

THE THIRD PRESS

NEWSLETTER

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August 2016

God's grace and peace be with you. I do hope you are well.

This newsletter will be a little different than those I have been presenting as of late. Years ago when I was taking courses toward a DMIN degree, I was encouraged by one of my instructors whom I greatly respect to take every opportunity to teach God's Word – even newsletter communications. I have sought to do this over the past few years. But I want to take a break from that in this newsletter to just offer a few (hopefully not totally insignificant) reflections.

To that end I want to begin by saying "Thank You!" to this congregation for your patient (and often needed, forgiving) support over that past fourteen years of ministry together. I have and continue to thank God for you. Lord willing, God will give you the patience for at least another eleven years – and more importantly – will bless and grow this congregation for His glory for many years to come.

As I write this we are about half-way through the summer – a full summer for our nation and our denomination. And I don't know about you, but I'm feeling rather concerned for both.

It has been a tough summer for our nation. I feel a special burden for police officers around this country. Most of us have no idea what stresses they face every day – both at work, and because of their work, at home. And sometimes they make mistakes. And sometimes those mistakes are their fault. But most of the time, their desire is to serve and protect. And they do that in places many of us would fear to tread. The truth is most of us make far more mistakes in our work place than them, it's just that ours often go unnoticed – and certainly not televised (and are certainly less costly). I encourage us as a church to pray for our police officers daily – for wisdom, discernment and protection. And to pray for our communities. And to pray and seek ways to address racial prejudices – especially those we carry in our own heart – as we try to do what God calls and empowers us to do, namely, "love your neighbor as yourself." (Mk 12:31)

Not wanting to go too far into politics, all I can say is pray. And, if there is any consolation as we face the coming political storm, remember that we are first and foremost citizens of God's Kingdom, and that the One who rules over us does so in perfect love – always working what is good and right for His citizens – for those who love Him and who have been called according to His purpose – always working by His grace and through His sovereign power to make us to be His faithful citizens. With that confidence, and with our sure and certain hope in, with and through Jesus the Christ, let us take up our role as ambassadors not of any political party but of the Lord Jesus. (2 Cor 5:20; Col 3:23-24)

At our denominational level, this summer saw the 222nd meeting of the General Assembly of the PCUSA. I was not there so I share my thoughts with caution and a certain level of ignorance (but then, what else is new©!). And I have no doubt that those gathered were seeking the Lord's leading in the decisions they were making. But with that said I do question their ability to hear (or maybe it's my ability to hear). I admit that I am becoming ever more disillusioned with the direction our denomination is going.

I have been disillusioned for years, but perhaps I was a bit hopeful, or maybe just apathetic, or maybe just ignorant. I don't know for sure. But I do know that, from my perception, many of the decisions our denomination has been making over the past several years have been more about following a fallen world than leading the lost to Jesus. From my perspective the erosion of the authority of the Bible is almost unbelievable. From my perspective it seems our denomination is more concerned about how it appears to a fallen world than about how it is honoring our holy, good, gracious yet uncompromising God. (Rom 12:2)

I think you know, but in case you don't I will tell you, I stand against our denomination on many of their decisions – some made several years ago and some recent.

I think the church should be welcoming of all people – after all, we are all sinners who deserve only God's wrath, but who, by His great grace, can receive God's forgiveness and walk in His love, as we repent and turn to Jesus, trusting Him for our salvation and walking under His Lordship.

Our doors and our hearts should be open to all people regardless of race, age, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, political persuasion, economic status, and so on. But when one's lifestyle choices conflict with the teaching of God's Word, we need to honor His Word, and graciously and gently confront sin, and help one another walk in righteousness – because we all sin, and we all seek to justify our particular “pet sins”, and we all need to be helped to see our sin that we might instead walk in the light of God's Word. (Ps 119:105)

Our denomination is big on social justice, which is extremely important (it is the “love our neighbor as ourselves”), but, it seems that their justice could give or take God – and often ignores God in order to promote what I perceive is a human-centered, not God-centered, agenda (it often ignores the “love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength”).

For example, I oppose our denomination's position on abortion. I feel abortion is a sin against God. Now, this clearly is a complex issue with many situations that need to be considered “case by case”. And, for women who have had an abortion, the church should be there to offer God's amazing grace. And for those seeking an abortion the church should be there to help show another way that could best serve both mother and child (if possible). To me that is right, God-honoring social justice for all, including the precious life in the mother's womb.

I oppose affirming the practice of sexual relations between persons of the same gender, or of any person outside the context of the marriage relationship (as the Bible affirms marriage – between one man and one woman). In saying this I don't deny the struggles people face with their own sexual orientation. Nor do I think it is wrong for those of the same sex to deeply love one another. But the place of sexual intimacy is to be between one man and one woman in the context of the marriage covenant. All other sexual activity is a sin against God's created order, is a result of our fallen-ness and our living in a fallen world, and ought to be repented of, not justified or celebrated or paraded!

What's sad to me is not merely that our denomination has taken a different stand on those issues noted above, but also the position that it seems to be taking on the authority of the Scriptures and the holiness of God. It seems that an ever increasing portion of our denomination – at least at the leadership level – is ignoring, or perhaps more accurately, selectively twisting and misapplying the Scriptures -- if not celebrating the demise of Scriptural authority all together. I don't really know what to say about that (actually there is a lot I could say but this is supposed to be a “short” newsletter), except that, without that authority we have nothing solid upon which to build our faith and guide our work. Moreover, there is nothing for the Spirit to illumine except our own passions – and we really shouldn't want those illumined, except to expose our sin and lead us to repentance!

Some consider this General Assembly historic in that two women were elected as co-moderators. Since women have been moderators of the GA in the past (consider Freda Gardner, a member of the Laz and Multunas extended family who served that position in 1999) I don't find this very “historic” – except that they are co-moderators. Sorry to burst bubbles but this doesn't seem to be something worth making a fuss over. I pray they serve well, but they are servants of the church, not celebrities to be “exalted”. If we as a church wish to look beyond race and gender perhaps we should start by not focusing so much on race and gender and instead seeing one another as one family in Christ.

More historic is the fact that a new confession, the “Belhar Confession”, has been added to our Book of Confessions. This has been a while in the making, having come before the GA some four years ago only to be voted down. Many were celebrating this achievement this year. I don’t believe it should have been adopted for reasons I will explain below. But for now, since it will be a part of our “Constitution” it might be beneficial to remind you of what it says. To that end I have included a copy of it below following a brief background statement:

“The Belhar Confession has its roots in the struggle against apartheid in Southern Africa. This ‘outcry of faith’ and ‘call for faithfulness and repentance’ was first drafted in 1982 by the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) under the leadership of Allan Boesak. The DRMC formally adopted the Belhar Confession in 1986. It is now one of the ‘standards of unity’ of the new Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA). Belhar’s theological confrontation of the sin of racism has made possible reconciliation among Reformed churches in Southern Africa and has aided the process of reconciliation within the nation of South Africa. But Belhar’s relevance is not confined to Southern Africa. It addresses three key issues of concern to all churches: unity of the church and unity among all people; reconciliation within church and society; and God’s justice.” (This background paragraph was taken from the website of the Reformed Church in America (www.rca.org)).

With that brief background let’s now read the Belhar Confession.

Confession of Belhar

[Note: This is a translation of the original Afrikaans text of the confession as it was adopted by the synod of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa in 1986. This inclusive language text was prepared by the Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Church (USA).]

1. **We believe** in the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who gathers, protects and cares for the church through Word and Spirit. This, God has done since the beginning of the world and will do to the end.
2. **We believe** in one holy, universal Christian church, the communion of saints called from the entire human family.

We believe

- that Christ's work of reconciliation is made manifest in the church as the community of believers who have been reconciled with God and with one another (Eph 2:11-22);
- that unity is, therefore, both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ; that through the working of God's Spirit it is a binding force, yet simultaneously a reality which must be earnestly pursued and sought: one which the people of God must continually be built up to attain (Eph 4:1-16);
- that this unity must become visible so that the world may believe that separation, enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that *anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church* and must be resisted (Jn 17:20-23);
- that this unity of the people of God must be manifested and be active in a variety of ways: in that we love one another; that we experience, practice and pursue community with one another; that we are obligated to give ourselves willingly and joyfully to be of benefit and blessing to one another; that we share one faith, have one calling, are of one soul and one

mind; have one God and Father, are filled with one Spirit, are baptized with one baptism, eat of one bread and drink of one cup, confess one name, are obedient to one Lord, work for one cause, and share one hope; together come to know the height and the breadth and the depth of the love of Christ; together are built up to the stature of Christ, to the new humanity; together know and bear one another's burdens, thereby fulfilling the law of Christ that we need one another and upbuild one another, admonishing and comforting one another; that we suffer with one another for the sake of righteousness; pray together; together serve God in this world; and together fight against all which may threaten or hinder this unity (Phil 2:1-5; 1 Cor 12:4-31; Jn 13:1-17; 1 Cor 1:10-13; Eph 4:1-6; Eph 3:14-20; 1 Cor 10:16-17; 1 Cor 11:17-34; Gal 6:2; 2 Cor 1:3-4);

- that this unity can be established only in freedom and not under constraint; that the variety of spiritual gifts, opportunities, backgrounds, convictions, as well as the various languages and cultures, are by virtue of the reconciliation in Christ, opportunities for mutual service and enrichment within the one visible people of God (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:1-11; Eph 4:7-13; Gal 3:27-28; James 2:1-13);
- *that true faith in Jesus Christ is the only condition for membership of this church.*

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people in such a way that this absolutization hinders or breaks the visible and active unity of the church, or even leads to the establishment of a separate church formation;
- which professes that this spiritual unity is truly being maintained in the bond of peace while believers of the same confession are in effect alienated from one another for the sake of diversity and in despair of reconciliation;
- which denies that a refusal earnestly to pursue this visible unity as a priceless gift is sin;
- which explicitly or implicitly maintains that descent or *any other human or social factor should be a consideration in determining membership of the church.*

3. We believe

- that God has entrusted the church with the message of reconciliation in and through Jesus Christ, that the church is called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, that the church is called blessed because it is a peacemaker, that the church is witness both by word and by deed to the new heaven and the new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Cor 5:17-21; Mt 5:9, 13-16; 2 Pt 3:13; Rev 21-22).
- that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit has conquered the powers of sin and death, and therefore also of irreconciliation and hatred, bitterness and enmity; that God's lifegiving Word and Spirit will enable the church to live in a new obedience which can open new possibilities of life for society and the world (Eph 4:17-6:23; Rom 6; Col 1:9-14, 2:13-19. 3:1-4:6);
- that the credibility of this message is seriously affected and its beneficial work obstructed when it is proclaimed in a land which professes to be Christian, but in which the enforced separation of people on a racial basis promotes and perpetuates alienation, hatred and enmity;
- that any teaching which attempts to legitimate such forced separation by appeal to the gospel, and is not prepared to venture on the road of obedience and reconciliation, but rather, out of

prejudice, fear, selfishness and unbelief, denies in advance the reconciling power of the gospel, must be considered ideology and false doctrine.

Therefore, we reject any doctrine

- which, in such a situation, sanctions in the name of the gospel or of the will of God the forced separation of people on the grounds of race and color and thereby in advance obstructs and weakens the ministry and experience of reconciliation in Christ.

4. We believe

- that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people (Dt 32:4; Lk 2:14; Jn 14:27);
- that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a *special* way the God of the destitute, the poor and the *wronged*;
- that God calls the church to follow Him in this, for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering (Eph 2:14; Isa 1:16-17; Jms 1:27, 5:1-6; Lk 1:46-55, 6:20-26, 7:22, Lk 16:19-31);
- that God wishes to *teach* the church to do what is good and to seek the right;
- that the church must therefore stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream (Ps 146; Lk 4:16-19; Rom 6:13-18; Amos 5);
- that the church as the possession of God must stand where the Lord stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others.

Therefore, we reject any ideology

- which would legitimate forms of injustice and any doctrine which is unwilling to resist such an ideology in the name of the gospel.

5. We believe that, in obedience to Jesus Christ, its only head, the church is called to confess and to do all these things, even though the authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence (Eph 4:15-16; Acts 5:29-33; 1 Peter 2:18-25, 3:15-18).

Jesus is Lord.

To the one and only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be the honor and the glory for ever and ever.

I want to make three points about this confession, but first I will say that as it stands as a general call to unity within the church, I have no problem with it.

My problem is that I don't think it reads as a confession of faith – just a strong call to unity. In that sense it is a fair document to be read and studied but not one that should have been elevated to a “Confession” within our constitution.

With that said, consider the following brief observations (in an already very long newsletter ☺!):

- I find this confession too vague to be of much use in teaching and guiding the church. Although it claims to be a statement that grew out of the need to confront racism (which is a problem in the church and in the world) it is really about ‘unity’. And unity is a good thing! But my concern is that because of the vagueness of this unity as described in this document (Is it unity regardless of race? Is it unity regardless of sexual orientation? Is it unity regardless of theological conviction? Is it unity according to where any particular group thinks we should be united?), this confession can be used to promote any agenda that challenges the natural and right ‘exclusivity’ of the gospel – namely that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone; and that such faith is evidence through submission to Christ as Savior and Lord, repentance from those behaviors that the Scriptures call sin, and a willingness to walk in godliness in the power of the Spirit. What's more, if the issue is unity, we already have that addressed in “A Brief Statement of Faith” and in “The Confession of 1967”, as well as in our other confessions to varying degrees.
- What's more, on the issue of racism, that has been addressed in “The Confession of 1967”. Our problem is not that we need a new confessional statement but that we need to study and apply the ones we already have (which is why I have included portions of the various church confessions in every newsletter since I have been at Third Church). It's rather ironic that in an age when the very existence of truth is being challenged both outside and within the church (especially with respect to the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures), the church wants to adopt a new confession, which by its nature is a statement of truth. But then, any truth claim (as a confessional statement is) is also by its very nature ‘exclusive’ and a potential threat to unity!
- Some proponents claim that we should adopt this statement not only for its strong call to unity (although again, the question is what type of unity is being ‘pushed’ here) but to show our desire to stand with the church in Africa (admittedly, the “church in Africa” is extremely diverse). Again, irony abounds. To cut to the chase, proponents of adopting the Belhar Confession have already ‘shown their hand’ in that they see it as supporting their justification for the ordination of self-affirmed, practicing homosexuals. But that is something that would be offensive to most of our “African” brothers and sisters in Christ – something they would never want this confession to endorse. So much for unity!
- Perhaps what is most troubling to me is the statement “. . . anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church and must be resisted”. In its context, this confession seems to promote unity as the ultimate goal of the church. But what about truth? What about holiness? What about glorifying God? What about pleasing God? Although Jesus prayed for unity among His disciples, He never compromised truth, holiness, or the glory of His Father. In the end, I don't believe the “Belhar Confession” merits confessional standing. Moreover, I believe it will lead to a lessening of unity within the PCUSA – a unity that, in truth, is ours not by our efforts but by Christ's sacrifice for us. We are united as believers in Jesus. We are united by the blood of Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit. What we need to do is live that truth. And I don't see this confession adding anything of substance to that end.

Anyway, the vote is over. It has been included. And now we must learn to live with the results. Or perhaps we need to think more clearly about who we are and what we believe, and what that means about our future as members of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

It might be a good time for all of us to look again at the “Essential Tenets” that your Session has produced, that we might be encouraged, focused and impassioned in our service to the Lord, despite our disagreements with some of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

I pray God’s blessing upon your for the weeks of summer that remain. And I encourage you to pray for our upcoming ministry opportunities in August, including our VBS (August 8-12) and our “Back to School Fair” on August 27th.

Love in Christ Jesus,

Pastor John

International Student Picnic - August 27th from 6 – 9 pm at Brunswick Church

Did you know that every year approximately 1200 international students from over 80 different countries live right around the corner from us at RPI?

You are invited to attend to find out more about the Horizon’s ministry with international students and how you could be involved. It is also a great opportunity to just spend time with and interact with the students to learn about them and to welcome them to the U.S. For many of the students this is their first time away from home and friendly faces are a great first step in making them feel welcome here.

As our own Abby McAuley will be studying overseas this fall, our prayer is that there will be friendly folks there to make her feel welcome while she is far from home.

Brunswick Church is also looking for help in hosting this event. Below is a list of the areas in which you might wish to serve

The day of the event:

- Set-up of tables and chairs 11:00am
- Break-down of tables and chairs 9:00pm
- Greeters 5:45pm
- Food prep/Buffer set-up 4:00pm
- Grillers/Barbecue Experts 4:00pm
- Buffet/Kitchen/Dining area clean-up 7:30pm

Other ways to serve:

- Bring a dish to share (preferable to feed 12 or more, in a disposable container if you aren’t attending the event)
- Donate gift cards for Hannaford, Price Chopper, or Wal-Mart for the purchase of food and paper products.
- Provide burgers, hot dogs, and rolls for the picnic
- Provide paper products for the picnic
- Make a financial donation toward the rental of tables and chairs

Please call the church office at 279-3792 for more information.



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 Colonie: Dot McGann

Those dealing with health issues:
Stan Bentley, Doris Calamaras, Joshua
Valerio

Our Church:
Pastor John and the Session

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

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

Serving at the Capital City Rescue Mission - August 20th

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



Serving This Month

August 7th

Worship Assistants: Kelly Valerio and Connie Russell

Greeters: Bill Multunas

Head Greeters: Mike Giddings

Nursery: Alice Bentley

Communion: Christian Multunas

Fellowship Host: Lois Pasinella

August 14th

Worship Assistants: Peter Laz and Ella Miller

Greeters: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski

Head Greeter: Andy Miller

Nursery: Jen McAuley

Communion: Dean Calamaras, Deena Dominy,

Doris Calamaras, Eric Ofori

Fellowship Hosts: McAuley's

August 21st

Worship Assistants: Bill Multunas and Jess Ofori

Greeters: Alice Bentley and Joe Pasinella

Head Greeter: Rob Jensen

Nursery: Megan Laz

Communion: Hazel Landry, Jason Laz, Jen

McAuley, Jerry Whitman

Fellowship Hosts:

August 28th

Worship Assistants: Eric Ofori and James
McAuley

Greeters: Deena Dominy and Andy Miller

Head Greeter: Christian Multunas

Nursery: Lois Pasinella

Communion: Mike Giddings, Natalia Multunas,

Peter Laz, Rachel Farnum

Fellowship Hosts: Whitman's

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 August we will be collecting soap, shampoo, toothpaste and deodorant.

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

**General Financial Update for
June 2016**

	Year to Date	June
Total Income	\$78,371.00	\$11,671.00
Total Expenses	(\$84,319.74)	(\$13,410.58)
Difference	(\$ 5,948.74)	(\$ 1,739.58)

August Birthdays

8/2 Beth Casey
 8/8 Sal Sceccitano
 8/12 Nash Joseph Brian Multunas
 8/13 Brian Giddings
 8/16 Maureen Somerville
 8/23 Terry Marra



August Anniversaries

8/7 Megan & Jason Laz
 8/12 Rob & Wendy Jensen
 8/16 Julie & Graham Tootell
 8/25 Peggy & Bill Siracusa

**Church Picnic
August 28th**

Following worship on August 28th we will have our church picnic. The Inward Ministry Committee will be providing hamburgers, hot dogs, rolls, and beverages. If you would like, you may bring something to share such as, chips, a salad, or a dessert. You are also encouraged to bring lawn chairs and any outdoor games or activities. This year we will have a tent out back to provide some shade.



**Back to School Fair
August 27th from 11:00 – 1:00**

As a way to serve our community and help children to be prepared for the start of school, Third Church will once again host a Back to School Fair for families in need in our community.



Each child that attends will receive a backpack and school supplies. A Bible or other age appropriate devotional material as well as information about our church and its ministries will be included with each backpack.

There will also be:

- ❖ Games, crafts, and other activities for the children to participate in
- ❖ Food and beverages
- ❖ New and gently used children's clothing and shoes for the families to choose from

How can you help? You could:

- ❖ Provide cookies or brownies for the food area
- ❖ Sponsor a backpack at a cost of \$25. Forms for this are available in the narthex and in the church office.
- ❖ Donate school supplies (1 subject spiral notebooks, loose leaf paper, marble composition books, boxes of 24 crayons, markers, glue sticks, scissors, 2 pocket folders, highlighters, dry erase markers, pencils, pens, and pencil sharpeners)
- ❖ Volunteer to help with set-up, clean-up, cooking and serving food, sorting supplies and filling backpacks, helping with the various games and craft activities.

There are baskets in the sanctuary for you to place your donations of school supplies in. Monetary donations can also be made by using the "Mission" envelopes in your box of offering envelopes or by indicating that your donation is for the Back to School Fair.

If you would like to help with this ministry, please speak with anyone on the committee – Sue Laz, Andy Miller, Pat Gilmaier, Jason Laz, Peter Laz, Rob Jensen, Jen McAuley or Pastor John.

Bible Quiz for August 2016

This quiz will focus on Luke 23:26-56.

1. True or False: As Jesus made His way to the place of His crucifixion and saw some women weeping for Him Jesus thanked them for their compassion toward Him.
2. True or False: Three other criminals were led out with Jesus to be executed.
3. True or False: As Jesus hung upon the cross He called out: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."
4. What did the soldiers do to determine who would get the various pieces of Jesus' clothing?
5. True or False: The soldiers at Jesus' crucifixion taunted Jesus by saying, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."
6. True or False: While one criminal hanging next to Jesus mocked Jesus, the other stood up for Jesus – noting Jesus' innocence.
7. True or False: To the one criminal who spoke out for Jesus, Jesus responded by saying, "Thanks, but it's too little, too late".
8. True or False: When Jesus was on the cross the curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom.
9. True or False: The centurion who witness Jesus' death on the cross praised God and said, "Surely this was a righteous man."
10. True or False: After Jesus' death, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for Jesus' body, and then buried Jesus in an unused tomb?

THE WESTMINSTER SHORTER CATECHISM

What we believe matters. Doctrine matters, for out of our core beliefs come our actions – actions which, by God's grace, should bring honor to God and blessing to others and us. To help build a solid theological foundation out of which "God honoring works" can flow, I encourage you to spend some time reading and reflecting upon the

questions below, which have been selected from the Westminster Shorter Catechism. The "Westminster Shorter Catechism" is one of the catechisms included in the Book of Confessions of the PCUSA, and was originally written to supplement the "Westminster Confession of Faith" as a teaching document for younger Christians.

Q 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.

Q 98. 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.

Q 99. 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-TROY, NEW YORK-JULY 11, 2016

ORDER OF THE DAY

- The Order Of The Day was to meet with and examine Susanna Stierer, who has applied for membership into Third Presbyterian Church of Troy, NY.
 - Each Session member introduced themselves.
 - Sue shared her Statement of Faith with us, and gave her personal testimony, which was followed by a period of questions, answers, and sharing with each other.
 - It was unanimously carried to accept Sue Stierer into membership by reaffirmation of faith

ACTION ITEMS - A motion was made, seconded, and carried unanimously to authorize the use of Post Memorial Hall, on a yet to be determined date in December, prior to the 20th, from 8:30 AM-5:00 PM, by Lonnie Woods of Lifeline Screenings, for the purpose of health screenings for the early detection of Vascular Disease.

CLERK'S REPORT

- Miscellaneous Information:
 - Average attendance for June 2016 was 45.
 - Preaching rotation reminder: Andy Miller, Sal Scechitano, Sue Laz, Jerry Whitman, and Bill Multunas.
 - All Elders who are interested and available to assist Pastor John with Home Communion on Sunday afternoons, were asked to give Jerry Whitman, Clerk, their name. He will then formulate a rotating schedule to better insure coverage when it is necessary.

INWARD MINISTRY

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

- The card ministry is ongoing.
- Visitations under Vera Whitman is in place and moving ahead.

YOUTH MINISTRY - Planning for Sunday School Start-up in September for youth.

OUTWARD MINISTRY

- Spending for July: Capital City Rescue Mission - \$500.00, Bangladesh Youth For Christ - \$600.00, Capital District Youth For Christ - \$500.00, InterVarsity (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute & Russell Sage College) - \$200.00, Reach Across (Dan McAuley) - \$1,000.00, Presbyterian Disaster Assistance - \$825.00.
- Planning for Back To School Fair is underway.

STEWARDSHIP

GENERAL FUND/FINANCE

- We had a negative cash flow during June 2016 of \$1,739.58. This brings our year-to-date deficit to \$5,948.74. this was the fifth month in a row where we have experienced a loss.
- We are short about \$250 per week in order for us to break even.

PROPERTY

- Cleaned, sanded, and painted partitions in men's bathroom.
- Making plans to repair ruts in parking lot with blacktop patch mix.

ALBANY PRESBYTERY

- The new Directory of Worship adopted by the General Assembly effectively decouples Baptism from the Lord's Supper by removing the requirement of Baptism for admission to the table.
- It was approved to add the Confession of Belhar to the Book of Confessions.



Mission Spotlight: Compassion International

Third Church sponsors a 13 year old boy from El Salvador through Compassion International. His name is Emerson Adony Ramirez Aviles.

Emerson's pastor, Mario Alfredo Galeas Morales of the Cuyultitan Amigos de Israel Baptist Biblical Tabernacle Church, writes:

"The people in this town are humble, and they work the land as day laborers. Some work as laborers in the city, looking for better life opportunities. One of the problems that the community faces is lack of employment and opportunities, plus a lack of interest in education and school desertion, which are obstacles in the full development of the community.

The Samuel Child Development Center has been a great blessing to the children in our community, because here they have found the love and support that perhaps they do not have in their homes, as well as hot meals, respect, and value that every child deserves, and of course, the spiritual bread of the Word of God. As a church, it is our desire, with the help of God, Compassion International, and you, to truly release our children from poverty – material, spiritual, and emotional – opening doors of opportunities to improve in the name of Jesus.

The impact this center has in the community is positive. We have ministered to children that are related to the heads of gangs. Thanks to the children, we have spoken face to face with these gang leaders to communicate the message of salvation and tell them that Jesus offers them His forgiveness, love, and new life. We have a program of preventative talks called Jesus Christ Operation to minister the Word of God to the youth in schools. We are doing what the Lord has commanded us to do, and that is to preach His holy Word. Eventually we will see the fruits, because at least 10 families of our children attend regularly the church services.

I cannot find the words to thank you for all the support for this center and especially for your sponsored child. God bless you always.

Your brother and friend, Mario Alfredo Galeas

Emerson writes, "It is a pleasure to greet you and I hope you are doing well. I want to thank you for your letter. It is a joy for me to get and read your letters. My mom is the best chef I have ever had. I love her potatoes filled with cheese. We go to the Baptist church where my project is. I ask you to keep my family in your prayers so that we can be safe and healthy. My family and I also pray for you."

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

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

Vacation Bible School
August 8th – 12th



It's not too late to help!
Many hands are needed to make our program run smoothly.

Please consider how you might be involved in this wonderful week of ministry. You could help with serving snack or you could assist one of our group leaders with their group of kids. If singing is your thing we can always use another voice. If you enjoy crafts we can always use an extra set of hands at craft time. You are also welcome to just come and hang out for a time and see what goes on at VBS.



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

If you have any questions please speak with Sue Laz.

Third Presbyterian Church
115 Winter Street
Troy, NY 12180

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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

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