

# The Third PRESS



April 2017

## “Christ Is Risen! He Is Risen Indeed!”

As we move through April we will once again be moving through Holy Week. And our movement through Holy Week will bring us from Jesus’ “Triumphal Entry” into Jerusalem, to the “Last Supper” with His disciples, and to the Crucifixion of Jesus. And that movement brings us from what seems to start as triumph to the severest of tragedies – that the innocent “Son of God” was murdered because of the sins of fallen humanity – because of us.

But thanks be to God, the story didn’t end there, for, on the third day from Jesus’ crucifixion, Jesus was raised from the dead – being fully alive, even as He prophesied. And His resurrection becomes the foundation upon which the church is built – so that the church stands or falls upon the truth of the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

So, is this resurrection true? Or is our faith in vain, and, are devout Christians the most pitiable of all people for giving our lives in the service of a lie?

The truth is, there is no absolute, incontrovertible evidence for the resurrection since it occurred some 2000 years ago – long before crowds gathered at every event, cell phone in hand taking pictures of every activity and posting everything they see on Face Book. If only such were around, I believe the evidence would be overwhelming – although, those whose hearts are hard to Jesus would probably still doubt!

But, despite the lack of advanced surveillance technology in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, there is reasonable evidence to believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. And at the risk of being redundant (I know I wrote about this and preached about it in the past.), I believe the topic is important enough for all of us to spend some time considering that evidence. And so, as we prepare to celebrate Easter, let’s look again at the evidence that I believe warrants our Easter celebration.

The resurrection of Jesus is essential in validating His teaching, in affirming His authority, and in establishing His Lordship over life and death, so that through Christ sin can no longer have a hold on us – if we put our trust in Jesus. And this means that the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus is fundamental to the Christian faith. What’s more, it is such belief that sets the Christian faith apart from any other faith system.

Many religions have rules and rituals designed to help their adherents grow deeper in their “faith system”. Some even speak of a ‘god’ who is sovereign and who alone is to be worshipped. But only Christianity claims to be founded by and built upon One who, being fully God from all eternity, was born into our world becoming at the same time fully human (Jn 1:1, 14); who lived a sinless life (2 Cor 5:21); who was unjustly tried and crucified (Acts 2:22-23); who was raised from the dead (Lk 24:6); who ascended into heaven (Lk 24:51; Acts 1:9); and, who will return one day in power and glory to judge all humanity (2 Tim 4:1).

What this means is that if it could be shown that Jesus was not raised from the dead, then the chain of Jesus’ ministry is broken, and we are indeed among all

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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



people the most to be pitied, for our faith would be futile and we would still be dead in our sins (1 Cor 15:16-19).

Christians believe that Jesus' resurrection was God's "seal of approval" on the sacrifice that Christ offered for us. After all, as Paul wrote in his letter to the church at Rome, it was the resurrection that confirmed Jesus to be "**the Son of God with power**" (Rom 1:4). What's more, the resurrection substantiated that Jesus is the Messiah of whom David prophesied (Acts 2:27; Ps 16:10). In other words, the resurrection guarantees that Jesus conquered sin, death and hell; and that He will make good on His promise to come again and take us to be with Him in His eternal heaven (Jn 14:2-3).

Since a dead Savior is no savior at all, everything in Christianity rests on the historical fact that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead; for, as Bible scholar, Darrell Bock writes:

"Without the resurrection, Christianity is just another human attempt to reach God; it's emptied of transforming power and hope; it's a mere shell not worth the energy one devotes to it. To believe in Jesus is to believe not merely in His example, but in the power of His resurrection to grant new life."

Practically speaking, this means that our faith – which is a gift of God made possible only through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit -- stands or falls on whether or not the bodily resurrection of Jesus can be verified beyond a reasonable doubt. But, according to Luke -- who wrote his account of Jesus' life to help us know the truth (Lk 1:4) – the resurrection of Jesus is true! (see 1 Cor 15:20)

So what evidence is there to back up such a bold claim?

First note the day of the resurrection and its impact on Jesus' disciples.

The Gospels emphasize that the resurrection occurred on the first day of the week, which according to our calendars is Sunday (Lk 24:1). And because of this the early church – which was predominately Jewish -- changed their day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. This may not seem like a big deal to us since many today argue that any day is as good as any other to gather to worship God. And certainly there's truth to that statement – anytime is a good time to worship God! But that's not how the Jews saw their Sabbath! God commanded His covenant people to keep the seventh day as their day of rest and worship – because God Himself rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:2-3; Ex 20:8, 11)! It was God's law and Jewish tradition. And no one seeking to be faithful to God disobeys a law from God, or a religious tradition one grows up with, without a really good reason.

But the early church did just that – and they did so because Jesus' resurrection was the predicted, fulfilled and defining event of Jesus' ministry (Rev 1:10; Acts 20:7)!

The point being that if the resurrection of Jesus never occurred – if Jesus remained dead and buried – there would've been no reason for His followers to set aside the first day of the week as a day to worship Him. After all, why deal with all the conflict that such a move would bring to the Jewish community – and that over a dead rabbi. For that matter, why even worship a dead rabbi – especially when the fundamental teachings and promises of that rabbi were contingent upon His resurrection?

Implied in the actions of the early believers is that the very choice of what day to worship speaks to a theological truth – the resurrection of Jesus. (As a side note, that's something the church today needs to consider, since, although necessity may require that some worship on another day, for a church to offer worship on another day just to free up people's weekends is, I believe, to make a theological statement of priorities.)

Another "piece of evidence" for the resurrection of Jesus has to do with the moved stone.

As the Gospel of Mark records, although the women started out early on that first day of the week to care for Jesus' body, there was the issue of how they would even get to Jesus (Mk 16:3). The walk-in tomb would've been sealed by a large, solid, wheel-like stone that was rolled in a channel in front of the cave-like tomb. It would take a few strong men with the right tools to move the stone; and the women knew they couldn't count on the Roman guards to help. But, to their surprise, when they reached the tomb the soldiers were gone and the tomb was open (Lk 24:2).

As Matthew notes, the angel who appeared to the women inside the tomb had rolled the stone away (Mt 28:2). Of course, the angel didn't do so to let Jesus out, but to let the women, and later Peter

and John, in (Jn 20:6-8)! And the angel did this so Jesus' disciples could see that the tomb was empty – as they should've expected, if they had really listened to Jesus.

Years ago an English journalist, Frank Morrison, set out to refute the claim that Jesus rose from the dead. He believed Jesus' followers made up the resurrection story, which, over time, became a foundational myth of the Christian faith. But as he examined the evidence he came to believe that the resurrection of Jesus was true. He set forth his evidence and conclusion in his book, "Who Moved the Stone?"

With the stone moved, it was clear to the women that Jesus' body was gone.

So, what happened to His body?

Before answering that question, we should note that no honest critic has questioned that Jesus was dead (Jn 19:34; Lk 24:46). What's more, no honest critic questions whether the women went to the right tomb, or that the tomb was really empty – there was just too much evidence to support those truths.

Besides, if the tomb wasn't empty, or if they went to the wrong tomb, then, when the disciples started preaching that Jesus had risen from the dead, all the religious leaders had to do was bring them to the tomb, open it, and show them Jesus' decomposing body. That would've been the end of Christianity – but we're still here!

So what are some of the explanations given for the empty tomb by those who deny Jesus' resurrection?

Some argue that Jesus' enemies stole his body. But there was no reason why any opposed to Jesus would steal His body. And if they were opposed to Jesus, as soon as His disciples started claiming He rose from the dead they would've produced the body and silenced the disciples. Besides, the tomb was guarded by soldiers. If anyone stole the body, those soldiers had better look like they were in a life or death battle. And even with that, they would've wished they were dead – after all, Rome didn't look kindly on soldiers who failed their mission!

Others point to the disciples, saying that they took Jesus' body so that they could propagate their lie while hiding contradictory evidence. This, in fact, was the story the religious leaders tried to promote. And they paid the soldiers to testify to this – with a guarantee of protection from Pilate (Mt 27:63-66; 28:11-15). Of course to explain the absence of combat wounds, the soldiers had to say they were asleep (Mt 28:13). But to believe trained soldiers would risk their own lives by sleeping on the job, and to believe they would remain asleep while others struggled to move a large stone and carry away a body is perhaps harder to believe than the resurrection itself! Besides, if the soldiers were asleep how would they know who took the body?

One thing we know about the disciples is that they were in no condition to orchestrate a "snatch and grab" under the nose of Roman guards. At that point the disciples were confused, discouraged and fearful – hiding out from the crowds to save their own skin.

Add to that the historical accounts that ten of the original twelve apostles were executed for preaching that Jesus was raised from the dead, and the reality that sane people don't die for a lie they fabricated, and we can rightly conclude that not only did the disciples not take Jesus' body, but they genuinely came to believe that He was raised from the dead.

Then there's the angelic witness – a witness affirmed in all four gospels (Dt 19:15). Luke records that the women encountered two men in dazzling apparel who gently rebuked them for seeking the living among the dead (Lk 24:5, 23). They said to the women at the tomb: "**He is not here, He has risen**" (Lk 24:6).

Some might be quick to discount this testimony because they deny the existence of angels. But to make such a denial is to allow one's materialistic worldview to dictate what one is willing to see and believe – it's to say, "I do not believe because I choose not to believe", which reveals not a desire to know truth but an unwillingness to accept what one doesn't understand. To deny this angelic visitation is to deny the account of several credible witnesses, and is to leave unexplainable what credible witnesses throughout the history of humanity have seen. And that's pure narrow-minded bias!

Further evidence for Jesus' resurrection arises from His own teaching. In fact, it was Jesus' teaching that the angels called to the women's minds -- that in their remembering they might come to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead (Lk 24:7-8). They were to recall how on several occasions Jesus predicted that He would be crucified and that He would rise from the dead (e.g. Lk 9:22, 43-45, 17:25, 18:31-33, 22:22). The point is, if Jesus is who He claimed to be -- God-incarnate -- then it would be impossible for Him to lie, and so we should expect His teaching to come to pass, and in turn the resurrection to be true.

If, on the other hand, there was no resurrection, then not only are we still dead in our sins, but Jesus was a liar who certainly isn't worth following. And so again, no resurrection equals no Christianity -- or, at best, a "straw man" Christianity that should've easily collapsed at the start. The fact that the church exists today lends support for the truth of the resurrection, as well as affirmation of the character of Christ.

At the same time, the fact that the first witnesses to the resurrection were women supports the authenticity of the account. Why is that? Because if one were to fabricate the story of the empty tomb -- as some claim the disciples did -- and expect people to believe it -- one would not choose women as primary witnesses. Under Jewish law women were not considered qualified witnesses. In fact even the disciples, when they first heard the women's claim, discounted it as delirium (nonsense; empty talk) -- that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the others, were so emotionally overwrought that they were seeing things (Lk 24:10-11).

Of course, to think that raises the whole issue of mass hallucinations -- the very charge leveled at the report that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time (1 Cor 15:6).

The reality is that hallucinations don't happen in mass.

What's more, when hallucinations do occur it's usually the case that the person sees what he or she was hoping to see, or was preconditioned to see. But the women didn't go to the tomb expecting to find it empty. They were expecting to find a dead Jesus -- that's why they brought the burial spices. The last thing anyone expected was that Jesus was alive! This is seen in the skepticism of Peter, who, although he heard Jesus say several times that He would be crucified and rise again on the third day, still, when Peter looked into the empty tomb he was uncertain what to believe.

If one wanted to lend credence to the claims of the early church, the last thing you would do was make women your first witnesses, and your leader slow to "get it" -- unless they were just recording the truth!

As if that isn't enough evidence to lend reasonable proof for the resurrection of Jesus, there was also the fact that the grave clothes remained in place on the burial slab -- positioned as if Jesus' body passed through the clothes (Lk 24:12; Jn 20:6-7). This certainly wouldn't have been the case if someone came and stole the body (Jn 20:2). Surely thieves would've taken the body wrapped, and even if the clothes fell off, no thief would've placed them neatly back on the slab as if they were still around a body.

We don't know a lot about Jesus' resurrected body, but we do know that on at least one occasion He seemed to pass through a closed door (Jn 20:19-29); and, on another occasion He seemed to appear instantly, and later just disappear (Lk 24:31, 36-43).

The other Gospels and the book of "Acts" yield further evidence to support the truth of the resurrection: like Jesus' two Upper Room appearances (Jn 20:19-20, 26-27; Lk 24:36-49); and Jesus' journey with two disciples on the Emmaus road (Lk 24:13-15); and His meeting with the seven on the shore of the Sea of Galilee (Jn 21:1-10).

We can't look at every bit of evidence but I would like to note two additional pieces to the puzzle, that, together with the others already presented, make it not only logical to believe in Jesus' resurrection, but illogical to reject it.

One piece of evidence has to do with the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper has been a central component of worship in the Christian church since the church's birth (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 11:23-26). As we know, the Lord's Supper calls us to remember Jesus'

sacrifice on the cross. Of course, that in itself doesn't say anything about the resurrection – in fact if that were all there was behind this sacred meal it might support a case for Jesus being dead!

But if the Lord's Supper is only to remember Jesus' death then we would expect it to be a somber event. But the church sees the coming to the Table as a celebration – as a feast of victory. And what is the victory but that Jesus not only suffered the penalty our sin deserves (Rom 6:23a; 1 Cor 5:21), but He conquered sin and death through His bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:55-57).

So the very mood of the Lord's Supper – the joy of this meal with the anticipation of Christ's return -- speaks to the church's belief in the resurrection.

Finally, there's the reality of changed lives throughout history: people who have put their trust in Jesus; people who know that Jesus lives, and who know it because He lives in them! Certainly this in itself isn't sufficient proof of the resurrection; but, the fact that many have had their lives transformed by their encounter with Jesus makes it pretty hard to refute the truth that Christ is alive (see e.g. Acts 9:1-6)!

And yet there are many who have heard the facts and have seen the evidence but still don't believe!

How is this?

The answer, at least in part, is that many refuse to believe in Jesus' resurrection because such belief carries with it moral and spiritual obligations that they're unwilling to accept.

If Jesus is risen, then He is the rightful Lord over all (Lk 24:3); and He has the authority to tell us how to come to God, and how to worship God, and how to live our lives (Jn 13:34-35; Mk 12:28-31; Mt 28:18; Jn 14:6).

If Jesus is risen, then to accept that truth requires that we surrender our lives to His Lordship (Lk 9:23). And that means putting aside our pride, selfishness, and personal agendas, and doing God's will. But like Adam and Eve, many desire to be their own 'god' instead of living for and worshipping the one true God (Gen 3:5-6). Because many want to choose sin over righteousness – darkness over light -- they chose to ignore or reject the truth of the resurrection (Rom 1:18-25; Jn 3:18-19).

After writing of the miracles performed, as well as the events of Jesus' bodily resurrection, the apostle John wrote:

**“Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”** (Jn 20:30-31)

Ultimately, one's response to the facts of Jesus' bodily resurrection is a matter of faith. And there are some things we need to note about such faith.

First, while Christian faith is built on the historical fact of the resurrection, faith is not merely intellectual. Faith is spiritual and moral as well. We've sinned against a holy God; and it's our sins that put Jesus on the cross (2 Cor 5:21). And so faith in Jesus isn't merely a matter of weighing evidence; it also involves acknowledging our sinfulness and seeking God's forgiveness. In turn, while the reasonableness of putting one's faith in Jesus is supported by the facts of history, such faith requires repentance of sins and a desire to know, love and live for God.

Second, while Christian faith is based on the historical fact of the resurrection, faith always involves an element of the unknown. I'm not saying that to put one's faith in Jesus requires a leap into the unknown, but it does require a step (Heb 11:1). There are some things about who God is, and why He does what He does -- and even, who we are -- that we will never know in this life. Some use this as an excuse to reject God – claiming that we can't really know God. And that's right to a degree -- we can't know God fully. But we can know God sufficiently and correctly enough to put our trust in Him. God has made Himself known so that we can know what we need to know to live for Him (Rom 1:20; 1 Jn 5:9).

The truth is, we exercise faith every day in things and people -- and with lesser information than what God has revealed of Himself. We drive our cars believing we'll get where we need to go, with most

of us knowing little about how cars work, and all of us knowing nothing about the person driving toward us with a potential killing machine. We order food at a restaurant trusting that what the cook put in that food won't kill us! If we can put so much faith in inconsistent, mistake prone, sinful people, we have no excuse for not trusting the perfect, loving sovereign Creator of all that is (Jn 3:16, 36).

Third, while Christian faith is based on the historical fact of the resurrection, none of us have automatic, perfect, complete faith. Faith in God involves our intellect and emotions, and is a relational process with each of us at various stages in our growth – and that's okay, as long as we're seeking to keep on growing.

The disciples and the women were all at different stages of belief when they saw the empty tomb. They all loved Jesus, but they struggled -- amidst deep grief and disappointment -- to comprehend what was happening. It was hard to see how all that was playing out fit with what Jesus had taught earlier. In fact, in the midst of the emotional shock of those "Passion Week" events, it was probably hard even to think about what Jesus had previously taught! But with that gentle rebuke from the angel the women seemed to believe (Lk 24:8). And although it took a little longer for the disciples, they too came to believe (Jn 20:20, 28)!

And the Scriptures reveal a gracious God who met each one where she or he was, and brought them to faith, and ultimately to a willingness to lay down one's life for the truth of the Gospel – for the truth that Christ has died, Christ has risen, and Christ will come again.

Thankfully, our God is able to take a mustard seed of faith and grow it into a "tree" useful for the work of His kingdom (Mt 13:31-32). At the same time, we're responsible to grow our faith – to work out our salvation even as the Spirit of God works within all who trust in Jesus (Phil 1:6, 2:12). But, as we grow our faith, we must always remember who the object of that faith must be – the living Lord Jesus.

As important as doctrines are, and as vital as moral standards are, Christianity is about more than knowing and living the truth. Christianity is ultimately about having a personal relationship with the living Savior. In turn, our goal as Christians ought to be as that proclaimed by the apostle Paul: that we may know Jesus and the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10).

If your faith is shaky or wavering, first check your heart to see if there is any unconfessed sin interfering with your relationship with God. And repent of it. And then give the time to study God's Word that you might know God more fully, and more fully understand the significance of all that Jesus did for you – including His crucifixion and resurrection (2 Tim 3:16-17; 1 Tim 4:16; Ps 119:105; Jos 1:8). Go to God's word that you might remember God's teaching and God's promises – and in remembering, that your faith might be renewed and strengthened (Lk 24:6, 8).

Since Jesus Christ crucified and resurrected is the doctrinal cornerstone of the Christian faith, be sure to commit, or recommit, yourself to holding fast to these truths -- that you might know the joy of life and hope in, with and through the one and only Savior and Lord – and, our greatest Treasure! And then commit to living for Jesus, that you might declare, with the apostle Paul:

**"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." (Gal 2:20)**

May the Lord bless you as you live the resurrected life – in, with and through Christ!

Love in Christ Jesus,

Pastor John



## 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:

That he will continually turn to God for his leading

For the people there that God will work in their hearts and open doors for him to love, serve, and share the good news with them.

For physical, emotional and spiritual health

That he will make the most of this opportunity and each day there.

For his family



## Volunteers needed

Like being outdoors? Enjoy the sun? We have the job for you! People are needed to help keep the church grounds beautiful. If you would like to mow, please contact Rob Jensen or Andy Miller.

## April Birthdays

4/2 Bruce Giddings  
4/7 Rob Jensen  
4/9 Natalia Multunas  
4/11 Ella Joan Miller  
4/13 Jennifer Miller  
4/13 Matthew Giddings  
4/15 Joe Hope  
4/18 Irene Ofori  
4/26 Jack Wocher  
4/27 Tori Davey  
4/28 Victoria Hope  
4/28 Stephanie Miller  
4/29 Jan Pedersen



## April Anniversaries

4/13 Karen & Bob Moore  
4/24 Mort & Beth Casey

## General Financial Update for February 2017

	Year to Date	February
Total Income	\$27,775.00	\$12,179.00
Total Expenses	\$30,453.66	\$14,617.84
Difference	\$(2,678.66)	\$(2,438.84)

## 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 April we will be collecting paper products.**



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

## Serving This Month

### April 2<sup>nd</sup>

Worship Assistants: Deena Dominy and Sue Laz  
Greeters: Joe Pasinella  
Head Greeters: Andy Miller  
Nursery: Alice Bentley and Diane Lewinski  
Communion: Eric Ofori  
Fellowship Hosts: Jen and Stephanie Miller

### April 9<sup>th</sup>

Worship Assistants: Natalia Multunas and Eric Ofori  
Greeters: Bill Multunas  
Head Greeter: Peter Laz  
Nursery: Lois Pasinella and Angelina Solomon  
Communion: Jen McAuley, Jerry Whitman, Bill Multunas, Jason Laz  
Fellowship Hosts: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski

### April 16<sup>th</sup>

Worship Assistants: Eric Ofori and Connie Russell  
Greeters: Pat Gilmaier  
Head Greeter: Rob Jensen  
Nursery: Jen McAuley and Ella Miller  
Communion: Pat Gilmaier, Rob Jensen, Peter Laz, Andy Miller  
Fellowship Hosts:

### April 23<sup>rd</sup>

Worship Assistants: John McAuley, Jesse Ofori  
Greeters: Dean and Doris Calamaras  
Head Greeter: Andy Miller  
Nursery:  
Communion: Alice Bentley, Rachel Farnum, Sue Laz, Vera Whitman  
Fellowship Hosts: Sue Stierer

### April 30<sup>th</sup>

Worship Assistants: Sue Laz and Dean Calamaras  
Greeters: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski  
Head Greeter: Peter Laz  
Nursery:  
Communion: Dean Calamaras, Deena Dominy, Doris Calamaras, Bill Multunas  
Fellowship Hosts: Pot Luck Luncheon

## Pot Luck Luncheon Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup>

During our regular fellowship time on Sunday, April 30<sup>th</sup> we will have a pot luck luncheon. Bring your favorite dish to share and join us for a time of fellowship.



## Spring Church Workday – April 8

You have a great opportunity to serve God and His Church as we will be holding a spring workday on Saturday April 8 from 9-1. There are a variety of jobs that need to be completed both inside and outside the Church building. You can come for the entire time or just for a short while as all help is needed and appreciated. All supplies, materials and tools will be provided so all that is needed is YOU!

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions please contact Rob Jensen or Andy Miller. Thank you.

## Easter Celebration!

April 15<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 to 3:00 pm  
Ages Preschool through fifth grade

We will have an Easter egg hunt along with some craft activities, telling the Easter story – and of course, snacks – all to help us celebrate Easter.



There are many ways to help with this ministry. You could bring cookies, invite families with children to come, help hide eggs, serve snacks, welcome those who come, or help with clean-up. Please speak with Sue Laz if you would like to help out.

**Join us for an afternoon of fun!!**



## Growing in Our Faith and in Our Witness

The study of God's Word is one of the main things we can do to grow in our faith. No matter where we are on our faith journey the Bible always has something to teach us.

Throughout this season of Lent there have been a series of ministry minutes during worship dealing with evangelism. Those presentations were based on the brochure "The Secret Power of Evangelism" published by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Copies are available on the table near the entrance to the sanctuary if you would like one.



The ministry minutes focused on the need for Christians to be active in evangelism and the importance of prayer in the process.

As Christians we are to be actively growing in our faith and sharing that faith with others.

To help in that, the Inward Ministry and Outward Ministry Committees have created a library of resources that can be borrowed. This library is located in the corner classroom at the top of the stairs near the church office.

### The resources for Bible study include:

Understanding the Bible, John R.W. Stott

Exploring the New Testament, Walter M. Dunn

Exploring the Old Testament, Samuel J. Schultz and Gary V. Smith

What the Bible is All About, Dr. Henrietta C. Mears

Simplified Bible Commentary Series:

Matthew and Mark

Luke and John

Acts – 2 Corinthians

Galatians – Philemon

Hebrews – Revelation



The Story: The Bible as One Continuing Story of God and His People

We also have ongoing Bible study opportunities that everyone is invited to participate in – the adult Sunday school class on Sunday mornings, the men's study on Sunday evenings, the Wednesday evening study and the women's study on Thursday evenings.

### The resources for evangelism include:

How to Give Away Your Faith, Paul E. Little

Just a Walk Across the Room: Simple Steps to Pointing People to Faith, Bill Hybels

Tell the Truth, Will Metzger

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, J. I. Packer

Beyond Awkward: When Talking About Jesus is Outside Your Comfort Zone, Beau Crosetto

Go and Do, Don Everts

Christian Mission in the Modern World, John Stott

Changing the World Through Kindness, Steve Sjogren

The Master Plan of Evangelism, Robert E. Coleman

These and other resources are available for anyone to borrow. There is a sign-out sheet to indicate what books you are taking and a basket to place returned books in.

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

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

### **“DON'T SKIP THE WAKE AND FUNERAL...”**

Coming from a fairly large Italian family, I've been to my fair share of wakes and funerals. The old axiom about laughter at wakes and tears at weddings has generally proven true for me, though the laughter is generally connected to reminiscing about good times with the deceased and the wedding tears have always been ones of joy. I've been to some amazing wedding receptions, where nothing was spared to provide a sumptuous occasion. But I've also been to some pretty extravagant *repasts*, which Webster defines as a meal, feast or banquet shared by family and friends following a funeral service. Nothing like good food and drink to stem the tide of grief and Italians are renowned for throwing a party with good food and drink! But if there's ever one *faux pas* you don't want to commit, especially in an Italian family, it's to show up at the *repast* without having attended the wake and/or the funeral--major no-no. You might even end up on the receiving end of one of those famous Italian put-downs like, *mamaluke*.

OK, all good to know, but what's the point? Ah, I thought you'd never ask! HOLY WEEK is coming. Why is it *holy*? “Holy” means *dedicated, consecrated, or set apart.*” Dedicated, consecrated, or set apart for what? (You're really asking all the right questions here--good work!) Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, as Jesus commences his final earthly days by entering Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey to the tumult of an adoring crowd. It ends with his bodily resurrection from a borrowed tomb following a ghastly, hideous death preceded by equally gruesome torture. So, Holy Week is bookended by these wonderful triumphant events, both so very conveniently occurring on a *Sunday*. I reckon we'd better not skip out on worship on those days, right? **Bzzzzzzz--partial credit alert!**

*I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection, and the **fellowship of sharing in his sufferings**, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. -- Philippians 3:10-11*

The Apostle Paul was no “let me cut to the happy ending and skip the tough parts along the way” kinda guy. While he wanted to experientially know Christ and the power of his resurrection, he also recognized the importance of being part of a fellowship that shared in his sufferings. “For as in Adam we all die,” he wrote to the Corinthians, even so in Christ shall we all be made alive. The psalms and the Old Testament in general, often recount God's mighty, saving works that he wrought through and for his people. The foreboding gloom and doom of the last supper, agony in the garden, betrayal, arrest, denials, sham trial, horrific scourging, being poked and prodded along the *Via Dolorosa* (“Way of Sorrows”) and ignominy of crucifixion all deserve our “sitting with Jesus”, much in the way Job's friends sat with him--if only in worship together, sharing in the fellowship of those sufferings. We do, after all, have the benefit of knowing the glorious *end of the story*.

So when the community of Third Church gathers in the *Lower Room* (we don't have an upper one!) on Maundy Thursday and then again on Good Friday, the Body of Christ can't afford to be missing some of its members. All are important. All are vital. And when we gather for that Easter Sunday *repast* around *The Lord's Table*, we'll have the satisfaction and blessing of knowing we didn't skip a beat--we walked the *entire* journey with our Lord.

With joy in *that* journey, too,  
*Sal Sceccitano*

## Mission Updates

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 **Perry Jones (Capital City Rescue Mission)** – “Thank you for your generous gift. Your partnership is appreciated more than you know. Thank you for your generosity and compassion that makes such a life-changing difference.”

From **Kevin Post (Capital District Youth for Christ)** – “Thank you for investing in the youth of the Capital District. If you were to spend any time around our office or any time with any of our staff, it wouldn't be long before you heard the phrase **Authentic Christ Sharing Relationships**. That is because that is the life blood of what we are trying to accomplish as a ministry. Our desire is to place Christian men and women in Authentic Christ Sharing Relationships with lost 11-19 year olds so that through those relationships, teens will have opportunities to know Jesus. This happens because you invest into teenagers through YFC. Thank You!”

From **Niki Campbell (InterVarsity at RPI and Russell Sage)** – It was just a semester ago that I was talking with some of the students at Sage and they were lamenting that they did not think anyone on campus was interested in what God had to say. This semester we are seeing unprecedented interest in our small groups, in our retreats and in our God. Please pray. We have made a commitment for one outreach event a week at Sage, to help us meet more people, discover what events are interesting for the campus, and to have a more visible presence. The leaders, while busy, are seeing great results. Please pray that this continues and students at Sage continue to respond. Please pray for good conversations on campus. Please pray that there is joy and excitement among the leaders who are experiencing God working in others. Please pray that we remain flexible and open to the movement of the Spirit on campus.”

From **Nate Smith (InterVarsity at HVCC)** - “The Spring 2017 semester is off to a phenomenal start! So far this semester, I have been blown away by the way that God has been meeting students and myself on campus at Hudson Valley! I have seen student leaders make major turns in their leadership growth, struggling Christian students steadily grow in their belief in Jesus, seeking students join a small group where they can ask their questions about Jesus, and the chapter grow since the end of last semester.

While this semester is going well, one thing I have learned in this ministry is that we can never get comfortable! Between students withdrawing, graduating and taking on second jobs, it often feels like the deck is stacked against the construction of a consistent witnessing community. We need prayer, support and God to intervene by His Spirit in the places we lack and even in the places we feel strong.”

From **Hope 7's Food Pantry** – “Thank you for your continuing support through your donations of food and toiletries. We enjoy seeing Jan and Jerry's smiling faces also.”

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

Updates and prayer request 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-MARCH 13, 2017

**CLERK'S REPORT** - Miscellaneous Information: Average attendance for February 2017 was 41. Membership roll is 68.

**PASTOR'S REPORT** - The merger of East & West Hebron Presbyterian Churches has been approved by the courts, awaiting final paperwork.

### **WORSHIP & PRAYER**

- Lenten Soup Suppers and Worship are ongoing.
- Easter Flower orders need to be in by April 10<sup>th</sup>.
- Palm Sunday – April 9<sup>th</sup> – We will have the usual palms and processional at the start of the service.
- Maundy Thursday – April 13<sup>th</sup> – We will begin with a Soup Supper at 6:15 PM with Worship and Communion to follow around 6:45 PM.
- Good Friday – April 14<sup>th</sup> – Worship at 6:30 PM.
- Easter Sunday – April 16<sup>th</sup> – We will have the living cross.

### **CONGREGATIONAL CARE**

- Visitation, phone calls, and cards are an ongoing ministry.
- We are looking to be a little more intentional in this ministry also and to have a better sense of who has been contacted and who may need to be contacted.

### **CHRISTIAN NURTURE**

**MEN'S MINISTRY** - The men's Bible study meets on Sunday at 6:30 PM and will be doing study on prayer.

**WOMEN'S MINISTRY** - The Women's Bible Study of Philippians and Colossians, meets on Thursday evenings.

**YOUTH MINISTRY** - We are still working on building up our rotation of nursery volunteers. We are in the process of updating our Child and Youth Protection Policy.

**SENIOR'S MINISTRY** - In the process of planning our Spring get together.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

- We are looking to be more intentional in our discipleship program and are working on some materials for that to hand out to the congregation.
- Fellowship: We will be having pot luck luncheons during fellowship time on April 30<sup>th</sup>, June 4<sup>th</sup> (Pentecost), August 20<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup>, and October 8<sup>th</sup>.

### **OUTREACH & MISSIONS**

- The \$1500 budgeted amount for Hope 7 was sent in February instead of March as Hope 7 had a matching donation program during February.
- We will be serving the evening meal at Capital City Rescue Mission on April 15<sup>th</sup>.
- We will be hosting the Horizon's Game Night on April 1<sup>st</sup>.
- Easter Egg Hunt will be held on April 15<sup>th</sup> from 1-3 PM.
- We will be looking to do a special mission offering again this spring.
- We are looking at some ways we might support Joshua Multunas when he begins attending seminary this fall.

### **GENERAL FUND/FINANCE**

- We have a year-to-date deficit of \$2,678.66.
- The Committee reviewed the Church's accounting procedures.

**PROPERTY** - Scheduled a spring clean-up work day for Saturday April 8<sup>th</sup>. Looking to upgrade the church's computers. Looking for volunteers for the lawn mowing team.

**ALBANY PRESBYTERY** - Next meeting Wednesday March 29<sup>th</sup> at First Presbyterian Church of Glens Falls, from 4:30-9 PM.

## THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

Our children and youth Sunday school classes are studying through various questions and responses from the Westminster Shorter Catechism over the 2016-2017 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 33. What is justification?**

Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.

### **Q 34. What is adoption?**

Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

### **Q 35. What is sanctification?**

Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness.

### **Q 36. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?**

The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification are: assurance of God's love; peace of conscience; joy in the Holy Spirit; increase of grace; and perseverance therein to the end.

### **Q 37. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?**

The soul of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory; and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection.

### **Q 38. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?**

At the resurrection, believers, being raised up in glory, shall be openly acknowledged and acquitted in the Day of Judgment, and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity.

## Bible Quiz for April 2017

One of the most significant passages in terms of teaching on the resurrection is the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of 1 Corinthians. As we look to celebrate Easter on April 16<sup>th</sup>, I want to quiz you on the content of 1 Corinthians 15. Try to answer the questions below and then read that passage and open your heart and mind to God's teaching on the bodily resurrection of Christ and of God's elect.

1. Paul affirms that the Scriptures taught of Jesus' bodily resurrection on the third day?
2. True or False: Following Jesus' resurrection, He appeared to more than 500 people at one time.
3. Who was Paul referring to when he spoke of one who was abnormally born?
4. True or False: Paul argues that there could be a resurrection of the dead even if Jesus never rose from the dead.
5. True or False: Paul argues that faith in God and His promises is futile if Jesus never rose from the dead bodily.
6. Fill in the blanks: "For as in \_\_\_\_\_ all die, so in \_\_\_\_\_ all will be made alive."
7. Fill in the blanks: "\_\_\_\_\_ company \_\_\_\_\_ good character."
8. Fill in the blanks: "The body that is sown \_\_\_\_\_ is raised \_\_\_\_\_."
9. True or False: Paul declares that in Christ believers have victory over death? Explain.
10. True or False: 1 Corinthians 15 is the longest chapter of all the Biblical Books written by Paul.

## HOLY WEEK SERVICES

### PALM SUNDAY – April 9<sup>th</sup> 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 – April 13<sup>th</sup>

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 – April 14<sup>th</sup>

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 16<sup>th</sup> 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.



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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



**THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
EXALTING GOD / PROCLAIMING CHRIST / MAKING DISCIPLES