

# The Third PRESS



June 2017

## “Chosen by God: A Reason for Praise”

As mentioned in my May newsletter article, I plan to be spending some time over the next months in a study of the New Testament book of “Ephesians”. It is a wonderful book that I believe has a lot to say to us about being the “Body of Christ” – the community of faith in Christ Jesus – in this day.

And so, as we begin this study through Ephesians let’s first read those powerful opening words from the apostle Paul – words that draw us into the presence of our glorious God and speak to the wonder of the new life we have with Him – by His grace.

In verses one through six of chapter one we read:

**Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will -- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.**

As you allow those powerful words to sink in and touch your soul, I ask you: What excites you? What truth so inspires and encourages you that it transcends all circumstances and causes you to rejoice even in the midst of trials, sorrows and heartache?

The year was around A.D. 61. The “second chapter” of Paul’s life had been quite dramatic. Nothing like what he had planned or expected. At one time in his life he was a Pharisee among Pharisee’s. His zeal for the truth of the Scripture went unsurpassed -- a man driven to uphold the Law.

And then there was that experience along the Damascus road -- that light; that voice -- a voice that sounded forth a truth that was so pure, it offended the ears. In that moment Paul’s life was transformed. He was given eyes to see and a mind to perceive the truth of the Scriptures, and he knew he had to speak. He had to speak of the Christ! He had to make disciples of Jesus! He had to plant churches! And he was compelled to do so because God had chosen him to be an ambassador for Jesus Christ.

And now, after years of learning, laboring, suffering and standing firm, it seemed that his journey would end -- for he was a criminal under house arrest in Rome. Of course, Paul still ministered. He preached and wrote and met with

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 ThirdChurchTroy

A community of Christ  
-followers where,

The Head of the Church  
is...  
The Lord Jesus Christ

The Ministers of the  
Church are...  
Every Believer

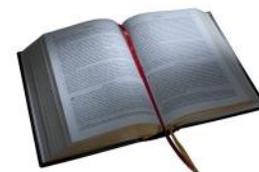
The Passion of the  
Church is...  
to be Spirit empowered  
ministers of  
reconciliation to God,  
inviting all people to  
faith in Christ Jesus  
our Lord and  
to holiness of life.

Our Mission:

To Love our God and  
Neighbor

To Proclaim the Gospel  
through Word and Deed

To Make Disciples of  
Jesus the Christ



visitors, but there was always that question in the back of his mind every day: “Would this day be my last?”

It was in this setting that Paul composed this letter to the Ephesians. And this letter is different from all of Paul’s other letters. This letter was not written to combat a specific problem, or answer particular questions, or resolve a major conflict. Rather, this letter was written as a guidebook for the Christian Church. Anticipating the ongoing struggles of the church and its future needs, Paul composed what some have called the richest, most powerful, most beautiful of all of Paul’s works. And, interestingly, it’s a letter dominated by praise!

Now, Paul opened this letter, similar to his other letters, by identifying himself as one chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ -- an eye witness to the glory of the Resurrected Lord. And so, from the start, this letter presents and affirms the Sovereignty of God.

Next, Paul proceeded to greet the saints -- a holy people, a people set apart to God. Once a term reserved for the Jews, Paul freely applied it to Gentiles as well, and so with his opening greeting comes a call to unity in Christ.

Paul was extending a greeting of grace and peace in Christ to a people who were especially dear to him, for these were the Gentiles to whom he was sent to proclaim the gospel and with whom he labored in love -- working to establish the church.

Following his opening greeting, Paul’s normal response when writing his letters was to offer up at the start into a prayer for the recipients. But, rather than moving straight into a prayer for the church or a statement of the purpose for Paul’s correspondence, Paul, reflecting upon God’s grace and peace which is ours in Christ, was moved in his spirit to cry forth in an attitude of worship: **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ!”**(Eph 1:3)

When Paul thought about what it means to be “in Christ”, and what it means to experience “the grace of God”, he felt compelled to shout forth praises.

Praise consumed the heart of Paul as he composed this letter. Throughout this letter we witness Paul in an almost heavenly state teaching us, the church, about God, but teaching us in a way that excites, convicts, and challenges. Ephesians is the ultimate devotional work -- arousing zeal which drew in the author himself.

So why the passion? Why the excitement?

Because Paul was about to share the most glorious truth a person could hear – a truth that caused Paul to rejoice even in the midst of trials, sorrows, heartache, and imprisonment! For, even as Paul himself was chosen by God, and even as the Jews had been called forth as God’s chosen people, so too, God was choosing Gentiles to be numbered among His people!

Paul tells the Gentiles, which includes us, there is no difference between us! We are one through faith in Christ -- Jew and Gentile: chosen by the same God; redeemed by the same Christ; empowered by the same Spirit. That is the message of this letter, and that is reason to celebrate!

Now Paul was not some naive, emotional child. He knew that there was a lot more to living united in Christ than just saying it. There are the why’s and how’s and so what’s to address. But for now, even before Paul prayed for the church, he pointed others to God’s glory and exhorted them to praise God – to praise God because we’ve been blessed with every spiritual blessing for this life, as well as for an eternity with Him.

God has gifted and empowered us, through the Holy Spirit, to resist temptations, to have victory over the forces of evil – forces that seek to squelch our praise, dampen our joy, and lead us into rebellion against the One who loves us with a never-ending love.

All God’s blessings for this life have been made available to His chosen people.

And so Paul tells the saints – the disciples of Jesus Christ -- those who seek to follow God’s commands in love -- that we have been chosen. Predestined by God to be His people: not as an after-thought upon the completion of creation; and not a choice made by God after we first choose Him; and

not a decision God made because He knew we would eventually respond to the gospel; but chosen before the foundation of the world!

Paul stated plainly and simply to the saints, both Jew and Gentile, you were chosen. You didn't initiate your relationship with God. You did nothing to earn your relationship with God. Nor were you born into your relationship with God based on your ancestors. Rather, God initiated your faith. And He did so according to His will, and for the praise of His glory.

That's the beauty of grace -- a grace which Paul elaborates upon later in this letter. But for now, in this "call to worship", Paul built the foundation of a theology of the church; and the cornerstone is that you and I were chosen -- elected by God.

Now some object to the idea of election. They either deny it completely, arguing that it's the individual who decides to choose God; or, they admit that the Scriptures teach election, but then they claim that God only chooses a person because of foreknowledge. What foreknowledge means is that since God knows everything which will ever happen, He knew you or I would one day respond to the gospel, and so knowing this, God chose us. In turn, however you look at it, the person who rejects the "Doctrine of Election" must argue that we're the ones in charge of initiating our relationship with God -- that we do something to cause the relationship to happen.

And people often devise such reasoning because they want to be in charge. Many don't like the idea that God gets to do the choosing. The doctrine of God's election, which should cause us to fall on our knees in thanksgiving, instead stirs many to anger or resentment, because they want to be "lord of their lives".

Moreover, many want to make the laws that bind us, especially when it comes to their salvation. In fact, in our culture, many have made "free-will" a god, with "freedom of choice" being their expression of worship to this god.

As a result, many think that freedom equals self-rule, when in fact true freedom comes only when we live within certain rules -- rules which God sets. And many think free-will means the ability to make choices without any prior inclination or disposition, when, in fact, that would mean that we make choices for no reason. Yet, there's always a reason for our choices, for as the great theologian Jonathan Edwards observed, "the will always chooses according to its strongest inclination at the moment."

To understand what Edwards, meant, picture that special person in your life. That one, who, when you first saw her or him you knew you wanted to get to know that person better. So you proceeded with your plan. Maybe you became best friends. Or, perhaps you fell in love and eventually married that person. But before the deep friendship, or before the marriage, there was the first meeting -- a meeting in which something almost magical happened; a meeting in which your senses were aroused, perhaps sight or sound or smell. By some effect not fully understood by you, you were caused to pursue a relationship with that person. You weren't forced or coerced. In your mind it was your choice. However, in reality, there was something about that person which, at the time, attracted you, enticed you, and caused you to want to pursue that relationship. You had a choice but only in responding to a pleasure which that person aroused in you, because you were created to desire that which brings you pleasure. In truth, that other person caused you to respond to him or her. This is the mystery of love.

And at a higher and greater level it is the same with God. God chose you, enticing you through the power of the Holy Spirit; opening your eyes and warming your heart to His unconditional love; causing you to respond to Him, because no one can come to God unless God draws that person. (Jn 6:44)

You may believe you chose to follow God, but in reality, you only did what God created you to do once you experienced His goodness -- once your heart was stirred, even regenerated, by His Spirit touching your spirit.

Because God first loved you -- because God chose you (after all, God's choosing and loving are inextricably linked) you were able to respond to Him. "Election" is about a Sovereign God who extends to us His Unconditional love -- His "irresistible grace". "Election" is about a loving God who works all things for His pleasure and our greatest good. "Election" is about a gracious God who created us for His

glory and is most glorified by us when we are most satisfied in Him. "Election" is about a God who knows that the hurt of our sinful hearts and the hunger that we have for love-and-acceptance-and-purpose can only be satisfied when we're brought into fellowship with Him.

And that brings us to the real problem some people have with the Scriptural "Doctrine of Election". After all, to accept the "Doctrine of Election" is to acknowledge the sinfulness of humankind – the "radical corruption" of the human essence – the "total depravity" of fallen humanity. And many people, especially in our present humanistic society, have a problem being identified as such sinners.

Yet, as the scriptures teach, and as our world confirms, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We are entirely corrupt so that apart from faith even our best attempts at righteousness are defiled by sin (Rom 3:23; Isa 64:6). And this means that every aspect of our life is affected by sin: the physical, the emotional, the intellectual, the relational, and the spiritual.

And, contrary to evolutionists, mankind is not getting better and better -- just look at the so called peace efforts between Israel and Palestine, the treaty violations of Iraq and North Korea, and the crime statistics of every major city in our nation.

And, contrary to humanists, mankind didn't fall "part way", leaving enough potential goodness in us so that all we need is a good example to follow and some words of encouragement, and we will achieve a state of repentance and righteousness on our own.

The Scriptures teach that we are sinners through and through. As, Paul wrote in chapter two of this letter, we're dead in our transgressions and sins – and a corpse can't help itself! (Eph 2:1)

If we take the Scriptures seriously when they talk about sin, we see that left to ourselves we couldn't possibly choose God. Our own sin prevents us from recognizing God, from being able to reach out to that which is perfectly holy and good.

Being thoroughly sinful also means that God could never "foresee" faith in us and then choose us, because, if left on our own, all God would see is spiritually blind sinners groping in the dark -- satisfying ourselves with poisoned pleasures instead of God's pure love.

As sinners there is no way we can choose to save ourselves because by definition to sin is to choose contrary to the will of God.

The awareness of our own sinfulness should help us to see the beauty as well as the necessity of "election", because at the heart of the "Doctrine of Election", at the core of "God's predestination" is the supreme love of God. God chose us despite ourselves. He reached out to us and loved us even when we rejected Him. (Rom 5:8)

In turn, through His Son Jesus, God offers to us the real freedom that we seek: not a freedom from the laws of God; not a freedom to do whatever we please; but the freedom to cast off the burden of sin that binds us, and receive forgiveness and new life through Jesus Christ the Lord.

God chose us so that we could experience a new freedom in Christ – the freedom to rise up and walk in the presence of our God.

God predestined us before the creation of the world to be in a relationship with Him.

God desires for us to be His adopted sons and daughters.

Unfortunately we seem to miss or gloss over the beauty and honor that "adoption" is meant to communicate here. Perhaps we think of the parent who abandoned their child or felt unable to care for their child, and so adoption carries some unwarranted shame. Or, perhaps we think of the parents who couldn't have children, and so we perceive adoption as a second best option to a hard or sad situation.

However we may perceive adoption, there is a good chance that it carries implications for us that are not associated with Paul's use of the word. For, in Paul's day, adoption was understood in terms that implied honor and privilege. There was no place for feelings of disgrace, or rejection or abandonment – especially for the one who was adopted.

In the Roman culture adoption wasn't done for the sake of giving an infant a home. In fact, it wasn't something practiced by the common people. Official adoption was something most often done by a wealthy, prominent individual who had no heirs and wished to pass along his wealth and his name. And, as far as the adopted was concerned, it was an honor to be adopted, for with the adoption came: a

new life – freed from past debts; a new hope – filled with a promising future; and a new name – with its corresponding rights and privileges.

And that's what the only Sovereign God offers us. For, the apostle John wrote: **"to all who received Jesus, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."** (Jn 1:12)

We have been adopted by God through Jesus Christ because this was God's will and good pleasure! He wanted to do it! God's choosing of us brought Him joy!

And God's adoption of us allows us to call God by a new name, by the name "Father", a word that speaks of intimacy, for, as the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans: **"You did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.'"** (Rom 8:15)

"Election" is all about a gracious God who finds pleasure in drawing a people to Himself -- a people who in turn experience the honor of being called His children; a people who are then called to glorify Him with their lives.

So in "election," although there is no place for boasting about our own works, there is certainly a place for rejoicing in the work of our God.

What's more, the fact of God's "election" should cause humility-and-praise-and-thanksgiving to flow from the depths of our being, inspiring pure, Christ-centered worship. Worship that compels us to sing forth, **"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy name!"** (Ps 103:1)

And part of our motivation for such praise is the assurance of our salvation that "election" gives since it is the all-knowing, perfect God who did the choosing not sinful, fickle people. And along with choosing us, this same God promises to continue His "good work" in us until the day of Christ's return (Phil 1:6; Jn 10:29).

"Election" also insures godliness because God chooses us, and transforms us, and empowers us so that we not only want to be, but can be holy and blameless in love – able, by God's grace, to actually please the God of Creation.

And, contrary to some who misunderstand the implications of "election", the "Doctrine of Election" actually inspires evangelism, because, as we come to understand election, we see that God only commands that we be faithful in sharing the Gospel -- it is God who is responsible for the results.

As we're obedient to His command to go into all the world and proclaim the gospel, so He promises that when His word goes out it will not return empty but will accomplish what God desires and achieve the purpose for which He sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

Thus, "election" promotes non-manipulative evangelism because election makes us aware that it's not our fancy methods, or flowery speech, but God's Spirit who causes people to repent and believe.

Perhaps you heard the story of the man who, after giving a stirring testimony of how God sought him, delivered him, cleansed him, and healed him, was approached by a fellow believer who took him aside and said, "you know, I appreciate all that you said about what God did for you, but you didn't mention anything about your part in it."

"Salvation," argued this brother, "is really part us and part God, and you should have mentioned something about your part."

"You're right," the man said, "I apologize. I really should have mentioned that. For you see, my part was running away, and God's part was running after me until He took hold of me."

"Election" takes our sin and God's holiness seriously, and when we take God's holiness and our sinfulness seriously we are compelled to praise God for His glorious graces extended to us through His sovereign choice.

If you are among the saints, then these opening words of "Ephesians" should serve as an exhortation to worship God for doing His part in your life despite how well you once did yours.

If you have not committed your life to following Jesus, then I encourage you to be still and listen: Is the Holy Spirit enticing you with the Father's love? If so then please stop running, turn and receive God's embrace today.

Then you too, together with all the saints, will know the joy Paul felt as he wrote this letter. And you too can have a purpose for your life, the greatest and only eternal purpose any person can have, the purpose for which God chooses us -- to glorify God and enjoy our Father forever!

God's grace and peace be yours.

Love in Christ Jesus,

Pastor John

**June Birthdays**

- 6/1 Bob Somerville
- 6/6 Marilyn Gibbs
- 6/6 Wendy Jensen
- 6/10 Christian Multunas
- 6/11 Pat Gilmaier
- 6/11 Jacob Russell
- 6/16 Angelina Solomon
- 6/20 Nora Miller
- 6/25 Howard Solomon
- 6/27 Kiko Valerio



**June Anniversaries**

- 6/18 Joshua & Colleen Reynolds
- 6/19 Bob & Maureen Somerville
- 6/21 John & Jennifer McAuley

**Serving at the Capital City Rescue Mission June 17<sup>th</sup>**

We have the privilege to minister to those in need by helping to serve the evening meal at the Capital City Rescue Mission. We will meet at the church around 5:00 and carpool or you can meet us at the Mission around 5:30. Serving involves ensuring the tables are set for dinner, serving the meal, and cleaning up the tables afterwards. If you can help please speak with Andy Miller or Rob Jensen.



**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 June we will be collecting peanut butter and jelly.**



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

**General Financial Update for April 2017**

	Year to Date	April
Total Income	\$56,289.00	\$16,089.00
Total Expenses	\$58,349.92.	\$15,567.05
Difference	\$(2,060.92)	\$ 521.95

## **CATCH THE SPIRIT!!**

**June 4<sup>th</sup> is Pentecost Sunday.** Pentecost is the day that the **Holy Spirit** came upon the disciples in Jerusalem, they began preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ, and the Christian church was born!

**Pentecost is a day to celebrate!** It is a celebration of newness, of recreation, of renewal of purpose, mission and calling as God's people. It is a celebration of God's ongoing work in our world.



**Red** symbolizes the **fire** of the Holy Spirit and therefore, red is the color of the day. The sanctuary will be decorated with red and everyone is encouraged to wear something red that morning.

After worship that morning we will have our **church picnic**. The Inward Ministry Committee will be providing hamburgers, hot dogs, rolls, and beverages. If you would like, you may bring something to share such as, chips, a salad or a dessert. You are also encouraged to bring lawn chairs and any outdoor games or activities.

**We hope you will plan to join us for this special day of celebration!!**

*"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit."*

*Galatians 5:22-25*



## **Remember in Prayer...**

### **Our shut-ins at home**

Tillie Herman, Marcella Goard, June Giles

**At the Eddy:** Dot Multunas, Edna Wells

**At Schuyler Ridge:** Dolores Robb

**At Brookdale:** Dot McGan

### **Those dealing with health issues:**

Stan Bentley, Doris Calamaras

### **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

### **Dan serving in Africa:**

For wise time management and the discernment to

Know which things are worth pouring his time into and which things he just can't do at this time.

For his ability to be humble and to allow God's plan to be his goal.

Pray for the country, local believers, the government, the people and the many struggles they face.

***From Music and AV Ministries...***

**A SHAMELESS PLUG!**

No, I'm not selling books in the narthex following worship but I do want to extend an invitation for you to attend a special Dedicatory Organ Recital to celebrate the new instrument at Hope United Methodist Church in Brunswick. This *hybrid* pipe and digital electronic organ was constructed with parts from the now defunct Methodist church building that housed a Korean congregation on Hoosick St. in the Sycaway area of Troy. A digital two-manual (keyboards) console was added and the whole project supervised and installed by L.A. Carlson and Associates organ builders from East Greenbush.

The one-hour concert will be held on Sunday, June 11 at 4pm. No tickets required, though I do believe they intend to take up an offering. The church is located at 566 Brunswick Rd. (Route 2 at Garfield Rd.) in Brunswick, just east of Pinewoods Avenue. In addition to some elaborate hymn arrangements, I will be playing classical organ works by Bach, Franck and Brahms. I am blessed and privileged to be asked to inaugurate this fine instrument by my friend, Pastor Dave Martin and the saints at Hope United. Please join us!

With joy in the journey,

*Sal Sceccitano*

There is a rack in the Narthex of greetings cards. They are free of charge and are provided by Gideons International. Please feel free to take and use them. You will be providing a pocket size scripture or a full bible to someone in need.

**Serving This Month**

**June 4<sup>th</sup>**

Worship Assistants: Deena Dominy, Dean Calamaras  
Greeters: Bill Multunas, Pat Gilmaier  
Head Greeters: Andy Miller  
Nursery: Alice Bentley, Jen McAuley  
Communion: Bill Multunas  
Fellowship Hosts: Church Picnic

**June 11<sup>th</sup>**

Worship Assistants: Sue Laz, Connie Russell  
Greeters: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski  
Head Greeter: Rob Jensen  
Nursery: Lois Pasinella, Megan Laz  
Communion: Deena Dominy, Dean Calamaras, Doris Calamaras, Eric Ofori  
Fellowship Hosts: Lois Pasinella, Doris Calamaras

**June 18<sup>th</sup>**

Worship Assistants: Eric Ofori, Jesse Ofori  
Greeters: Deena Dominy  
Head Greeter: Peter Laz  
Nursery: Jaime Miller, Angelina Solomon  
Communion: Natalia Multunas, Jason Laz, Jen McAuley, Jerry Whitman  
Fellowship Hosts:

**June 25<sup>th</sup>**

Worship Assistants: Kelly Valerio, Ella Miller  
Greeters: Dean and Doris Calamaras  
Head Greeter: Andy  
Nursery: Diane Lewinski, Alice Bentley  
Communion: Peter Laz, Rachel Farnum, Rick Russell, Rob Jensen  
Fellowship Hosts:



## Growing in Our Faith and in Our Witness

Before his ascension Jesus left his followers with a final command and a promise,

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20*

The church of Jesus Christ is to be about the task of making disciples.

This is a part of the mission statement of Third Church:

- To love our God and Neighbor
- To Preach the Gospel through Word and Deed
- To make Disciples of Jesus the Christ

Simply put, a disciple is a student who learns from and follows the teaching of a teacher. Once we come to God through faith in Jesus, we become a disciple of Jesus. From then on, for the rest of the days God gives us, we are to learn from and follow the teachings of our Savior as taught in God’s Word.

*“Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”* *2 Peter 3:18*

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*  
*Romans 12:2*

*And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing good fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.”*  
*Colossians 1:10*

These verses teach us that once we come to faith in Jesus we have a responsibility to continue to grow in our faith to become more and more like Christ, growing in our knowledge of him, being able to discern God’s will for us and bearing fruit through our good works.

Part of the work of the Inward Ministry Committee is to provide resources and opportunities for the members and friends of Third Church to grow in their faith.

To that end we offer opportunities to gather for Bible Study.

**The Men’s Group** is currently studying Paul’s letter to the Colossians. They meet Sunday evenings at 6:30 at the church.



**The Adult Sunday school class** that meets at 9:15 Sunday mornings is studying the life of Jesus.

**The Wednesday evening Bible study** continues to meet at 6:00 PM. This study focuses on the sermon text for the upcoming Sunday.

We have also added resources on discipleship to the church library including:

- Basic Christianity, by John Stott
- Christianity Beyond Belief, by Todd Hunter

Don't Waste Your Life, by John Piper

If You Want to Walk on Water, You've Got to Get Out of the Boat, by John Ortberg

The Radical Disciple, by John Stott

Living as a Christian, by A.W. Tozer

Radical, by David Platt

Our prayer is that everyone will take advantage of these resources and Bible study opportunities as, together, we seek to grow as disciples and to make disciples to the glory of God!

## Mission Updates

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms" 1 Peter 4:10*

Your giving to Third Church enables us to support many varied ministries, both locally and around the world. The funds we give and the prayers offered for our various mission partners are greatly appreciated and we wanted to share some of the thoughts and comments we have received from those we support.

From **Dan in East Africa** – "In the past, I've been able to celebrate Easter surrounded by close friends and family and although the same truths remained and have filled this season with joy for me, almost everything else about this Easter season has been different. It was about 30 degrees hotter than it usually is even on a warm Easter Sunday back home and I celebrated with all new faces that I've met just within these last couple of months, but probably the strangest thing was meeting people these past couple of weeks who didn't even know what Easter was!

Many doors to share have opened this past week or so, as people want to know why their foreign friends sing songs of praise and celebrate during this holiday that they don't understand. Doors to clearly walk through the hope we have as we remember the shame, fear, and guilt born for us and the victory, adoption, and new life won for us as we look back at the most significant week in all of human history.

At a time of year where it's hard to be away from home, doors have opened to experiences I would have never even dreamed of a year ago. In this Easter season, it's weird to be in a country with so little green that there is no spring blossoming of trees, at least that I've seen, but I'm hoping to see new life spring up here as abundantly as the trees that I'll miss seeing bloom back home.

**From Peter Halder (YFC Bangladesh)** – "We are so grateful for your excellent support toward YFC's ministry. Your support bring change in the life of the individual but not only that, it brings change in the family and in the community which builds a new community. I would like you to read Isaiah 65:17-25, it reminds us of what will be. It is only possible with the life changing message of Jesus Christ. Thank you for being with us in this journey of sharing the message of Jesus Christ with the young people of Bangladesh. May the Father above bless you so abundantly."

From **Perry Jones (Capital City Rescue Mission)** – "Thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support. Men, women and children are warmed by hearty meals, protected, sheltered, and offered eternal hope because of you. Every day we see resurrection stories taking place. Lives are changed. Broken people are healed. New life is begun. Thank you kind friends."

From **Niki Campbell (InterVarsity at RPI and Russell Sage)** – “Please be in prayer for Justus who, through our small group ministry at RPI, is now a new brother in Christ. Pray for the seniors who are graduating...and preparing for what God has as the next chapter in their lives. Please pray for the Eastern NY staff team. Due to several life changes, we will be seeing our team look pretty different soon. We know that God is calling many students from this area to Him. Let’s pray that God raises up more staff to bring this way.”

**Kevin Post (Capital District YFC)** will be with us in worship on **June 25<sup>th</sup>** to share with us about YFC’s ministry to young people in the capital district.

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

Updates and prayer requests from Dan as he serves in Africa are posted on the bulletin board in the narthex.

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## **SESSION MEETING-THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-MAY 8, 2017**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

1. A motion was made and carried unanimously to authorize placement of a floral planter and sign in the triangle area welcoming people to the Eastside Neighborhood.
2. A motion was made and carried unanimously to purchase two new computers and all appropriate ancillary products, to be funded from the Technology Fund account. This is being done under the supervision of Rick Russell.

### **CLERK’S REPORT**

- Miscellaneous Information:
  - Average attendance for April 2017 was 50.
  - Membership Roll is 68.
  - The Clerk’s Session minutes have been reviewed and approved without exception.

### **UPWARD MINISTRY**

#### **WORSHIP & PRAYER**

- We also discussed the chancel set up for Good Friday and how best to arrange things in the Sanctuary for that service.
- Sal Scechitano thanks the various music groups and Audio/Video volunteers for their dedication and great work during the busy Lenten season.
- Sal Scechitano will be away on June 18<sup>th</sup>, Wayne Mizerak will fill in for him.
- Choir will begin their summer break on June 11<sup>th</sup>.

### **INWARD MINISTRY**

#### **CONGREGATIONAL CARE**

- We have updated the birthday and anniversary list.
- Following worship on Pentecost Sunday (June 4<sup>th</sup>) we will have a church picnic. Hamburgers, hotdogs, and beverages will be provided.

#### **CHRISTIAN NURTURE**

##### **YOUTH MINISTRY**

- We are still working on building up our rotation of nursery volunteers, as the nursery is being used weekly now.
- We are in the process of updating our Child and Youth Protection Policy
- We are looking ahead to Vacation Bible School and working on setting dates for that. (6/26-6/20)

## ADULT MINISTRY

- The Adult Sunday School class has started a new study on the life of Jesus.
- The Wednesday evening Bible Study continues with a couple of new faces.

## MISCELLANEOUS

- We will be doing a Minute For Ministry on Pentecost (June 4<sup>th</sup>) on discipleship and information will be handed out to challenge and encourage us in our spiritual growth.

## OUTWARD MINISTRY

### OUTREACH & MISSIONS

- Spending for May 2017: \$500.00-Capital City Rescue Mission, \$300.00-Reach Across (Dan McAuley), \$500.00-Bangladesh Youth For Christ-\$700.00, InterVarsity at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and Russell Sage College
- The Easter Celebration was held on Saturday April 15<sup>th</sup>. 35 kids and their families participated.
- We will be serving the evening meal at Capital City Rescue Mission on June 17<sup>th</sup>.
- The Spring Mission Offering is underway and will run through June 4<sup>th</sup>. In April \$815 was received, and so far in May another \$230.
- Planning for the community Garage Sale on June 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Considering the possibility of hosting community dinners periodically as a way to connect with our community.
- The Back-To-School Fair will be held on August 26<sup>th</sup> from 11 AM-1 PM.

## STEWARDSHIP

### GENERAL FUND/FINANCE

- We had a positive cash flow during April 2017 of \$521.95. This gives us a year-to-date deficit of \$2,060.92.

### PROPERTY

- We will be working on several small outside projects over the next few months, as well as going forward with the parking lot project.

Reflect on the following questions:

- What passion has the Lord placed on my heart, and where does it fit in with my walk with Him?
  - How can I use my vocation/current situation for the Lord?
  - What do I feel God is leading this church to be passionate about?
- 

We had a wonderful time at our last Senior Luncheon. We were entertained by a trio from the Albany Schenectady Symphony Orchestras. We hope you can join us next time. We collected \$150.00 for Ronald McDonald House plus a supply of food items.



## THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Our children and youth Sunday school classes is studying through various questions and responses from the Westminster Shorter Catechism over the 2017 Sunday-school year. So that we may walk with them in that journey, and so that all of us may be able to interact with them should they approach us with their questions (as they should feel free to do 😊), we are going to return to that catechism over the next several months that we might be equipped to give a defense for the hope that is ours in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim 2:15; 1 Tim 4:16; 1 Pt 3:15)

**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 anything 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.

## Bible Quiz for June 2017

Our next sermon series which began at the end of April is on the New Testament book of “1 Thessalonians”. As we begin that study the questions for this quiz are taken from the second chapter of this letter.

1. True or False: Paul’s preaching in Thessalonica faced strong opposition.
2. True or False: Paul claimed to the Thessalonians that his ministry to them was approved by God.
3. Fill in the blanks: “We are not trying to please \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_, who tests our \_\_\_\_\_.”
4. True or False: Paul spoke of his care for the Thessalonians in terms of a “mother” and a “father”.
5. True or False: Paul apologized for being a burden to the believers in Thessalonica.
6. In what way does Paul say that the Thessalonian believers were imitators of the churches in Judea?
7. Upon whom does Paul say the wrath of God has come at last?
8. True or False: Paul expressed his wish that he could have gone back to see the believers in Thessalonica.
9. Who does Paul blame for preventing him from returning to Thessalonica?
10. True or False: Paul said of the believers in Thessalonica that they were his glory and joy.

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### COMMUNITY GARAGE SALE June 3<sup>rd</sup> from 9:00 – 2:00

The Outward Ministry Committee is once again planning for a Community Garage Sale this summer so as you do your spring cleaning begin saving the treasures you no longer need and plan on joining us on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. There is no cost to participate. Just bring a table and your treasures to sell. If you would like to use one of the churches’ tables please speak with Andy Miller.

If you would like to help out, we are looking for people who can help with set up and clean up and we need a few people who could man the food table and the church information table. We are also looking for donations of baked goods for the food table.

If you are able to help out or if you have any questions, please speak with Sue Laz.





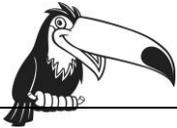
## Vacation Bible School June 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>

If you are aged preschool through fifth grade, you are invited to join us at “**SonQuest Rainforest**” where we will be journeying into the Amazon rainforest to learn what it means to follow Jesus.

Informational brochures and registration forms are available in the narthex. Please take one for yourself or to share with a friend.

Many hands are needed to make our program run smoothly. Please be praying about how you can be involved in this wonderful outreach ministry.

This is a great week of ministry, filled with fun, excitement, and energy and we hope you will join us for the adventure!



If you have any questions please  
speak with Sue Laz.

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

