

The Third PRESS



March 2018

“From Revelation to Transformation”

Continuing with our reflections from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, in this newsletter I would like to look at Ephesians 3:1-13. But before I reflect upon that passage I invite you to read the text, taken from the NIV.

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles --

Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God’s people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

Have you ever invested yourself in something, hoping to achieve a certain goal or status and then just when you thought you had everything figured out -- you knew the game and how to play it – but then the rules were changed and you found yourself confused, frustrated or perhaps hurt? Like the student who pulled an ‘all-nighter’ studying chapters 1-10 for that exam only to find that all the questions were taken from chapter 11. Or, like the young mother who thought life was going well only to find herself abandoned, with a child, with no job, and with no one to help.

The apostle Paul underwent such an upheaval within his once secure, well-ordered life. For you see, Paul was a Pharisee, a religious leader respected and honored in his community. And as you know the Pharisees were zealous for God. They sought to protect the holiness of God. They understood that the Lord was an awesome God, a God to be loved and feared. And the Pharisees despised anyone

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to be Spirit empowered
ministers of
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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



who profaned God's holy name, which in their eyes included all Gentiles.

And so Paul worked and studied hard under the best of teachers to rise in position and status among his peers. He showed great potential as a leader. He was a visionary who would do whatever it took to advance his cause -- a cause which he understood to be from God.

So, when that sect came along, the ones who worshipped the carpenter Jesus -- the ones who claimed that Jesus was God -- well, Paul was going to put an end to them, and quickly, for God's honor was on the line. He had a job to do and he was good at his job. He successfully persecuted the church and caused believers to scatter at his approach. His name was known and feared among Christians.

But then he met God face to face on that Damascus road and his world was turned upside down. All that he worked for was called into question. When confronted by the risen Jesus he came to realize that he was playing by the wrong set of rules. He came to understand that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

And this revelation caused a major paradigm shift for Paul, which led to his transformation, for, after encountering Jesus, Paul knew he had to change, to repent, to seek God's forgiveness.

And, by the grace of God, Paul went from rejecting Jesus as the Messiah to accepting Jesus as his own Lord and Savior. He went from working hard to fulfill his duty to the law of God, to working hard out of his delight in the love and grace of God. He went from bringing suffering upon the Gentiles to suffering for the Gentiles. He went from the seat of honor among the Jews to a place of scorn among his peers. And he accepted all this change, this transformation, as a gift from God.

Paul began thinking and relating to God and others in a whole new way.

Have you ever to undergone such a paradigm shift -- an examination of your frame of reference, your worldview, which caused you to rethink how you perceived God, the world, other people, even your own life?

As I have shared before, it was such a paradigm shift that caused me to end my course of studies at RPI and begin ministering to teenagers with Youth for Christ. And it was hard, for me, and for those who couldn't understand what God was doing in my life -- because paradigm shifts are hard. They challenge and sometimes upset our plans. They disturb our security and our independence. But they are necessary if we're to come to know God and to grow in our relationship with Him.

Indeed, many of us, like Paul, faced such a paradigm shift when we finally came face to face with the living God -- when we, like Jacob in the Old Testament, wrestled with God and realized in the midst of our struggle that He would not leave us unchanged. And so our encounter with God through Christ brought forth our transformation -- a glorious, eternal transformation -- a wondrous new birth. And with that new birth God called each of us to follow Jesus -- to serve the living God as God enables.

Paul was called to follow Jesus -- called to serve. But Paul's call was not ordinary nor was the message he was to preach. Paul, the one time persecutor of the Gentiles, was now called to be their servant -- the bearer of good news to them.

And this good news was a mystery, for it was once unknowable -- unknowable to the prophets of old, to the angels above, to the demons below, and even to Satan himself -- until God decided to make it known.

Now, the mystery of which Paul speaks here, that mystery which he mentioned briefly in the first two chapters of this letter, is that God the Father has made Himself known through His Son Jesus, and through Him the Father has reconciled a fallen world to Himself, so that in Christ Jesus, Jews and Gentiles would become a new people -- with a new heart and a new spirit -- the church of Jesus Christ.

Moreover, Paul states that Jews and Gentiles, those called by God, those who put their faith in Christ Jesus as Lord, are equals in God's eyes -- but not just equals, they are now one people, under one God, living by the same promise, and with the same hope.

This was a very unsettling message for the Jews: first because many Jews could not accept that Jesus was their long awaited Messiah; and second, because many had been taught all their lives to

despise the Gentiles. The religious, social, and even political prejudices of many 1st century Jews were being challenged, and it was disconcerting to say the least.

In some ways the paradigm shift that Paul was seeking to effect in his day was like the turmoil our nation experienced when eyes were enlightened to the truth that blacks are equal to whites, that they are not sub-human -- a sin-saturated lie that was not only tolerated, but often propagated by many Christian churches in this nation! And, as you know, the attempt to change that old paradigm served in part to nearly split this nation in two.

Now, it's true that the Jews were God's people, chosen and special. They were of the seed of Abraham, physical descendants of those delivered out of bondage to the Egyptians and brought into the riches of the Promised Land. And, the Jews knew that they were to proclaim the Word of God to the Gentiles so that one day God would bring the Gentiles into His kingdom.

Paul probably even taught from such passages as Isaiah chapter eleven and verse ten, where Isaiah wrote: **“And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.”**

The Jews knew that they were to be a light to the Gentiles (Isa 49:6), but many also believed that they would always be Jews, and the Gentiles would always be Gentiles, and never the two would-or-should mix.

But now Paul was revealing a different message -- a message of unity, but even more of equality in and through Christ. And this is the basic message of the parable of Jesus which Matthew recorded in the 20th chapter of his Gospel. (see Mt 20:1-16)

In that parable Jesus spoke of a man who hired workers at various times throughout the day. Then, at the end of the day, they all received the same wage causing those who worked the longest to become jealous and angry of those who only labored a short time. And the main point of that parable is that all whom God brings to Himself are of equal value in God's eyes. All will receive the same blessings, whether they were the first or the last to respond, whether they were Jews who lived under the Law and worshipped God all their lives, or whether they were Gentiles who were hearing God's call for the very first time.

And so the mystery which Paul revealed was that Jews and Gentiles are *Co-heirs, Co-members* of one body, *Co-sharers* in the blessings of God -- by grace through faith in Christ. (Eph 2:8-9)

Jew and Gentile together formed a new “race”, a third race -- not Jewish, not Gentile, but Christian.

Can you imagine how hard it must have been for Paul to set aside his own prejudices toward the Gentiles, prejudices developed over a lifetime? Can you imagine the struggles faced by Paul, Peter and the other leaders of the early church, Jew and Gentile alike, as they tried to combat such prejudice in the lives of those to whom they preached?

It is not easy to change prejudicial attitudes formed by years of negative reinforcement. We see it today as we witness the anti-American demonstrations around the world, with many of the participants in those demonstrations being mere children, clue-less of international affairs, with most having never met an American – yet taught only to hate. And in turn, we in the United States are quick to put down other nations and peoples in a sort of snobbish elitism without ever trying to learn about and understand their struggles, hurts and needs. Years of discrimination, fear, and hatred are hard to overcome, and so any challenge to our prejudices often faces enormous, even violent resistance.

In fact, the thing that upset many within the Jewish religious community was not that Paul was preaching a new doctrine about God, but that, according to Paul's new theology, Gentiles were seen as equal with Jews. Many had come before Paul with new ideas about God. The Pharisees were used to dealing with false teachers. But Paul's preaching was an attack on their unique status as God's people. To call them to accept the Gentiles as equals was preposterous, after all, they didn't even accept Samaritans – those who were of their same bloodline.

Clearly, Paul's ability to effect such a paradigm shift in his own life and go to the Gentiles was nothing short of a miraculous working of the Spirit of God – the kind of miraculous working that we all need if we're to allow God's revelation of love, grace and mercy to transform our behavior to that which honors Him.

Paul's world had been changed. He became a prisoner for Christ: spiritually, out of love for God, and physically, out of his unwillingness to compromise the Gospel. And as a prisoner for Christ, Paul's passion was to grow God's church, for, the church is the body of Christ, united under one head for the glory of the one God. And the church has the task of revealing God's plan -- of making God's wisdom known to all creation.

And so, what God has made known to the apostles and prophets through His Spirit, what Paul preached to the Gentiles, we as God's people are to make known each day. This means that we as the church of Jesus Christ have a divine role in the world. Indeed, having been chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sealed with the Holy Spirit, "The church is the hope of the world!"

Moreover, the Christian church is the only institution explicitly established by God in the New Testament Scriptures for the purpose of bringing the good news of salvation and new life in Christ to all the world. And so, the church has the responsibility to challenge the paradigms of our fallen world – even at great cost to us. And we're to do so through our words and actions – what we say and how we live. And, although our lives cannot invalidate the truth of "the gospel", in the eyes of the non-Christian, we either validate or invalidate the significance of the gospel message through how we live -- how we respond to issues of prejudice and poverty, of injustice and violence, of what is right and what is wrong, of how we treat those within the church and how we treat those outside the church! That is why Jesus' last command to His disciples before He was crucified was so crucial. Jesus said, "**A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.**" (John 13:34-35)

If we're to be disciples bringing others to Christ, our life must be attractive. It must pour forth the love of God. As Charles Colson, the founder of Prison Fellowship said, "*If people could see unity in the Body of Christ, they would come knocking our doors down. We wouldn't be able to build churches fast enough.*"

God has chosen to use His church to carry out His plan for the world. And so the church has a central role in the history of the world -- in the spread of the Gospel, and in the transformation of people's lives.

The church has a central role in the history of the world, for, despite what secular history books may teach, no study of history is feasible without a study of God and His working in the world through His church. The church is God's agent for fulfilling His plans which means that we have a part in making history that shall have eternal consequences.

The church has a central role in the spread of the gospel, for, God has chosen the church to be His stewards of the divine revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I once was talking with some friends at a retreat in which we were studying about God's spiritual gifts. One person remarked how he would like to have the gift of healing because he would like to pray for people who were suffering and see their lives changed through God's miraculous power. Well, as grand as physical healing may be, God offers a greater, more miraculous, longer lasting healing through faith in Christ -- and that's the healing of one's relationship with God. And, God has given the church the mission to spread the news that such healing is available here-and-now, to all who put their faith in Jesus Christ.

The church also has a central role in the life of the believer, for, Christianity is a corporate faith. Therefore, failure to participate in the body of Christ through regular worship and service is to disobey God's commands, to reject His plan, and to deny ourselves the blessings of worship and fellowship.

Paul was set apart by God to proclaim a mystery, the revelation that Jew and Gentile are now one with Christ, and they together form the church -- God's instrument for reaching all creation with the news of His love and His judgment.

Paul believed in this message. And he was compelled to preach it to all who would give him a hearing, but especially to those whom he once rejected, whom he once saw as less than worthy of God's time and care.

He was so committed to the Gospel that he was willing to give his life so that others may hear and believe. And so, as Paul attempted to pray for the church, he was moved to encourage them. Perhaps he received word of their sorrow over his suffering for them. Perhaps he felt the need to strengthen them for the spiritual conflict that they would face as they sought to honor God. Or, perhaps he felt they needed a reminder of the free access they had to God through Christ Jesus. Whatever the reason, it's clear that Paul saw both his insight into the mystery of God in Christ, and his own suffering on behalf of that revelation as a gift from a gracious God. And for that he could rejoice. For, Paul knew that God was Sovereign and that His plans would not fail. Paul also recognized that God had chosen to use His church to bring the message of reconciliation to all the world.

The thing even Paul could not know was whether the church would respond to God's call in faithfulness 50, 100, 1000, or 2000 years down the road.

Which places the stewardship of the gospel message in now in our hands. Knowing that we are a part of the unfolding of the greatest plan on earth, how will we respond to God's call on His church, today and in the days ahead? Will we be like Paul, who, even in his prayers, could not get over the gift God had given to him -- this life changing message of hope? Or, are we going to turn away from God, as if God has given us nothing of value, and in turn deserves nothing of value from us?

We complain about the state of our schools, our community, our country and our world. And we work hard, by our own power, to make a difference, but then we become frustrated with our meager results. Yet we have before us the greatest revelation of the ages, and for some reason we keep this mystery concealed. We keep our faith to ourselves, and as a result we find ourselves trying to change the world by our own power, when in truth it's only the revelation of God's working through Christ that can transform individuals, communities, and entire nations.

We have a story to tell to our families, our friends, our community, to all nations of the earth, but our story may never be heard if we choose not to reveal it!

For Paul, it took a blinding encounter with God to transform how he saw the world, and even more, how he saw God's plan for all who believe, Jew and Gentile alike. But when he came to see rightly he was convinced of his need to proclaim that gospel to all peoples.

What will it take for us to see the world as God sees it, so that we might be faithful ambassadors of God's grace and peace to those who do not know Jesus -- even, dare I say it, to those who, in our prejudice, we might think do not deserve to know Jesus?

And, as we allow the revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to transform our lives, may God give us the wisdom to appreciate our new life in Christ, the courage to trust Christ to conform our lives according to His perfect will, and the love to proclaim boldly the mystery of the ages, so that the heavens and the earth may sing forth -- glory, praise and honor be to God, for ever and ever!

And, make part of your Lenten resolution the commitment to pray for someone who doesn't know the Lord, and to speak of the hope that's yours through faith in Christ Jesus, that this Easter you might celebrate with one who, this very Lenten season, has come out of the darkness to walk in the light of Christ!

Love in Christ Jesus,

Pastor John

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 March we will be collecting pasta and sauce.



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

LENTEN PROGRAM

Wednesday evenings at 6:15



The Upward Ministry Committee invites you to join us during this Lenten season for a time of worship and fellowship. We will gather on **Wednesday** evenings at **6:15** for a light meal of soup and bread followed by an informal time of worship.

If you would like to contribute to the meal you can bring a pot of soup or some cookies to share. There will be a sign-up sheet in the narthex where you can indicate what you will bring.



March Birthdays

3/11 Serena Solomon
3/22 Vaughn Skarzynski
3/25 Sue Stierer
3/26 Chuck Davey
3/30 Abby McAuley



March Anniversary

3/23 Joe & Lois Pasinella

Serving This Month:

March 4th

Worship Assistants: Sue Laz, Kelly Valerio
Greeters: Dean and Doris Calamaras
Head Greeters: Peter Laz
Nursery: Jen McAuley, Deena Dominy
Communion: Jerry Whitman
Fellowship Hosts: Whitman Family

March 11th

Worship Assistants: Natalia Multunas, Dean Calamaras
Greeters: Jen McAuley
Head Greeter: Rob Jensen
Nursery: Lois Pasinella, Diane Lewinski
Communion: Natalia Multunas, Pat Gilmaier, Jen McAuley, Rob Jensen
Fellowship Hosts: McAuley Family

March 18th

Worship Assistants: Kelly Valerio, Ella Miller
Greeters: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski
Head Greeter: Andy Miller
Nursery: Jaime Miller, Deena Dominy
Communion: Sue Laz, Vera Whitman, Alice Bentley, Andy Miller
Fellowship Hosts:

March 25th

Worship Assistants: Bill and Natalia Multunas
Greeters: Joe Pasinella, Deena Dominy
Head Greeter: Peter Laz
Nursery: Bill Multunas, Dean Calamaras, Deena Dominy, Doris Calamaras
Fellowship Hosts: Holly Steciuk

General Financial Update for January 2018

	Year to Date	January
Total Income	\$12,394.50	\$12,394.50
Total Expenses	\$15,049.10	\$15,049.10
Difference	\$ (2,654.60)	\$ (2,654.60)



Remember in Prayer...

Our Shut-ins at home:

Tillie Herman, Marcella Goard, June Giles,
Jan and John Pedersen

At the Eddy: Dot Multunas, Edna Wells

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:

Pray for open doors to build relationships
and share truth.

Pray for the local believers that they would
be bold and grow together.

Pray for wisdom while navigating
friendships, especially across cultural
barriers.

Pray that he will have clarity for God's plan
for his future.

Our college students:

Brian Giddings (Roger Williams)
Abigail McAuley (Boston College)
James McAuley (Albany Law School)
Joshua Multunas (Gordon Conwell)
Alida Sceccitano (Boston College)
Natalie Sceccitano (Houghton)
Angelina Solomon (SUNY Albany)

Bible Quiz for March 2018

As we move through the Lenten season we continue will spend some time in chapters 2 and 3 of the book of "Revelation" (Jesus' message to the seven churches.). The questions in this quiz will come from those two chapters of "Revelation".

1. Of the seven churches, which was promised a "crown of life" if they remained faithful?
2. To which church did Jesus say that He would clothed those who conquer in "white garments"?
3. Which church's name translates "brotherly love"?
4. John's letter was to be sent on a circular route to the seven churches. Which church was in the middle of the "mail route"?
5. In the ascription of which of the churches does Jesus identify Himself as having the two-edged sword?
6. Which church was identified as being "lukewarm"?
7. In His message to which two churches does Jesus mention the Nicolaitans?
8. In His message to which two churches does Jesus mention "the synagogue of Satan"?
9. Which church did Jesus accuse of tolerating "Jezebel"?
10. To which church did Jesus say that if they proved faithful they would be given a white stone with a new name written on that stone?

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 given 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) – “We had many visitors come this past month. Some short-term teams working with different organizations came and we had the chance to take them to our school and share with them about the work that we do here.

An American and a Tanzanian came to do some training with both team members and locals. They did a great job equipping and empowering us to work effectively here in this context.

While showing our guests around I had the chance to take them to several places I don’t normally have the chance to work at or simply had never had the chance to visit before. I was able to take them to a ministry that works with street children – playing games with kids coming from situations that are nearly unimaginable. It can be a difficult place but one that I hope to spend more time at in the future.”

From Joshua Multunas (at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) – “I am looking forward to my course-load much more this semester. I’ll be taking Preaching I, an in-depth course on the Gospel of Mark, Hebrew II, and Old Testament Interpretation.

In addition, I have begun my mentored ministry work at my church, which has been fun so far! Our church leads a worship service at a local nursing home once a month, and I had the opportunity to preach there this past weekend (only a couple people fell asleep!).

Please pray for me as I embark on this semester’s worth of classes, with added church responsibilities! You are in my prayers, and as always, let me know if there is anything specific I can be praying for you for.”

From Peter Halder (Bangladesh YFC) – “Every day I am very excited to do the exciting ministry of reaching every young person in our beautiful nation. We recall our memories and praise Him for all His blessings. BYFC has been blessed already in the new year: He has blessed us with a couple new staff members because ministry has grown. We were able to reach the highest number of youth in in the history of Bangladesh YFC in 2017. On behalf of the Bangladesh YFC family, thank you for your great support”

From Andy Lightcap (Capital District Youth For Christ) – As we begin a new year, we at Youth for Christ are very excited for what the Lord has in store for our ministry in 2018. As we look back on this past year, we have had so many opportunities to invest in the lives of kids. Thank you for your partnership in helping to reach lost students in the Capital District!”

From Emerson (our sponsored child in El Salvador) – “Hi dear sponsors, I greet you and I hope God is keeping you healthy and that you are full of blessings in every area of your life. Please pray for me to have good health and to do well at school this year. I will be praying for you and your families.”

From Perry Jones (Capital City Rescue Mission) – “Your generous compassion is helping to provide our homeless neighbors with a warm, safe refuge where they can find food, shelter and other vital care this winter. Your donation is already hard at work providing these essentials, plus life-transforming hope through the programs you make possible. And a little bit of hope can play a very big part in turning things around. It is exciting to know that God is using us together to make a difference this year. May you be blessed by the joy of His presence in the months to come – and always.”

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.

Time for a Check-up!

The annual physical exam by a doctor is something most of us do on a regular basis. We do this to make sure we are healthy and to hopefully diagnose any issues before they become major health problems.



In the same way, we need to perform a "Spiritual Check-up" periodically to ensure that our faith is healthy and growing.

Consider the following categories and rate yourself on how you are doing:

- I make Sunday morning worship a priority.
- I spend time in God's Word every day.
- I participate in a Bible study group or Sunday school class.
- I spend time in prayer daily.
- I pray regularly for those I know who do not know the Lord.
- I pray for opportunities to tell others about Jesus.
- I give sacrificially of my finances to the work of the church.
- I willingly give of my time and talents to the work of the church.

Think about what areas you would like (or need) to grow in and then prayerfully consider how you can go about meeting those goals.

There are several resources available to help you grow in your faith. The church library has books on a variety of topics that you can borrow. There is also an assortment of devotional materials available in the narthex that are free for you to take and read.

We offer several opportunities for you to gather with others for Bible study, encouragement and support and, of course, worship is available every Sunday!

It is our prayer that each member of the Third Church family would take seriously the need to keep growing in our faith.

If you have questions or if you would like to talk to someone about what it means to follow Jesus, please speak with any of the Session members – Dean Calamaras, Jason Laz, Sue Laz, Andy Miller, Bill Multunas, Eric Ofori, Jerry Whitman, Vera Whitman and Pastor John.



Growing as Witnesses

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

Acts 1:8

The mission of all followers of Jesus is, and has always been, to make disciples.

If those first eleven disciples had not been obedient to that call, there might not be a Christian church today.

If others before us were not obedient to that call, we might not know Jesus today. All of us who are a part of the church today are a part of the church because someone took the time to teach us and nurture faith in us.

We are Christians and there is a church today because the many who went before us shared their faith with us and with others.

Who are you sharing your faith with? Who do you know that does not know Jesus and what are you doing about it?

We are called to share our faith, to tell others what we believe and to encourage others to come to faith in Jesus.

We can't force this on people but there are things we can do. We can pray. We need to be praying for those who don't know the Lord. We need to be praying for opportunities to share what we believe with them. We need to be praying to have the courage to speak of our faith when God presents the opportunity.

We don't need to know everything about the Bible before we can share our faith. We only need to share what we know...we are to be witnesses. A witness simply tells what they know to be true.

Let us all be diligent in praying for the lost and for opportunities to share our faith. Let us be bold in speaking of the hope we have in Jesus for this is what our Savior calls us to do. Let us have such a heart for the lost that our heart breaks for those who are living apart from God.

There are several resources available in the church library to encourage you as you strive to be obedient to the call to be a witness. There are also resources in the narthex for you to take for your own encouragement or to share with someone you are seeking to nurture in the faith.

If you have questions or would like more information, please speak with any of the Session members.

From Music and AV Ministries...

A SURVEY YOU WON'T MIND TAKING

Now that we're in the "thick" of the Lenten season, it is good that we should consider some of the music which makes the season so sublime. I'd like to take a look at and share with you some of the beauty behind one of the greatest hymns in all Christendom. I'm always hard-pressed to name a *favorite* hymn-- I have so many! But no discussion of hymns near and dear to my heart would be complete without *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* being in the mix. Or, as it was originally entitled: *Crucifixion to the World by the Cross of Christ*. I'm certainly thankful that someone renamed it along the way!

The only hymn that I think rivals *When I Survey* in terms of the richness of its poetry and theological insight is *And Can It Be*. But that one covers a whole lot more subject matter than just the crucifixion! Authored by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), a contemporary of J.S. Bach, *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross* was one of an astounding 600 hymns penned by him. In an era when the Church of England's practice was to sing only the Old Testament Psalms in worship, Watts forged a new path, based on his disdain for omitting in song all the glorious truths expressed in the New Testament. His work moved the Church from the rigid, metrical style of the Psalms to a more freely flowing form of hymnody. His texts still fit the most common Psalm meters but because hymns back then were *lined* by a leader (leader sings a phrase, congregation echoes it back), he strove to design each line of his texts to be a complete thought.

When I Survey is clearly based on Galatians 6:14: *May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.* The simplicity of its match to the tune *Hamburg* by American Lowell Mason belies its utter profundity:

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

Note the dual oxymorons: "My richest gain I count but *loss*" and "pour *contempt* on all my *pride*."

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

*See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns and compose so rich a crown?*

The grim paradox of "a crown of thorns"...and the twin rhetorical questions: "Did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?"

*Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life my all.*

Do we really comprehend what we're saying when we admit that "Love so amazing, so divine demands my SOUL, my LIFE, my ALL?"

Doing some research on this beloved hymn has revealed to me that the last verse was *not* the original 4th verse. There was another before it, for some reason discarded throughout the ages but still packing a powerful punch in its imagery:

*His dying crimson, like a robe,
Spreads o'er his body on the tree;
Then I am dead to all the globe,
And all the globe is dead to me.*

Thanks be to God for faithful men and women like Isaac Watts, who have penned such lofty sentiments to be brought to life in time and space as we sing them with all our heart, soul, mind and strength!

With joy in the journey,

Sal Sceccitano

SESSION MEETING-THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-FEBRUARY 12, 2018

ACTION ITEMS

1. A motion was made and carried to approve the Clerk's Annual Statistical Report and other related year end reports to General Assembly, and Albany Presbytery.
2. A motion was made to allow the use of Post Memorial Hall on March 3, 2018 for the Horizon's International Student Game Night from 2-10 PM.

CLERK'S REPORT - Miscellaneous Information: Average attendance for January 2018 was 43. Albany Presbytery approved Andy Miller and Sue Laz to administer the Sacrament of Communion in Pastor John's absence.

UPWARD MINISTRY (Encounter, Exalt)

- Lenten soup suppers began on Ash Wednesday (2/14).
- Soup Supper during Holy Week will move to Maundy Thursday (3/29).
- We will have Good Friday worship service in the evening (3/30).

INWARD MINISTRY (Encourage, Equip)

CONGREGATIONAL CARE-Visitation, phone calls, and cards are an ongoing ministry.

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

MEN'S MINISTRY-The Men's study on the Gospel of Mark is ongoing.

MISCELLANEOUS

- The Adult Sunday school class is studying the life and letters of the apostle Paul.
- We are planning to start regular times of fellowship after Easter similar to the dinner and game nights that we have done in the past. We will have a meal, a brief devotional activity, a time for games or other activities, and dessert.
- Pentecost is May 20th. We will have a picnic during fellowship time.

OUTWARD MINISTRY (Engage, Evangelize, Extend)

- Spending for February: Capital City Rescue Mission-\$500.00, Bangladesh Youth For Christ-300.00, Capital District Youth For Christ-\$500.00, InterVarsity at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute & Russell Sage College-\$500.00
- We will be serving the evening meal at Capital City Rescue Mission on April 21st.
- We will be looking at ways to stay more focused on outreach to the unchurched.
 - Sue Laz handed out and reviewed information from **The Unchurched Next Door** by Thom S. Rainer as well as from **Surprising Insights From The Unchurched And Proven Ways To Reach Them** by Thom S. Rainer.
- The Community Garage Sale is planned for June 2nd.

GENERAL FUND/FINANCE-We had a negative cash flow during January of \$2,654.60.

DESIGNATED FUNDS TREASURER'S REPORT-Report was handed out, reviewed, and accepted, current balance \$49,042.49.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

PALM SUNDAY – March 25th at 10:30



We will remember and celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Childcare is offered for children under 5 and there will be a fellowship time following the worship service.

MAUNDY THURSDAY – March 29th

This is a time to remember and reflect on the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. We will begin the evening with a **light meal at 6:15** followed by **worship with communion at 6:45**.



GOOD FRIDAY – March 30th

We will gather for worship at 6:30 P.M. to reflect on the suffering of our Lord and what it means for us today.

EASTER SUNDAY – April 1st at 10:30

Come and celebrate with us the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the promise of new life in him! Childcare is offered for children under 5. There will be a fellowship time following the worship service.



Third Presbyterian Church
115 Winter Street
Troy, NY 12180

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
EXALTING GOD / PROCLAIMING CHRIST / MAKING DISCIPLES