share their conference experience with the congregation with a Minute For Ministry update.

- **MEN'S MINISTRY** - Looking to start Men's Study Group in February 2016, possibly using material from A W Tozer.

- **WOMEN'S MINISTRY** - Women's study of Job continues after a short break for the Christmas season. Will finish up in February. Will find something short to take us up until summertime.

• SENIOR'S MINISTRY

- Had our holiday get together in November. Collected \$355 for Ronald McDonald's House, which will be submitted after the first of the year during their phone-a-thon, thereby getting a matching donation. Also collected two large boxes of individual serving food donations.

• ADULT STUDY

- Sunday morning study continues their history of the church.
- Wednesday evening study of sermon series continues.

• OUTREACH/COMMUNICATIONS/MISSIONS

- Spending for December: \$300-Capital City Rescue Mission, \$40-Bangladesh Youth For Christ, \$300-Capital District Youth For Christ, \$500-InterVarsity (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute/ Russell Sage College), \$500-InterVarsity (Nate Smith/Hudson Valley Community College), \$100-Campus Crusade For Christ (To help Serena Solomon attend a conference)
- Met with Nate Smith (InterVarsity at Hudson Valley Community College) on November 20th.
- We collected 49 shoe boxes for Operation Christmas Child.
- Still working on church logo and a tag-line.

STEWARDSHIP (Upward, Inward, Outward)

GENERAL FUND/FINANCE - We had a positive cash flow during November of \$2,477.64. This gives us a year-to-date positive cash flow of \$3,114.22.

NEXT MEETINGS

- Business – January 11th at church at 7 PM. Please read **Spiritual Classics**, John Henry Newman, “Religious Joy, Christ, A Quickening Spirit”, pages 327-334.
- Informal/Study – January 25th at church at 7 PM. Please read **Spiritual Classics**, Amy Carmichael, “The Traffic of the Temple”, pages 360-368.

Fellowship Hosts Needed

Hosts are needed for Fellowship Time throughout the upcoming months. Fellowship hosts are asked to bring a few snacks for after worship. Coffee, sugar, cream, cold drinks, cups, napkins, and plates are provided. In addition to snacks, you would also be responsible for setting things up and cleaning up afterwards.

You can host on your own or you could work together with others to make the job easier. There is a sign-up sheet near the kitchen showing the Sundays where a host is needed. If you have not hosted before and would like some assistance or if you have questions, please speak with Natalia Multunas.



*Third Presbyterian Church
115 Winter Street
Troy, NY 12180*

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

*Our Mission:
To Love our God and Neighbor
To Proclaim the Gospel through
Word and Deed
To Make Disciples of Jesus the Christ*

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16