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December 2016

“Reforming God’s People by Teaching God’s Word”

I want to continue through our study of “Nehemiah” as we take time to think about what it is that the Lord is calling Third Church to be and do in the coming days.

Using Nehemiah’s experiences to help stimulate our thinking, we’ve seen over that last three newsletters that in order for us as a church to follow God’s vision together we must “put first things first” – with the first of the first being prayer for God’s guidance; and we must “work as one in Christ Jesus”, being that united Body of Christ that God calls us to be; and we must “persevere in the work of the church”, staying committed together to live out our mission (To love our God and Neighbor; To proclaim the Gospel through word and deed; To make disciples of Jesus the Christ) for the glory of God and the blessing of others.

But to do all that faithfully, we need to be rightly grounded in God’s Word – His truth revealed and illumined through His Spirit – that we might be rightly anchored as we face the trials, temptations and storms the world might thrust upon us.

Nehemiah understood this, which is why Nehemiah’s work didn’t end with building a wall around Jerusalem. In fact his greater work was to help build the faith of the people, a faith that can only be sustained when rightly erected upon the Word of God – the living and written word.

And so today I want to spend some time talking about what we need to do to erect such a sustaining, nurturing, hope giving faith.

To that end I would encourage you to take a moment to read from the book of “Nehemiah”, chapters 7 and 8.

I think we’ve all heard the expression “If you build it they will come” – that classic line from the movie, “Field of Dreams” (1989). And that sounds inspiring, but is that true? What about down-town Troy? What about all those empty malls in our surrounding community that sit vacated? What about many a church that has had to shut its doors?

As you know, it takes more than nice buildings to attract people and sustain a healthy community.

Nehemiah understood this, and so although he led the rebuilding effort in Jerusalem, and in fifty-two days saw a city wall repaired, Nehemiah knew that the project was far from complete. Unless things were changed on the inside – on the inside of the city, and, on the inside of the people – the wall would soon be just another monument to a task left undone.

Unless we allow our hearts to be restored – our lives will never honor God – no matter how good we look on the outside!

And so, in the year 445 BC, Nehemiah came to the city of Jerusalem to rebuild the walls, but even more, he came to restore the glory of that city by turning the hearts of the people back to the worship and service of their God.

Now, the first thing he did, after completing the walls of the city, was to search the genealogical records to find those families that were to live and serve within the city. Nehemiah sought to repopulate the city so that it could sustain itself. But even in doing this Nehemiah proceeded with caution so that none who wished to destroy this work of God could establish a foot-hold among the people.

Nehemiah was a master city planner, and he knew that gathering people who could support the work of renewal was important. People are necessary to restore vitality and health, to bring renewal and revival. But Nehemiah also knew that not just any people will do. For renewal is never just about filling a place with warm bodies, rather it is about finding the people who will share God's vision and carry out God's plans.

Renewal is about gathering a people with a hunger to know God and a passion to glorify His name! And thanks to Nehemiah's prayerful planning, unwavering perseverance, and unshakable integrity, not only were many people inspired to join in the rebuilding and redeveloping of the city of Jerusalem, but it was these very people who approached the "spiritual leaders" and asked them to read the Word of God to the people.

The people appreciated Nehemiah's leadership but they longed for God's guidance. There was a hunger on the people's part to hear from God.

Imagine the excitement that Ezra must have felt. After some thirteen years of pulling teeth, not only were the people willing to hear the Word of God but they were asking to hear it. You get the feeling that if the leadership didn't give the people God's Word they would've pushed the leadership aside and gotten it themselves!

Such was the rebuilding work that God was doing in the hearts of the people!

There's something exciting about seeing God work in His people to grow a hunger for His Word -- a hunger that reflects a passion to know Him. The people of Nehemiah's day asked for the Word of God. They would not settle for anything less.

A look at the people of Jerusalem back then causes one to ask, "Are we so hungering after God: That we long to hear His Word? That we seek to know His Word? That we will not be content with anything less than to understand His Word?"

A hunger for the Word of God is a first sign of a spirit of renewal. And a feasting upon the Word of God is an essential step in the ushering in of revival.

The revival of which Ezra and Nehemiah were a part was inspired by the dream and plan given by God to Nehemiah, but it eventually was fueled by the working of God's Spirit in the hearts of the people. And so we see that on the first day of the seventh month, the people came as one in heart and mind and asked the religious leaders to share the Word of God with them.

Now, the seventh month was a significant month in the life of the Jewish people, for in many ways it was a month that spoke of deliverance. The first day of the seventh month was the Feast of Trumpets. It was to be a day of solemn gathering for God's people; a day of rest initiated by the trumpet blast; a day of reflection as the people looked to the "rest" anticipated with the coming of the Messiah.

Because the Jews of Judea had just completed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, perhaps there was an expectation that now was the time when the Messiah would come and restore the people of God to their former glory -- a natural expectation and longing after years of living in oppression under foreign rule. There was an air of excitement and anticipation in Jerusalem.

We live in the in-between time from when Christ came and when He shall come again. We know of the glory of God which was revealed in His Son. And so, as Paul tells us in Thessalonians (1 Thes 4:16), we too should be alert to the trumpet call of God. We too are to live in a state of excited readiness -- anticipating the coming of our Lord. But do we? Is such enthusiasm present in our lives? In our worship?

I think that too often Christian worship lacks passion because we don't really expect to meet God! As a result we tend to evaluate our worship by how we like the music, or how we enjoy the message, or how comfortable the service makes us feel. And in turn our worship becomes more about experiencing a feeling than about seeking our God – it becomes more about us than about God. Too often the only thing for which we wait in excited anticipation is the closing benediction!

On this particular Feast of Trumpets the people in Jerusalem gathered to focus upon God. They wanted to and were expecting to hear from and be challenged by His Word. And so Ezra read the Word of God. And the people stood for hours, soaking up every word. Imagine a sermon that went from early morning to late in the afternoon, with no one complaining! In fact some came back the next day for more!

I am always amazed when I hear stories of how some believers in other parts of the world will gather for hours, often in dilapidated, uncomfortable facilities, often standing or sitting on the floor just to hear God's Word. And then I think about so many of our churches that meticulously time every element so as to make the worship service as unobtrusive to our schedules as possible.

Well, in response to the request of the people, Ezra and others ascended a platform, began to read the Word of God, and in turn sought to translate and explain what was read.

The Word of God reveals the heart of God, but God's heart can only be known when His Word is read and understood. And so, it is the reading and preaching of God's word that must guide and inform our worship of God, for to offer worship that does not grow out of the exposition of God's Word is to risk offering worship to an idol, or idolatrous worship to the true God.

Now it's true that through God's creation we get a vague understanding of who God is – His power, creativity, and wisdom. Theologians call such a revealing of God His "General revelation". But, it is God's "Special revelation" given to His people throughout history and recorded for us in His written Word that clarifies our understanding of God. The written Word reveals all we need to know about who God is, what He requires of us and what He has done for us. Apart from God's written Word we could not appreciate nor respond to the person and work of Jesus. Apart from God's written Word we could not conceive of the love, mercy, justice and grace of God. Apart from God's written Word we could not know how to live for the glory of God.

As the great preacher of old, Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones has noted, "the ultimate task of the church and of the Christian minister is the preaching of the Word of God. For, the decadent periods and eras in the history of the church have always been those periods when preaching and teaching has declined."

Now, as the people heard the Word of God they were moved to sorrow, for their hearts stood in conviction before the holiness of God. As the apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 3, verse 20, "**through the law we become conscious of sin.**" The right hearing and understanding of the Word of God will expose our sinfulness, causing us to fall before God like Isaiah the prophet saying, "**Woe is me . . . for I am a man of unclean lips . . . !**" (Isa 6:5)

The people hungered to hear God's Word but upon hearing it they stood under conviction.

So, what is our response when we hear or read the Word of God? Does it cut to our hearts exposing our need for repentance and forgiveness? Or do we find ourselves indifferent, unmoved, and unchallenged by it?

I would suggest that if we don't experience some degree of conviction then we probably didn't really "hear" God's Word! In which case what we need to do, before we open the Scriptures, is to ask God to prepare our hearts to really hear what He has to say -- to hear of His power, holiness and glory -- which will in turn help us to more rightly celebrate in His patience, mercy and love. For to encounter the holiness of God as revealed in His Word will cause us to fall down in conviction of our unworthiness. But thanks be to God, that is not where God desires to leave us -- because the purpose of God's Word is not merely to expose our sinfulness, it's to magnify God's graciousness. Indeed, it's the contrast of the two

(our sinfulness and God's graciousness) that ought to compel us to worship – to rejoice in the fact that a holy God delights to receive the praises of His people.

In “Nehemiah” chapters 7 and 8 we encounter this very movement from conviction to celebration as Ezra and the leaders exhorted the people to rejoice, for the joy of the Lord was their strength (Neh 8:10). After all, it is in rejoicing in God's love for us, in spite of our sinfulness, that our own spirits are renewed.

And so we see that, when rightly heard and understood, God's Word will move us to repentance and will compel us to worship. But, even more, God's Word rightly understood will challenge us to obedience, for, as James reminds us, to be a right hearer of God's Word is to be a doer of God's Word (Jms 1:22).

Exposure to and instruction in God's Word is to lead to obedience: to loving even as God first loved us; to forgiving even as God first forgave us; to serving even as God first served us.

God wants people who hunger after Him, who seek Him, and who follow Him, and the fundamental means that God has given us to do that is through His written Word. And so let me ask you: Do you listen to God's Word with the desire to really hear what He has to say to you, personally? Are you taking the time to study God's Word – both alone and with others? And, are you seeking to live in obedience to His Word – not so as to merit God's favor, but in thankfulness for having received His favor?

The Jews in Jerusalem were ready to hear God's Word and eager to obey it. In fact, the leaders of the families gathered for a second full day of Bible teaching – a follow-up seminar if you will, so that they could know what they should do in response to God's Word. The people wanted to get things right - - such was their desire to please their God.

Now, in God's providence, all this occurred at just the right time for the people to be able to celebrate the week long Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles came at the end of the fall harvest. It was the most spectacular and celebrative of all the Jewish feasts having a three-fold emphasis – past, present and future.

At its inception, the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths, looked to the past and God's provisions during the 40 years of wilderness wandering of the people of Israel. As part of this feast the Israelites would build huts made out of tree branches, and, for seven days, live in those huts, even as their ancestors lived in temporary shelters as they traveled through the wilderness.

The Feast of Tabernacles recalled God's provision in the distant past. But it was also a time to give thanks for God's provision over the past year – in particular for the final fall harvest. Such remembrances of God's faithfulness would carry special significance to a people who just finish rebuilding the walls of their city, for, as they looked upon those restored walls, they would have been reminded in a very real and tangible way that their success was solely by the grace of God.

In some ways, the Feast of Tabernacles was for the Jews what our Thanksgiving celebration is meant to be for us – a time to remember, celebrate and give thanks for God's faithfulness to us throughout the year and throughout our lives. The Feast of Tabernacles was a time for looking back – a time for renewing one's faith.

But the Feast of Tabernacles was also a time for looking ahead, for the Feast of Tabernacles spoke to the hopes of the people.

In Palestine, most of the year is dry except for a rainy season between late October and early March. Without those rains there would be no harvest for the coming year. And so, as part of the weeklong celebration there was an elaborate water ceremony each day which served as an acted out prayer for winter rains so that the ground would be ready for the spring crops. But even more, this water ceremony was a prayer for the outpouring of the very Spirit of God, wherein God would establish His Kingdom among His people.

Perhaps the unusual energy felt at this particular Feast of Tabernacles was fueled by the hope that God was about to do something great in Jerusalem – perhaps now was the time for God’s Kingdom reign to be established!

In many ways, the Feast of Tabernacles contained an element similar to our season of Advent, for during Advent we are not only to prepare ourselves to remember and celebrate the birth of Christ, but we are to prepare ourselves for the return of Christ – and in such preparation our hope is renewed.

Through the reading of God’s Word the people were reminded of the command to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles – a time for the renewing of their faith and hope.

But the Feast of Tabernacles was also at time of challenge to live for God in the present! One of the activities of the week was the daily assembling and reading of the Word of God. And so during the Feast of Tabernacles the people were reminded daily of the love of God and of the command to live out that love in the here-and-now – for to know God is to show love!

In the eighth chapter of Nehemiah we’re convicted by the need to hunger after God and to have that hunger satisfied in Him alone. In the eighth chapter of Nehemiah we’re challenged by the need to read, to study, and to apply God’s Word.

And, as a people who have experienced the saving grace of the Messiah, Jesus the Christ, the very thing which the Feast of Tabernacles anticipated, we’re called to remember: that we’re to be a people who walk by faith, for we’ve been fed by the Bread of Life and have drunk of the Living Waters in Jesus Christ; that we’re to be a people who live in hope because we worship a risen Lord who came, who will come again, and who promises that He is preparing for us an eternal dwelling with our God; that we’re to be a people who practice love, for our God commands us to love.

But more than just commanding love, our God demonstrated perfect love in that while we were yet sinners He sent His only begotten Son to die upon a cross for the forgiveness of our sins and for our salvation.

In the eighth chapter of Nehemiah we’re reminded that renewal will never come merely from rebuilding fallen walls nor from repopulating empty buildings. Rather, genuine renewal will only come when lives are open to being transformed. And lives will never be open to being transformed apart from a personal encounter with God.

Do you want to experience a renewed spirit, a transformed life, a heart filled with the joy of the Lord? As we learn from the book of “Nehemiah”, chapters 7 and 8, in order to experience such internal renewal we must be a people immersed in God’s Word. And so I exhort you to read His Word daily, and, to come ready to receive and respond to His Word every Sunday.

And, I want to give you a very specific challenge for the remaining days of 2016. I encourage you to read “The Gospel of John” before Christmas. And I encourage you to do this above and beyond your regular Bible reading. I believe this will be a great way to ready our hearts for celebrating together both Advent and Christmas, as well as for getting us ready for God’s work in the New Year.

Nehemiah rebuilt the walls, reorganized the people and repopulated the city. He could inspire the people to turn to God, but the turning had to be their choice.

The exciting thing about chapter eight of “Nehemiah” is that the people chose for God, for it was the people who asked to hear God’s Word, and, it was the people who stood for hours just to listen God’s Word, and, it was the people who responded in obedience to God’s Word.

May we be such people! May we be such a church – to the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

God’s peace be with you,

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, Steve Derby

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 East Africa:

For adjusting to a new place and culture
That he would trust God for all his needs
That he would find joy in serving

Winter Collection for Capital City Rescue Mission



Throughout the winter months we will be collecting new and gently used hats, gloves and scarves for Capital City Rescue Mission. With the weather turning colder, the Mission struggles to provide these necessary items to those in need. There is a box near the entrance to the sanctuary where you can place your donations.

Serving This Month

December 4th

Worship Assistants: Deena Dominy, Dean Calamaras
Greeters: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski
Head Greeters: Mike Giddings
Nursery: Megan Laz
Communion: Jerry Whitman
Fellowship Hosts: June Foltz

December 11th

Worship Assistants: Peter Laz, Ella Miller
Greeters: Alice Bentley, Jen McAuley
Greeter: Rob Jensen
Nursery: Lois Pasinella
Communion: Dean Calamaras, Deena Dominy, Doris Calamaras, Eric Ofori
Fellowship Hosts: McAuley Family

December 18th

Worship Assistants: Natalia Multunas, Jesse Ofori
Greeters: Joe Pasinella, Jason Laz
Head Greeter: Andy Miller
Nursery: Deena Dominy, Angelina Solomon
Communion: Hazel Landry, Jason Laz, Jen McAuley, Jerry Whitman
Fellowship Hosts: Jen and Stephanie Miller

December 25th

Worship Assistants: Pastor John, Natalia Multunas
Greeters: Dean and Doris Calamaras
Head Greeter: Peter Laz
Nursery: Alice Bentley
Communion: Jerry Whitman, Natalia Multunas, Pat Gilmaier, Peter Laz



Thanks to everyone who participated in and supported Operation Christmas Child. We filled 43 shoeboxes that are now on their way to children in need around the world!

From Music and AV Ministries...

“AM AHL AND THE NIGHT VISITORS”

I hope you're not reading that title as ***A Mall*** and the Night Visitors, because I'm not exactly referring to the evening security shift log at Crossgates! Several times over the last two decades, I had the great honor of producing and conducting that beloved family Christmas opera by Gian-Carlo Menotti. Though fiction, it's simple message is one of hope and healing in a season that cries out for both.

While following *The Star* on their way to pay homage to the Christ-child, the three wisemen (point taken--scripture never says there were three!) stop at the home of a poor widow woman and her crippled young son, Amahl. The wisemen (Magi) are even given names (again, no basis in scripture)--Kaspar (no relation to the *friendly* ghost), Melchior, and Balthazar. The mischievous Amahl, who has been lame since birth, hobbles around on his crutch and is routinely in trouble with his dotting mother for telling one tall tale after another. When the mysterious night visitors knock on their door one evening seeking shelter, he has a rough time trying to convince her of the royal and stately figures standing outside and asking to come in. Like the boy who cried wolf, he just doesn't have any credibility left with her. But after three sets of *hard knocks*, mom herself goes to the door and is blown away by the sight of them in their royal regalia. Amahl was finally exonerated!

Being of little to no means, the mother attempts to provide these *night visitors* some hospitality while Amahl alternately entertains and pesters them with questions. They show off the gold, frankincense, and myrrh--the gifts they are planning to bring to the Christ-child whom they are seeking by following *His Star*. This really piques the curiosity and interest of Amahl and his mother as they know nothing of this coming child. She is particularly drawn to the gold and starts wistfully dreaming of all she could do with it to make life better especially for her son. When the Magi drift off to sleep, she does in fact make a grab for it and is caught red handed by the servant traveling with them. Some fisticuffs ensue as Amahl attempts to beat the servant off his mother with his crutch. All this commotion naturally rouses the three royal visitors and one graciously announces that the woman should just keep the gold--that the child they seek doesn't need it. "On love alone," he says, "the child will build his kingdom. His pierced hand will hold no scepter. His haloed head will wear no crown. His might will not be built on their toil. Swifter than lightning He will soon walk among us. He will bring us new life... and the keys to His city belong to the poor."

Now pierced and convicted in heart, Amahl's mother insists they take the gold back--that "for such a king, I've waited all my life. And if I weren't so poor, I would send a gift of my own to the child." But Amahl to the rescue. He suggests they take his crutch as a gift since he made it himself and who knows? maybe the child will need it. As he walks forward to present it to one of the Magi, he and mom realize that he's walking on his own--*completely, normally*. All stand in awe of the miracle that just took place and thanks is given. It's resolved that Amahl should go with them to see this king, and after a tender goodbye to his mother, off they go to follow the star.

Amahl and the Night Visitors is a short opera (less than an hour); is perfect for the Christmas season, and has endeared itself to old and young alike for over 60 years. It's available online and I have videos of it myself and would be happy to lend and share.

With joy in *this journey, too!*
Sal Sceccitano

Christmas Flowers

Order forms for Christmas poinsettias are available in the narthex. If you cannot make it to church but would like to purchase a poinsettia, please call the church office at 283-2420.

Orders must be turned by December 11th.

Payment can be submitted later if necessary. Checks should be made payable to "Third Presbyterian Church".



December Birthdays

12/2 Eric Jesse Ofori (son)
 12/2 Rick Russell
 12/5 Edna Wells
 12/9 Deb Lawrence
 12/11 Dean Calamaras
 12/13 Wayne Mizerak
 12/13 Peggy Siracusa
 12/18 Dot Multunas
 12/19 Bill Siracusa
 12/24 Rachel Farnum
 12/25 Robert Moore



December Anniversaries

12/16 Marie & Kurt Whitman

Serving at the Capital City Rescue Mission December 17th

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.

General Financial Update for October 2016

| | Year to Date | October |
|----------------|--------------|-------------|
| Total Income | \$140,124.00 | \$20,031.00 |
| Total Expenses | \$139,420.30 | \$13,293.52 |
| Difference | \$ 703.70 | \$ 6,737.48 |

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 December we will be collecting pancake mix and syrup.

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



Christmas Caroling at the Eddy December 18th

We will meet at the church at 3:00, travel to the Eddy to share some Christmas cheer with the residents there and return to the church to enjoy some food (pizza, cookies and hot cocoa) and fellowship!

We hope you will join us for an afternoon of music, fellowship, and sharing the joy of Christmas with others!



Many Thanks!!

We often attend worship without thinking about all that is done to make worship happen. From the big things - like preparing the sermon and planning for the music – to the little things – like making sure the lights and heat (or fans) are on - many people give of their time and energy to make worship happen each week. I counted over 40 different people who are actively serving in various ways to see that everything is in place for Sunday morning.

Thanks to Pastor John for the time and energy he puts into planning for all of our regular and special services.

Thanks to Sal Sceccitano for the time and energy he gives to our music and AV ministries.

Thanks to the choir, the Red Letters, and the Acoustic Worship team for the work they do in preparing for and leading worship.

Thanks to our worship assistants, Scripture Readers, and those who do the children's message for giving of their time to prepare to lead us through our time of worship.

Thanks to our elders who prepare for and serve communion every week.

Thanks to our greeters and head greeters who welcome all who come and tend to anything that needs tending to while the service is in progress.

Thanks to those who serve in the nursery when needed.

Thanks to the A/V techs who manage all the technical aspects of our worship service.

Thanks to those who are a part of the preaching rotation and fill-in when John has a week off.

Thanks to those who take care of the heat, lights, unlocking and locking doors, clearing the steps and sidewalks of snow, etc.

Thanks to Peggy Siracusa for preparing the Order of Worship for all of our worship services.

Thanks to the members of the Upward Ministry Committee for the time they give to the work of planning for worship.

You all make my job very easy!

Sue Laz, Upward Ministry Committee Chairperson



Mission Spotlight

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 as we bring this year to an end we wanted to share some of the thoughts and comments we received from those we support.

Perry Jones, executive director of The Capital City Rescue Mission writes, "Thank you for your generous gifts on behalf of the homeless people of our community. Your partnership is appreciated more than you know. Today you are providing nutritious meals, a safe refuge for the homeless, recovery programs and discipleship for the addicted and the lost, clothing without charge for anyone in need, and medical care for suffering and sick people. Men and women here want you to know how truly grateful they are. Thank you brothers and sisters at Third Pres. You bless many in Jesus."

Andy Lightcap from Capital District Youth for Christ writes, "Many of the kids we work with have stories that could only be described as a tragedy. Often their lives are full of brokenness and heartache.

Our staff and volunteers are investing on a regular basis in the lives of these kids to introduce them to the person of Jesus Christ. We have the honor of being characters in their stories, often being a part of that critical moment when tragedy turns to triumph as they become followers of Christ.

None of this would be possible without your support! Thank you so much for being a part of forever changing these students' lives."

From Phyllis Sandow, Executive Director of Hope 7 Community Center, "Your donations have improved our food pantry by providing more much needed provisions than ever before for families in need. You provided 180 new crockpots that will be paired with recipes and ingredients and presented

as holiday gifts to Food Pantry clients who have been enjoying samples and instruction days presented by volunteers and staff.

We send you may thanks for your continued support. We can't do it without you! We welcome and encourage you to come and visit and see your investment at work anytime."

Niki Campbell from InterVarsity at RPI and Sage says, "Please pray for our ever-growing small group ministry. We are seeing more people come to study Scripture, and have the joy of needing to constantly plant new small groups.

In this season of giving thanks, I give thanks for you and all you have done to help bring about this ministry at RPI and Sage. Thank you for your prayers and financial partnership. I am so thankful for each of you!"

Nate Smith from InterVarsity at HVCC says, "We have made it to 100 percent funding for the 2016/2017 ministry budget for InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at HVCC!!! This is a moment of joy and celebration for all of us as we reflect upon God's provision and give Him the glory that He is worthy of.

This is also a moment for me to extend my deepest gratitude for your generosity, your prayer, your encouragement and love and your patience over these last several months. I have been blessed by each of you beyond what words could adequately communicate."

Peter Halder with YFC in Bangladesh writes, "We express our deep thanksgivings to our heavenly Father for his every single blessing in our lives. His grace is unlimited, beyond our thinking. We so much appreciate you for your love toward us and YFC. Your generous support of prayer and giving is inspiring us every day to do the work we are called for."

From Gideon's International, "This past fall Gideons International placed hundreds of testaments in each of the major colleges in Rensselaer County. We also have a monthly ministry at the Rensselaer County Jail and are distributing hundreds of testaments in local nursing homes. It is the faithful support of the local church which helps make our ministry possible. Thank you."

Emerson, our sponsored child in El Salvador writes, "It is a pleasure to greet you and I hope you are well. For Christmas we eat chicken sandwiches and tamales and we get together with our whole family and we also go to church to thank God for the year that he gave us. I have one younger brother. His name is Christian. My mom is the best cook. I love her potatoes filled with cheese. We live in a rural area and the weather is cool because of so many trees. I ask you to keep my family in your prayers so that we can be safe and healthy. May family and I pray for you also."

Please remember these and our other mission partners –Daniel McAuley in East Africa, Horizons, Ronald McDonald House, Voice of the Martyrs, Medical Benevolence Foundation, and our other sponsored child, Anyelo in Guatemala - in your prayers.

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 East Africa are posted on the bulletin board in the narthex.

SESSION MEETING-THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-NOVEMBER 14, 2016

ACTION ITEMS

1. A motion was made to approve the minutes of October 10th and 24th, as well as the Congregational Meeting Minutes of October 9th, for submission to the congregation.
2. A motion was made to authorize the use of Post Memorial Hall by Chuck Davey for a birthday party for his granddaughter on Saturday, December 3rd, no sooner than 3:30, because of the luncheon sponsored by the Senior God Squad at noon time.

CLERK'S REPORT

- Next Communion will be served: December 4th by Jerry Whitman (Intinction). December 11th by Dean Calamaras, Deena Dominy, Doris Calamaras, and Eric Ofori.
- Miscellaneous Information: Newly elected Elders will be examined at the next Business meeting.

PASTOR'S REPORT

- The Albany Presbytery's Administrative Commission on East Hebron United Presbyterian Church will present the merger finalization between them and West Hebron United Presbyterian Church at the Presbytery meeting on November 16th. The new church will be called Hebron United Presbyterian Church.
- We continued our study of **How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth** by Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, chapter 10.

UPWARD MINISTRY (Encounter, Exalt, Enjoy)

WORSHIP & PRAYER - Planning for the Advent and Christmas Season.

INWARD MINISTRY (Encourage, Equip)

CONGREGATIONAL CARE - Visitations, cards, and calls continue.

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

- Women's Bible Study will have a few more meetings before Christmas break.
- Luncheon sponsored by the Senior God Squad is Saturday December 3rd at noon, catered lunch by (local) Carols, and entertainment by (local) harpist. Collection of individual serving food items for Ronald McDonald House in Albany, as well as financial contributions.

OUTWARD MINISTRY (Engage, Evangelize, Extend)

OUTREACH & MISSIONS

- Spending for November: \$500-Capital City Rescue Mission, \$600-Bangladesh Youth For Christ, \$200-InterVarsity (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute & Russell Sage College), \$500-Capital District Youth For Christ
- We will be serving the evening meal at Capital City Rescue Mission on December 17th.
- Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes will be delivered to the distribution center this week. We collected 43 boxes.
- Throughout the winter we will be collection winter clothing for Capital City Rescue Mission.
- Redesign of the church website is almost done.
- Working on letterhead, newsletter cover, and brochure to incorporate the new logo.
- An example of some of the things that our dollars do for the missions that we support:
 - **Gideons International** – Distribution of Bibles/Testaments: 3275
 - **Capital District Youth For Christ** – Building relationships with and introducing youth to the Lord:
 - **Capital City Rescue Mission** - Now providing for 240 each night, 270,000 meals provided each year, 10,000 articles of clothing provided each week, 3,200 medical visits provided this year, 40 transitional apartments now in use.

STEWARDSHIP (Upward, Inward, Outward)

GENERAL FUND/FINANCE

- We had a positive cash flow for October of \$6,737.48. This gives us a year-to-date surplus of \$703.70.
- It is also noted that our Mission Spending Plan is now at 15% of budgeted income.

PROPERTY

- Had a Fall work group that.
- Currently looking to perform needed prep work to prepare for Winter.

PERSONNEL - Working on staff evaluations.

ALBANY PRESBYTERY

- The transition work continues.
- There will be a first reading of the Ministry Plan for Congregational Revitalization and a

first reading of recommendations for a new staffing pattern.

- Rev. Jerry McKinney's term as Moderator ends. Ruling Elder Cara Molyneaux will be installed as the new Moderator and Ruling Elder Arthur Fullerton will be installed as Vice-Moderator.

NEW BUSINESS

- We will examine the newly elected Ruling Elders at the Business meeting on December 12th.
 - The Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday January 29, 2017.
 - Pastor John brought to our attention the dwindling attendance for Sunday mornings and asked us to be in prayer about that and to pray for growth.
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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 14. What is sin?

Sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the law of God.

Q 15. What was the sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created?

The sin whereby our first parents fell from the estate wherein they were created was their eating the forbidden fruit.

Q 16. Did all mankind fall in Adam's first transgression?

The covenant being made with Adam, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression.

Q 17. Into what estate did the Fall bring mankind?

The Fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.

Q 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate into which man fell?

The sinfulness of that estate into which man fell consists in: the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.

Q 19. What is the misery of that estate into which man fell?

All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under His wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever.

Q 20. Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery?

God, having out of His mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.

Bible Quiz for December 2016

Our quiz questions come from the Old Testament book of “Esther”, which will form the content of our sermon series through the months of November and December. For this quiz our questions will come from chapters 6 through 10 of “Esther”.

1. When Mordecai the Jew was honored by the king, who was the person who led Mordecai through the streets of Susa?
2. Where did the king go after Esther identified Haman as the man who sought to destroy the Jews?
3. When the king returned what did he catch Haman doing?
4. Who told Xerxes about the “gallows” that Haman had built upon which he sought to hang Mordecai?
5. True or False: When Xerxes learned of Haman’s plan to have all the Jews in his kingdom killed he wrote an edict rescinding that previous command?
6. What was the date when Haman had arranged for the Jews in Persia to be slaughtered?
7. After Haman was killed, who was promoted to take his place?
8. True or False: Mordecai was permitted by Xerxes to write an edict that would allow all the Jews in Persia to defend themselves, and even blunder their enemies, on the same day those enemies were to attack the Jews.
9. True or False: Esther petitioned the king to have all the sons of Haman hanged on gallows?
10. What is the name of the Jewish feast that is the result of the deliverance of the Jews by God in response to the attempted slaughter of them by Haman?
11. Bonus Question: About whom was the author of “Esther” speaking when the author closes by identifying this person as one who worked for the good of the people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews?



*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