

The Third PRESS



January 2018

“Breaking Barriers -- Building Bridges”

As we move into the New Year I want to begin by thanking all of you for your generous Christmas gift to the McAuley family. We are grateful for your generosity toward us, and, for our years of ministry together – may God be glorified in and through both.

In this Newsletter I want to continue in our study through and reflection upon Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus. As I shared before, I am spending time in these newsletters reflecting upon this letter by Paul because it has often been identified as the “Magna Charta” of Paul’s letters as it sets for both theologically and practically who we’re to be and how we’re to live in the freedom of Christ, as the Body of Christ. The letter to the Ephesians contains in brief some of Paul’s richest theology applied to the most basic issues of living together in community in Christ. And both – the theology and its application – are important for us to understand if we’re to glorify God as His people together and enjoy His presence in our lives.

As we continue in this study, I also want to encourage you to supplement this particular study by joining our adult Sunday school class where we will soon begin a study of the apostle Paul and his ministry, and in so doing interact with all his writings found in the New Testament – including the letter to the church at Ephesus. If you ever wanted the opportunity to study the life of Paul and see how his writings fit together to display his heart for his Lord and for the church this is a great opportunity to do so. This study will probably begin on Sunday, January 21st (We’re finishing up our study of the life and ministry of Jesus during the beginning of January.). I would love to have everyone join us. In fact, it would be great to have to move this Sunday school class to Post Memorial Hall just to accommodate everyone☺!

That said, let’s continue now in our study through Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus by picking up our study at Ephesus 2:11-18, which reads:

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men) -- remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away

115 Winter Street
Troy, NY 12180
283-2420

www.thirdchurchtroy.org
office@thirdchurchtroy.org

 ThirdChurchTroy

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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



and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

After looking at the issue of our new life in Christ from the perspective of the individual in Ephesians 2:1-10 (see the December 2017 newsletter), Paul focused upon what God has done for all believers in community, Jew and Gentile alike. In turn, he addressed our new relationship with God and one another through Christ. And fundamental to Paul's urging to the church to be the church is that we tear down the walls that often divide the church, walls like those of racism, ethnicity, social status, age, education, worship style, denominational affiliation, and the list goes on.

The truth is, we are a people who build walls (And I'm not talking about border walls, although that too is an issue Christians need to wrestle with as those who live in the world but are not to be of the world – as those called to bring Christ to all the world.) -- sometimes for the good, but often times to our shame.

As I shared with you before, I have a special gift from my brother. It's a rock. But it's not just any rock. This rock is from what is considered to be the eighth wonder of the ancient world, the Great Wall of China. This wall, built before the time of Christ, stretches over 1500 miles and was built to keep northern invaders from entering China.

As you may know, this wall is wide enough to be used as a road and can be seen from outer space. It's quite an impressive manmade structure. Today the "Great Wall of China" is falling apart. But China has constructed another barrier to keep the Chinese people in and others out. That barrier is called the "Bamboo Curtain". Despite efforts for reform, and despite the great economic and social progress made in that nation over the years, that dividing wall stands strong.

The Chinese, however, aren't the only people with barriers erected to separate themselves from others. In 1990 we witnessed the tearing down of the Berlin wall, a wall which symbolized the separation of East and West Germany. Moreover, the decade of the '90's witnessed the demise of much of the Iron Curtain of Communism which separated Eastern and Western Europe. These are obvious examples of walls that entire societies have built, both philosophically and even physically, with the intent to separate and to isolate.

And there are many other societal barriers in every nation of this world. Some go by such names as racism or sexism. Some are cloaked in the guise of location, education, economics, politics, or religion.

And there are walls that individuals erect, walls that often go unseen but that can be harder to tear down than those of nationality or religion or government – such as walls of pride, fear, ignorance, and self-centeredness.

Robert Louis Stevenson, in his *Picturesque Notes of Edinburgh*, tells the story of two unmarried sisters who shared a single room. The sisters had a falling out, which Stevenson says was 'on some point of controversial divinity', in other words, they disagreed over some aspect of theology. The controversy was so bitter that they never spoke again. There were no words exchanged, either kind or spiteful -- just silence. Nevertheless, possibly because of a lack of means, they continued to live together in a small room. A chalk line was drawn across the floor to separate their two domains. For years they coexisted in hateful silence. Each woman's meals, baths, and family visitors were exposed to the other's unfriendly silence. At night each went to bed listening to the heavy breathing of her enemy. And that is how these two sisters -- faithful church attendees -- continued the rest of their lives together.

Our world is filled with walls that divide. And, Paul writes in our passage today about one of the most impenetrable walls in history, the barrier between Jew and Gentile.

Before Christ, the Gentile could perhaps best be described as one who was alienated -- first from God, and then, as a result, from God's people, the Jews. There was the reality of the physical alienation between Jew and Gentile, but that was only a representation of a greater alienation between Gentile and God.

Now, in order to understand our text we should go back to the time of Moses and the establishment of the nation of Israel. God set apart a people for Himself, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In doing this He also gave them a land and laws by which to live in that land -- the Covenant established at Mt. Sinai. This covenant set apart a people who would worship one God, the God who presented Himself as the Creator of all that exists.

The Israelites, then, lived under a Covenant with this God which called them to holiness: to a life set apart for the praise and worship God; to a life set apart for living in righteousness and justice with each other; to a life set apart for witnessing to the surrounding people of the sovereignty of God.

And they were to live as a "holy" people by following the Laws and Commandments of God.

Thus, in a sense, God initiated the "wall" between Jew and Gentile.

But the wall God created always had a gate -- an opening for any who wished to enter; for any who wished to receive God's grace and experience a relationship with God.

The Jews, however, closed that gate and reinforced the barriers as the religious teachers took the rules and regulations of God "super-charged" them. They didn't alter God's Law. They would never do that. But in their zeal to "protect" God's law, they introduced new, more rigid rules -- a sort of line in the sand before God's line -- a religious "no fly zone".

Along with these "modified" rules and regulations the Israelites "developed an attitude" -- an attitude which grew into deep prejudice and hatred for the Gentiles. Sure, the Jews tolerated the Gentiles. They had no choice since they were often a captive people. But they didn't enjoy their company and they certainly didn't want them living next door!

Of course, the Gentiles were no paragons of hospitality. Their hatred for the Jews was just as deep. The Jews were tolerated but not appreciated. They were fine as long as they stayed "on their side of the caravan tracks".

So over time the walls of hostility grew -- socially and spiritually.

The reality of the situation was that the Jews themselves, although God's special people, were unable to experience the full extent of God's love because their faith became a religion of do's and don'ts. Many were trying to seek God's favor, and their own "salvation", by following a prescribed set of works.

But, as Paul made clear Ephesians 2:8-9, salvation, and therefore new life and hope, come by grace alone.

Even the most diligent among the Jews was not, nor could ever be, good enough to earn God's love and acceptance (Is 64:6). And, as hopeless as that sounds, for the Gentile the situation was worse, because they were alienated from God (outside of God's common grace).

The Jew at least had a "Covenant of Promise" with God through Abraham which offered a future hope even if the present was not going well. The Gentile had no such covenant with God, no promise of future blessings, no promise of fellowship with their Creator. Any hope they did have was built upon the lies of false gods which were themselves the creation of sinful mankind of the evil one, and so their promises were without the power to provide. (Rom 1:24-25)

The Gentile, despite their worship of a myriad of gods, were in fact without God and without hope. (Eph 2:12)

Paul was writing to Christians, some of Jewish descent, but mostly Gentile, and he was saying to them: remember what it was like for you before Christ; remember how you were hopeless and helpless; remember that you were once outcasts; remember that you were abandoned and alone.

Can you feel the pain in those words? Do you, Gentile, for we are those who were once called Gentiles, remember what it feels like to be without Christ?

I do. And that is the only reason why I would dare to preach or teach the Scriptures. I am not serving as a pastor because I have some phenomenal gifts that I feel compelled to share with you (How's that for stating the obvious☺!). But I do remember what my life was like when I was living without Christ, and I know I never want to live like that again -- to feel that emptiness, that meaninglessness, that burden of sinfulness without real forgiveness. And I know that for me that means helping others to experience Christ's love by serving as a pastor (as long as the Lord deems beneficial), even as it ought

to mean for you to live your faith in word and deed wherever God has placed you and however God is calling you. (Col 3:17, 23)

Sure, we can close our eyes to the hopelessness of life without God -- for a while. And we can fill our lives with good activities, positive relationships and rewarding responsibilities. But, eventually we will have to face the truth of God's claims, because no one can hide from reality forever.

The walls – the enmity, the division, the alienation, the loneliness, the hopelessness -- these are not part of God's desire for His creation. These barriers are a result of sin. But, Paul goes on to say, God has dealt with these walls.

Jesus Christ destroyed the wall of hostility.

Actually, Jesus destroyed two walls of hostility: the wall between God and fallen humanity (for all who trust in Jesus) -- the vertical barrier; and, the wall between individual believers, the horizontal barrier.

Jesus destroyed the wall of hostility between God and humanity by fulfilling the Law of Moses in his own flesh. Through Jesus' perfect obedience to the Law of God, He satisfied God's requirement for holiness. And, through His offering up of Himself upon the cross for us and our sins, He became our representative and substitute. (Jn 1:29; 2 Cor 5:21)

Jesus gave His life that we might live, thus ending the Old Covenant with its regulations that caused separation, and beginning a New Covenant open to all people who would put their faith in Jesus. (Jer 31:1; Heb 9:15)

In a sense, Jews and Gentiles alike were separated from God -- the Jews because they could not fulfill their covenant promises with God, and the Gentiles because they had no covenant with God. Which is why Paul reminded the early church that they were at war with God when they lived apart from God, pursuing the desires of the flesh. And Paul reminds us that humankind is at war with God whenever we put ourselves and our own interests above God's will.

But, through Jesus, and His blood alone, we have peace with God (Rom 5:1). And this peace is more than just knowing that we need not fear God's wrath. This peace is the realization: that we're accepted by God; that we can have hope; that we can receive comfort. This peace is the realization that we're no longer separated from, but rather, are in union with the Author of the universe. And this peace is made possible solely through the work of, and in the person of, Jesus the Christ. (Jn 3:16, 14:6; Acts 4:12)

Many people in our society are fighting God. Perhaps this describes a friend of yours, or a neighbor, or perhaps it describes you! Perhaps there's a refusal to accept the reconciling work of Jesus. Perhaps pride will not allow you to submit to the authority of a loving God. Perhaps life is so cluttered with the distractions of unnecessary things or improper relationships – with the hope of deadening an inner pain and loneliness – that one can no longer hear God's voice. Maybe you know someone who has bought the lie that one can get to God another way – perhaps through good works, or meditation, or special prayers, or mystical trinkets. Regardless of the cause, the effect is the same -- a wall remains between them and God; maybe even between you and God!

But Paul's words in the book of Ephesians tell us that Jesus has eliminated that barrier and has built a bridge to God, and, even more, that Jesus Himself is that bridge. Jesus reconciled us to the Father! (1 Pt 1:3-5)

But His work didn't end there. There's another barrier that Jesus destroyed -- the one between Jewish and Gentile believers. (Gal 3: 26-28)

There's no way around it. Paul's words in Ephesians 2:11-18 make it clear that God has destroyed any excuse for hatred and mistrust between those who are united in Christ. Jesus reconciled us to one another. He became our peace -- our source of unity, love and acceptance. He is our peace, not only unto God, but unto fellow believers as well. Therefore God commands us, and the Spirit of God enables us, to be in union with God and each other.

God has torn down the walls of division that separate His people. And so, if we've put our faith in Christ -- if we're Christians -- then we have no right to build these walls again.

No one can claim to be a Christian and in the same breath defend prejudices and divisions, whether they be with respect to race, sex, age, economic or social status, or even with respect to styles of Christian worship -- what we sing or how we pray.

Jesus commands His people who are under this New Covenant, a covenant in His blood, to love one another (Jn 13:34-35). And the apostle John makes it clear that no one can rightly claim love for God while practicing hatred towards a brother or sister in Christ (1 Jn 4:20-21). And hatred, although a harsh word, is exactly what our prejudices foster.

At this point I want to interject a few observations regarding what this text does not say.

First, it does not say that Jesus eliminated all divisions between people. Jesus never commands us to ignore truth and to accept all beliefs and lifestyles with open arms. As long as there is sin -- rebellion against God -- there will and must be divisions.

What Jesus did do was redefine the divisions. He redefined what it means to be a child of God and part of the covenant community of God. He redrew the dividing lines to be between those who are at peace with God and those who are at war with God -- not so that the church would reinforce those lines but so that we would know to whom we must go to share the gospel and, by God's grace, to help across that line from death to life in Christ.

The lines Jesus drew have nothing to do with who we are -- our sex, our skin color, our occupation, our nationality, and so on. Rather, the lines Jesus drew have everything to do with whose we are, what we believe, and in whom we place our faith.

The lines Jesus drew are not meant to keep people out but to show all people, who by our sin nature are inherently out, how they might come in!

Second, Jesus never calls us to live in conflict with those who don't know Him. Even if people choose to build a wall between themselves and God, even if they express anger at Jesus' exclusive claim that He alone is the way to the Father, our response should always be one of compassion, sympathy and service -- thereby demonstrating the hope and love we have in Christ. For, Jesus is our peace, our reconciliation, and He calls us to peace and reconciliation with the Father and with each other (Rom 12:18).

The hatred and division between Jew and Gentile was deep in Paul's day. Even Gentile proselytes, those who were baptized into the Jewish faith, were never fully accepted by the Jewish religious establishment.

The Temple in Jerusalem, you may recall, had a special outer court for the Gentile who wanted to worship, but they were allowed to go no further. An inscription was placed periodically along that outer wall warning Gentiles about proceeding any further into the Temple courts. The inscription read:

"No man of another race is to proceed into the partition and enclosing wall about the sanctuary; and anyone arrested there will have himself to blame for the penalty of death which will be imposed as a consequence."

How's that for an opening line on a welcome brochure?

We would never write something like that! But do we ever think it? To a degree? Especially when the visitor doesn't look just right, or smell just right? Or worse, when they sit in our pew? And how welcoming are we to the non-churched -- to those who don't know our beliefs, traditions, or etiquette? And how quick are we to encourage such "undesirables" to try worshipping at St. Elsewhere -- for their own sake of course?

Are we about the business of building bridges or barriers?

And lest we miss the point, Paul isn't just talking about tearing down those obvious walls -- those sinful barriers of racism, or sexism. Paul is also talking about the hidden walls that keep us from loving, trusting, forgiving and serving one another -- those barriers all of us erect about ourselves to keep us safe and comfortable.

Many of us claim to be Christian, members of the body of Christ -- the family of God -- but then we carefully keep our distance from God and each other. At times, our motto for living echoes the words of song writer Paul Simon who wrote:

“I am walls, a fortress steep and mighty, that none may penetrate. I am shielded in my armor, hiding in my room, safe within my womb, I touch no one and no one touches me.”

That’s not the way of the Gospel! The Gospel is not a message of barriers, the Gospel is a message of bridges. The Gospel is a message of reconciliation -- of acceptance and love and peace and hope.

We, the followers of Jesus Christ, are commanded to demonstrate the peace and unity we have in Christ so that the world might see it, and in seeing it, that they might believe in Him. (Mt 5:16; Jn 13:34-35)

Paul wrote to the Church at Ephesus, **“You, Jew and Gentile, are one new person in Christ.”**

It’s as if God took oil and vinegar, mixed them together, and brought forth pure spring water – doing the impossible by His grace.

Likewise, in Ephesians 2:11-18, Paul reminds Christians that we’re one new body in Christ. And our differences, rather than causing divisions, are to serve to demonstrate God’s creativity – for His church is like a splendid floral arrangement in which every flower and piece of greenery enhances the beauty of the whole.

Jesus broke-down the barriers that separate. Jesus built a bridge that unites. And He makes clear to us that we must cross that bridge. We must cross that bridge that unites us with the Father – even Jesus Himself – crucified and resurrected. And we must cross the bridge that unites us with each other – even Jesus Himself – crucified and resurrected.

And, of course the journey before us as we cross this bridge will not necessarily be easy. At times it can even be frightening. Yet cross that bridge we must, if we wish to wear the name Christian. And, if we wear the name Christian -- like Jew and Gentile of old -- we must remember that where Jesus has built a bridge, we have no right to erect a wall.

May God give you the grace and strength to serve our God as “bridge builders” throughout this New Year, that there might be genuine unity within the Body, and that many who are lost would be enabled to cross that bridge from death to life, through Christ, to the glory of God.

God’s grace and peace to you,

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 January we will be collecting peanut butter and jelly.



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

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.



Serving This Month

January 7th

Worship Assistants: Natalia Multunas,
Connie Russell
Greeters: Joe Pasinella and Alice Bentley
Head Greeters: Rob Jensen
Nursery: Deena Dominy and Ella Miller
Communion: Alice Bentley
Fellowship Hosts: Whitman Family

January 14th

Worship Assistants: Eric Ofori and Jesse Ofori
Greeters: Jen McAuley and Pat Gilmaier
Head Greeter: Andy Miller
Nursery: Jen McAuley and Irene Ofori
Communion: Alice Bentley, Andy Miller,
Bill Multunas, Dean Calamaras
Fellowship Hosts: Ofori Family

January 21st

Worship Assistants: Bill Multunas,
Dean Calamaras
Greeters: Dean and Doris Calamaras
Head Greeter: Peter Laz
Nursery: Diane Lewinski and Jaime Miller
Communion: Deena Dominy, Doris Calamaras,
Eric Ofori, Jason Laz
Fellowship Hosts: Lois Pasinella

January 28th

Worship Assistants: Deena Dominy,
Kelly Valerio
Greeters: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski
Head Greeter: Rob Jensen
Nursery: Alice Bentley, Jen McAuley
Communion: Jen McAuley, Jerry Whitman,
Natalia Multunas, Pat Gilmaier
Fellowship Hosts: Soup Pot Luck Luncheon

January Birthdays

1/10 Mike Martin (Sr.)
1/11 Lauren Russell
1/15 Caitlin Dickson
1/18 Kurt Whitman
1/25 Mort Casey

January Anniversaries

1/14 Alice & Stanton Bentley
1/14 Daniel & Sally Nolan



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 him to make the most of the next year
Pray for him and his family as this is a hard
time to be apart
Pray for wisdom as he considers future plans
Pray that some of the conversations he has
had with students will lead to more
conversations about faith
Pray for the local believers

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)
Serena Solomon (Coastal Carolina)



Mark Your Calendars...

Lent begins **February 14th**. Watch
for more details about the Lenten
Soup Suppers and Worship times.

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) - This past weekend we had the school Christmas celebrations for the students. We had two nights of celebrations (we invited half the school to one and half to the other), where we had the chance to play games, eat Christmas cookies, and put on a play where we explained what we believe and don't believe about Christmas.

Upon reaching the half-way mark I realize just how much I've been blessed throughout this past year. I have been able to serve and grow in ways that I couldn't have imagined before coming here. I thank God for the gift that you have been to me; without your faithful prayers and financial giving none of this would have been possible. As I thank God for you I pray that you would know the fullness of His love for you, the comfort of His care of you, and the joy of His presence with and in you."

From Peter Halder (YFC Bangladesh) – "I have been studying 1 Thessalonians and when I read 1:2-3, I found something that was in my heart always: I must acknowledge you, because you care for me, my family and BYFC work. Your hard works and sweet income giving for us, you prayer time and heart given for Him and us. We so much appreciate and are thankful for you. As you celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas, we want you to celebrate what He has done through your partnership with BYFC to help many desperate needy ones who now live new and transformed lives. Thank you!"

From Joshua Multunas (at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary) – "I have a little less than a month left of the semester, which means finals and term papers are coming soon! I've gotten into a good routine here, and have had a lot of opportunities to be involved in the life of the seminary and my church. My church leads a worship service at a local nursing home once a month, and I was able to help this month by leading the music portions. I have been glad to give back in some small ways in the midst of all that I have been receiving in the forms of your support and my education!

I have been really grateful to be learning what I am learning, and to see that it is having a tangible impact on my own relationship with God. And this will certainly help me be better equipped to teach others. I am grateful to be here, and grateful for your support!"

From Kevin Post (Capital District Youth For Christ) – "This year as Torie anticipates a Christmas full of pain and heartache because of what is going on in her life, we have the opportunity to introduce her to the Wonderful Counselor. As James goes to bed on Christmas Eve not knowing what the future holds in his chaotic world, we have the joy of telling him about a Mighty God. As Jen and Melissa gather around the tree without a dad, we will invite them to know the Everlasting Father. And as our young people look to another year filled with uncertainty and fear, we will introduce them to the Prince of Peace.

There is no greater gift that we can give than the opportunity to know God. Thank you so much for all that you do through your prayers and financial support to reach lost 11-19 year olds. I pray that you too will experience the Joy of Christ this Christmas."

From Perry Jones (Capital City Rescue Mission) – Thank you for your gift to help hungry and struggling men and women in our community. Because of your generosity we will provide close to 3,000 Christmas meals and give away hundreds of gifts.

David came to the Rescue Mission struggling with addiction and homelessness. He joined the New Life program and was reminded that God loved him, had never abandoned him and would forgive him. Today David is on staff as a resident assistant, even leading lunchtime devotions for our guests.

Thank you friends at Third Pres. You bring Jesus' love to many. Merry Christmas."

From Niki Campbell (InterVarsity at RPI and Sage) –“Thank you for your partnership in the ministry. In this season, we are giving thanks for you. Your prayer and financial partnership has been pivotal in everything God has been doing through us on campus. Already we have seen two new brothers say “YES” to Jesus for the first time and we know God will be doing so much more. Thank you!”

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.

Bible Quiz for January 2018

As we move into January, our sermon series will continue in 2 Thessalonians. In conjunction with that series, questions for this Bible quiz will be taken from that letter, chapters 2 and 3.

1. What two events does Paul say must occur before the Lord Jesus returns?
2. Who does Paul say will present himself as being God although certainly not God?
3. How will the Lord Jesus Christ destroy this one who presents himself as God?
4. Who is it that is behind the working of this lawless one?
5. Fill in the blanks: "So then, brothers and sisters, _____ and hold fast to the _____ we passed on to you."
6. What two things does Paul ask the church at Thessalonica to pray for Paul and his companions?
7. Who does Paul command the believers at Thessalonica to keep away from?
8. Why does Paul say that he and his companions worked hard among the Thessalonians even while speaking to them of the person and work of Jesus?
9. Fill in the blanks: "The one who is not willing to _____ shall not _____."
10. What does Paul say the church at Thessalonica should never tire doing?

General Financial Update for November 2017

	Year to Date	November
Total Income	\$152,956.82	\$14,380.00
Total Expenses	\$153,795.10	\$14,799.53
Difference	(\$ 838.28)	(\$ 419.53)



Winter Collection for Capital City Rescue Mission

Throughout the season of Advent we collected items needed by Capital City Rescue Mission to help those in need be prepared for the cold weather. Each week during Advent we focused on a different item. So far, thanks to your generosity, we have collected:

46 Hats, 44 Pairs of gloves
 3 Scarves, 10 Coats
 162 Pairs of socks, 12 Blankets

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

The Scriptures exhort us to be ready to give a defense for our faith in Jesus (1 Tim 4:16; 2 Tim 2:15; 1 Pt 3:15). To equip us to be able to do that we will continue in our review of the Westminster Shorter Catechism.

Q 93. Which are the sacraments of the New Testament?

The sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Q 94. What is Baptism?

Baptism is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, does signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.

Q 95. To whom is Baptism to be administered?

Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience to him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptized.

Q 96. What is the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament, wherein by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, His death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of His body and blood, with all His benefits to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

Q 97. What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's Supper that they examine themselves, of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon Him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

Q98. What is prayer?

Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God, for things agreeable to His will, in the name of Christ, with confession of our sins, and thankful acknowledgment of His mercies.

Q99. What rule has God given for our direction in prayer?

The whole Word of God is of use to direct us in prayer; but the special rule of direction is that form of prayer which Christ taught His disciples, commonly called "the Lord's Prayer."

SESSION MEETING-THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-DECEMBER 11, 2017

ACTION ITEMS

1. A motion was made and carried unanimously to authorize the use of Post Memorial Hall by Chuck Davey on Saturday January 27, 2018 from 12 noon to 7 PM.
2. A motion was made and carried unanimously to approve the readiness of Bill Multunas, Eric Ofori, and Vera Whitman to serve as Elders for a three-year term beginning on January 1, 2018.
3. A motion was made and carried unanimously to approve the General Fund Budget for 2018 as presented.
4. A motion was made and carried unanimously to authorize Sue Laz and Andy Miller to begin administering the Sacrament of Holy Communion with Pastor John, as part of their training to fill in in that capacity when needed.

CLERK'S REPORT

- Miscellaneous Information:
 - Average attendance for November 2017 was 43.

- Membership Roll is 64.
- Reminder of activities before the next Business meeting:
 - 01/03 – Bible Study at Beechwood at 10:15 AM.
 - 01/08 – Session Business meeting at church at 7 PM.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

- Will recognize those members/friends who died in 2017 on January 7th.
- Prayer time during Sunday School in the afternoon is going well.
- Will be presenting Andy Miller and Sue Laz to Presbytery to be approved to serve Communion in John's absence.

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

- We are working on plans for a mid-week Christian Nurture program that would include a meal, a time of learning, crafts, games, and other activities. Final details are still being worked out but we are looking at possibly Wednesday evening, ending prior to choir rehearsal. Watch for more information to come.
- We are working on a brochure of ministry opportunities to have available.
- We are working on putting the goals for our Christian Nurture program in writing.
- We have ordered subscriptions to Clubhouse and Clubhouse Jr. magazines for our kids. We are still looking for something for our older kids.

SENIOR MINISTRY - The Holiday Luncheon sponsored by the Senior God Squad was held on December 9th. There were 17 attendees.

FELLOWSHIP - We went Christmas Caroling at the Eddy December 10th with nine (9) people.

OUTREACH & MISSION

- Spending for December: Capital City Rescue Mission-\$600 (\$500 budgeted and a gift of \$100 that someone put in the offering plate), Reach Across (Dan McAuley)-\$300, Bangladesh Youth For Christ-\$500, Capital District Youth For Christ-\$600, Church Around The World Inserts-\$ 42, Samaritan's Purse-\$189 (shipping for 21 shoe boxes)
- We have created a schedule of posts for the church's Facebook page to hopefully keep us more diligent in keeping the page active.
- Planning to offer shirts with the church logo for people to purchase. Order forms will be available soon.

STEWARDSHIP

GENERAL FUND & FINANCE

- Reviewed and presented the 2018 General Fund Budget, (Action Item #6)
- Reviewed the 2018 Pledge Report.

PASTOR'S REPORT

- Newly elected Elders will be installed on January 14th during Worship Service.
- Annual Meeting will be held on January 28th.

Annual Meeting and Pot Luck Luncheon Sunday, January 28th



During our regular fellowship time on Sunday, January 28th we will have our annual meeting along with a pot luck luncheon. Bring your favorite dish to share and join us for a time of fellowship, of celebrating God's goodness and provision in 2017 and of looking ahead to how God will work through Third Church in 2018!

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 and hanging the wreaths.
- Sal, the choir and the Acoustic Worship Teams for their gifts of music.
- Everyone who filled a shoebox or gave a donation for Operation Christmas Child.
- Jerry and Vera Whitman for planning the senior luncheon.
- Everyone who purchased a poinsettia to decorate the sanctuary.
- Bill Multunas and Pastor John for coordinating Christmas Caroling at The Eddy.
- The kids who made Christmas decorations to hand out to the residents 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, effort and care that was put into planning and leading our worship services and other holiday ministries.

Third Presbyterian Church
115 Winter Street
Troy, NY 12180

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

