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March 2016

“On the Cross of Christ”

“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:24-25)

As we move into the month of March, we continue our journey through the Lenten season – a season that will culminate with our Holy Week activities.

Holy week is the most significant week in the life of the church, as it begins with Palm Sunday, moves through Maundy Thursday and Jesus’ last supper, and closes at the cross. And then the time of waiting until Jesus’ mission culminates with His glorious resurrection of Easter Sunday.

And Easter is certainly a day of celebration, but first we must move through Friday, and the cross, and the sacrifice of our Lord for us and for our forgiveness and redemption. And then we celebrate.

To help us in that movement, and to help us better appreciate and celebrate Christ’s victory over sin and death, I want to take the time in this newsletter to reflect upon the cross -- its meaning and significance – it’s necessity and sufficiency.

And I want to do so because we live in a day when Christians love to talk about Jesus’ sinless life, His victorious resurrection, and His glorious ascension, but they often want to skip over the cross – the horror, the shame, the blood – even to the point of claiming that it isn’t essential to the gospel.

But nothing can be further from the truth.

In fact, our freedom from the penalty of sin and it’s power over us each day is only possible because of Jesus’ substitutionary sacrifice for sin’s debt – a debt that could only be paid through Jesus’ crucifixion. (Rom 6:23a; 2 Cor 5:21)

Now, this topic may seem like one best reserved for theology professors, but I believe a right understanding of the cross will help Christians not only in understanding important theological concepts, but in working through the problems of real life – problems like how to overcome marital struggles, and how to raise godly kids, and how to manage one’s finances, and how to face devastating ever terminal illness, and how to walk with integrity in a world of dishonesty.

In fact, there’s no more practical subject in all the Bible than the subject of the cross of Jesus Christ. After all, the cross reveals the character of God. The love and justice of God meet at the cross. God’s wrath is satisfied and God’s grace is magnified at the cross of Jesus. And so, if we want to grow our knowledge of and deepen our love for God, we must have a right understanding of the significance of the cross. If we want to experience the power and presence of God to face life’s challenges, we must have a right understanding of the significance of the cross. If we want honestly to address the gravity of our sinfulness and of our desperate need for deliverance, we must have a right understanding of the

significance of the cross. If we want to experience genuine peace and joy in our lives, we must have a right understanding of the significance of the cross.

The cross is the place where the wounds of sin are healed. Through the cross of Jesus Christ there's hope for the grieving, peace for the anxious, encouragement for the depressed, acceptance for the lonely, comfort for the hurting, and strength for the weak.

The apostle Peter believed a right understanding of the significance of the cross could bring such help to the people of God, for remember, he wrote the words recorded at the opening of this newsletter to a people who were suffering real hardship. Peter wrote words about the wounds of the Savior to slaves who were being beaten. Peter wrote words of hope to people who lost everything because they wouldn't deny the Lordship of Jesus. Peter knew that meditating upon the cross would produce a heart of gratitude and joy even amidst trials. And so Peter took the time to turn the eyes of the persecuted church – and of all Christians -- to the cross.

Satan, on the other hand, hates the cross, because it sealed his doom. Every cult, as well as many false teachers, hate the cross because it exposes their arrogance and their ignorance. Fallen humanity hates the cross because it unmask our pride as it confronts our sinfulness.

The cross of Jesus Christ – and all it signifies -- finds tremendous opposition in our day because the necessity of the cross flows from the reality of sin. And many in our day don't like to face the fact that we're sinners. Instead we try to convince ourselves that we're good people who deserve God's blessings – assuming we even believe in God.

But then, if we can convince ourselves that we're not sinners in need of a Savior -- if we can convince ourselves that we don't need to repent or face the wrath of a holy God – then we have no need for the cleansing blood of Jesus (Rom 2:5). And if we foolishly believe such lies, then the cross becomes a crude and archaic idea once used to manipulate the masses, but that no longer has a place within our enlightened society.

Such is the reasoning of many in our day – and even of many in the church. But such thinking is spiritually dangerous. The truth is, in one way or another, all our problems stem from our own sin or from the sin others commit against us or within society. The truth is, at the center of all life's problems is the penalty sin brings upon us, and the power sin has over us.

But then, the good news of the gospel is that, through Christ's death on the cross, we can be delivered from both the penalty and the power of sin. In other words, the cross is central to life-and-hope-and-peace with our Creator God and with each other.

And so we're going to look closely at the significance of the cross. And we're going to do that by looking in particular at what the cross has done about both the penalty of sin and the power of sin.

Now, our first claim upon examining the significance of the cross is that through the cross those who turn to Jesus are delivered from the penalty of sin. And we're delivered from the penalty of sin because Jesus took that penalty upon Himself. This is what Peter taught when, he wrote: **“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.”** (1 Pt 2:24a)

I want us to note that by using the word **“tree”** (Greek, ξύλον) rather than **“cross”** (Greek σταυρός) Peter was alluding to the Old Testament book of Deuteronomy, chapter 21, where Moses described the penalty for a condemned criminal – that his body be hung upon a tree. (Dt 21:22)

This hanging upon a tree was to show that the condemned person was cursed by God.

And that's what Jesus endured for us, for as Paul wrote to the church at Galatia: **“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.”** (Gal 3:13)

What Paul said to the church in Galatia, and what Peter was saying in this passage above, is that Jesus took on Himself the condemnation that we deserve because of our sin against God. The justice of

God demands that a penalty be paid for sin (Rom 3:25, 6:23a; Heb 9:22). We understand this, for even in our imperfection, we know that justice requires that some penalty be paid when laws are broken.

Christ took upon Himself the penalty that we incur from breaking God's good and perfect Law (Ps 19:7-11; Isa 53:12). But how could Jesus take our place and be our substitute? Peter answered that indirectly by mentioning Christ's body (σῶμα), and in so doing he called attention to Jesus' humanity (Jn 1:14; Phil 2:8). Because Jesus was a human being like us – while maintaining His full deity (Col 2:9) -- He could be a substitute for us. (2 Cor 5:21a)

After all, since it was the human race that sinned, it's the human race that must in some way pay for that sin. (1 Cor 15:22)

But the only way to pay for the sins of humanity is for a human being who is perfect – without sin in Himself – to offer His lifeblood in payment for our sin (Heb 2:17, 9:22). And Jesus is the only one among the human race who committed no sin (1 Pt 2:22; Isa 53:9). In turn, not only is Jesus capable of being that right and perfect payment for the penalty our sin deserves, only Jesus is able to do so.

Of course, His “bearing” of our sins doesn't mean that Jesus became a sinner. Rather, this idea of bearing our sins speaks of a legal transaction in which God the Father transferred to God the Son the penalty we deserve – as if He sinned and as if He deserved the penalty.

At the same time, because Jesus merited God's full acceptance and blessing -- because He perfectly fulfilled God's Law, having never sinned -- Jesus was willing and able to credit (impute) to us His righteousness – His right standing with the Father. And so, although we're sinners, according to God's accounting in Christ, God sees us as righteous – God sees us as if we merit His favor.

Of course, one thing we learn in Jesus' taking of our sins upon Himself is that God doesn't take sin lightly. Although being His only begotten Son, still Jesus had to face the penalty sin deserves so that the integrity of God's justice might be honored.

We live in a day of loose justice. People commit various crimes and sometimes get merely a slap on the wrist; and sometimes even get off “scot-free.”

Unfortunately many people think God works the same way. They shrug off sin as if it's no big deal to God – that God will “get over it.” But the Bible is clear: one day all sin will be judged (2 Tim 4:1; Rev 6:10). And either we can accept the forgiveness Jesus offers, trust in Him, commit to living in gratitude and obedience to Him, and allow His payment to cover our sins; or, we can try to face the penalty of our sins on our own. In either case, the cross shows us that perfect justice will be done. The penalty of sin will be paid in full. And that payment is death. And it will either be our death, or the death of the One and only One who can be our perfect substitute.

The story is told about an event during the Napoleonic Wars. Back then men were conscripted into the French army by a lottery system. If your name was drawn you had to go off to battle. The only exception was if you could find someone who would take your place. On one occasion, a man was drafted but he refused to go. And he refused because he said that he was already killed in battle two years earlier. At first the authorities questioned his sanity, but the man was adamant that the records would show that he had been killed in action. The man then explained his situation. Some two years earlier he was drafted, but because he had a large family to care for, a good friend offered to take his place. That friend was killed in battle. And so the man claimed that since his friend died in his place, it was as if he had died, and so his debt of service to the government was satisfied. That man's case was brought before Napoleon, who decided that the man was correct, the country had no legal claim on him – his obligation was met.

The good news of the cross is that if we accept Jesus as our substitute, and walk with Him by faith, we do not need to fear facing the penalty of sin. Jesus Christ bore our sin on the cross. But for that sacrificial substitution to be applied to us we need to receive His offer. And we receive His offer by believing Jesus is who He claims to be – the eternally existence Son of God – even God in the flesh (Jn

1:1-4, 14, 10:30). And we receive His offer by submitting our lives to living for Him – by walking in love for God and for one another. (Mk 12:30-31)

If you confess faith in Jesus, know that you are delivered from the penalty of your sins. That's what Peter meant when he wrote: **“He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.”**

But that's not all Peter spoke of. Peter went on to write about how Jesus' death not only delivers us from the penalty of sin, but also how Jesus' death delivers us from the power of sin. Peter wrote: “. . . **that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed.**” (1 Pt 1:24)

Now, when Peter says that we **“have been healed”**, the context shows that Peter is talking about spiritual healing. Peter is talking about deliverance from the ongoing power of sin that Jesus' death offers.

There are a few facts about the power of sin which verses 24 and 25 reveal and which we must understand if we're to rightly celebrate the victory of the cross of Christ over sin's power.

First, we must understand that the power of sin causes us to stray from God like lost sheep. Before we turned to Jesus Christ as our sin bearer, we were characterized by straying from the Good Shepherd and consistently going our own way. We were lost even though we may not have known it (And if you have not put your faith in Jesus you are still lost even though you may not admit it.). What's more, like sheep, we were in danger of harm – being unable to rightly care for ourselves.

Now I've never tried shepherding a flock of sheep, but from what I've read from those who have, domestic sheep aren't too bright, and are pretty much defenseless. And so they need continual care to guide them safely to food and drink, and to guard them from predators. In fact, I've read that when sheep wander they're not even smart enough to know that they're lost and in danger. And that sounds a lot like people!

But then, as the Bible compares us to helpless, wandering, sheep, it also speaks of a Good Shepherd. Jesus is that Good Shepherd who comes after us and cares for us. (Jn 10:11, 14)

We all, like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned to our own foolish way (Isa 53:6a). But thanks be to God, He has sent a Good Shepherd to come after us lest our wandering leads to our death! Jesus is that Good Shepherd who wants to draw us to Himself; and even more, who wants to deliver us from the power of sin that causes us to stray from His loving care and protection. (Lk 15:1-7)

Understanding that the power of sin causes us to stray from our loving Good Shepherd, the second thing we need to understand about the power of sin is that it's too powerful for us to overcome by ourselves. In other words, we can't be delivered from the power of sin just by deciding to turn over a new leaf, or make some resolutions.

The only way to overcome the power of sin is through the death of our sin nature, and the establishment of a new nature within us. This is what Paul meant when, speaking of his new life in Christ, he declared: **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”** (Gal 2:20)

When Christ died on the cross, we who believe in Him died with Him. In turn, the Bible tells us that the power of sin over us has been put to death (Rom 6-8; Col 3:1-4). And instead, through the power of Christ in us, we're able to walk, not in the darkness of sin, but in the light of God's righteous character. (2 Cor 5:17)

Because through faith in Jesus we were identified with Jesus in His death, we, in turn, have been raised with Him to newness of life through His resurrection, so that the power of sin over us was broken. (Col 2:12)

Now, although this is true, it sounds too good to be true, especially since we know ourselves. We know that even though we've put our faith in Jesus many of the same evil desires and self-centered behaviors that were a part of our old life are still there. So how can we believe that we're dead to sin? What does the Bible teach by making this claim?

The key to understanding the Bible's teaching is that death, here, doesn't mean cessation of existence but separation. In other words, to say that in Christ we're dead to sin is not to say that we no longer sin, rather, it speaks to the state of our relationship to sin. To say that we're dead to sin is to say that we're no longer slaves to sin, but are instead bondservants to God. We now belong to God – even though we still struggle with sinful behavior. And, because of that separation from sin through Jesus we can now choose to obey God rather than sin.

Whereas prior to faith in Jesus we were sinners who were not able to not sin, now, through Jesus, we have been saved into new life in Christ and are able not to sin. Whereas before even our best efforts were as filthy rags in God's sight, now, we can actually do things that are pleasing in God's sight and that bring glory to His holy name.

When Peter says we're dead to sin (ἀπογίνομαι = to die; to separate from) Peter means that we've been alienated from our sins. It's true that our old nature is not fully done away with as long as we are in these mortal bodies (Rom 7:14-25). But, the power that sin holds over humankind has been broken by the cross -- for those who trust in Jesus. And so we can live separated from sin's dominance – although, sadly, we often still choose sin over that which honors God (1 Jn 1:8).

What's more, being dead to sin speaks not only to what has been done for us in Christ – that we will not be judged for our sin; and that we are no longer slaves to sin; but, being dead to sin speaks to what we are now to do because of our new life in Christ.

Since we've died to sin, we are now called to put to death those behaviors that characterized our fallen nature – things like sexual immorality, dishonesty, jealousy, gossip, greed, and idolatry (Col 3:1-5). Being dead to sin means that we must take radical action to separate ourselves from those things, or people, or places that tempt us to sin. Being dead to sin means that we need to make the choice to deny our sinful cravings and instead to mature into that new position that's ours in Christ – that we should choose to honor our relationship with God instead of surrendering to our selfish passions. To be dead to sin calls us to think upon what is good and right and noble, and to act upon those thoughts. (Phil 4:8-9)

Having died to sin “positionally”, in Christ we're now to live in righteousness – we're to choose to do what God commands, not what our old sinful nature tempts us to do (Gal 5:16-25). And having died to sin means that we're able to do this because the power of Christ in us is greater than the power sin once held over us. (1 Jn 4:4)

Although we are new creations in Christ, we are still sheep as we live in these mortal bodies. But, although still sheep, we need not respond to the voices of those who seek to destroy us. Instead, we must learn to recognize and commit to following God's voice. (Jn 10:1-10)

But then, that voice speaks to us most clearly through His Word – the Bible. And so our first recourse in seeking to be guided by the Good Shepherd is to read His Word. And then, through worship, prayer, the fellowship of believers and the indwelling Spirit, we can find ourselves experiencing in our lives victory over sin – a victory which is already ours “positionally” in Christ.

All this to say that power over sin requires both our initial deliverance through the cross, and the ongoing care of our Great Shepherd and Overseer, through the indwelling Christ.

Peter wrote to encourage a church that was facing many trials and challenges. And many of those challenges could've been eased if the people just denied their faith and succumb to the pressures of the world.

Things are not a lot different today. Although few of us face persecution because of our faith – sometimes it seems life would be so much easier and so much more fun if we went easy on the whole Lordship of Jesus thing, and instead conformed to the behaviors of our fallen world.

Peter wrote to encourage us not to give in no matter how enticing the temptations around us. And Peter seeks to encourage us by reminding us that we're under the watchful eye of the Good Shepherd. The God of creation sees everything we face every moment of every day. God knows our hearts and is able to keep our hearts true to Him, if we yield ourselves to God's leading.

It's sobering to know that God watches our every move. At the same time it's comforting, because the One who sees us isn't watching us to condemn us; rather, the One who sees our moves and knows our hearts is watching over us to guide us and protect us, and lead us into places of peace and joy. (Ps 23:1-6)

As we move toward and celebrate Easter Sunday, I want to remind you of the peace and hope that God wants you to enjoy – peace and hope that can be ours only because of the cross of Jesus, and His resurrection.

And, as we move toward and celebrate Easter Sunday I want to remind you of the new life you have in Jesus: that you can know victory over life's trials and challenges when you choose to walk in obedience to the Lord's leading; that in Christ you have the power to face the struggles of life and be more than conquerors if you would humble yourself, repent of your sins, listen to His voice, and surrender yourself into His care. (Rom 8:38-39; Acts 3:19)

As we move toward and celebrate Easter Sunday I want to remind you of the love of God – a love demonstrated in the cross of Christ.

God loves you! And the cross is an expression of that love – that God cares for His children – and most especially when we are in most need of Him. (Lk 5:31-32, 15:1-6, 19:10)

The story is told of a mother of three children who was questioned by a counselor regarding her love for her children. The mother made the claim that she loved all her children the same. This counselor, being a student of human nature, challenged such a claim, saying, "That's psychologically impossible. There's no way you can love your children the same." The mother was adamant in her claim, but the counselor pushed her until she finally confessed that he was right, she didn't always love her children the same. She admitted: "When one of my children is sick, I love that one more; when one of my children is in pain, I love that one more; when one of my children is confused, I love that one more; when one of my children is lost, I love that one even more. and so, in a sense, I do love them differently." But, she concluded, "I always love each one fully!"

God cares for each of us in the ways we need to bring us healing and wholeness in Him. But regardless of our situation, God loves each one of us fully. And the full expression of His full love is found in the cross. And so, when you look upon the cross in faith: know that through the cross of Jesus you are no longer under the penalty of sin; know that through the cross of Jesus you are no longer under the power of sin; and most especially, when you look upon the cross of Jesus, know that you are loved with a never ending, other worldly, unconditional, complete and perfect love – always and forever.

May the truth of God's love for you, and the demonstration of that redeeming love through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, full you with hope, joy and peace, and we move through the cross and to the glorious truth that Christ is risen! He is risen indeed.

God's peace be with you,

Pastor John



Remember in Prayer...

Our Shut-ins at home:

Tillie Herman, Marcella Goard, June Giles,
Dot McGann

At the Eddy: Dot Multunas, Edna Wells

At Schuyler Ridge: Dolores Robb

At Brookdale: 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

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

PALM SUNDAY – March 20th 10:30



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

MAUNDY THURSDAY – March 24th

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



GOOD FRIDAY – March 25th

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 – March 27th 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 and there will be a fellowship time following the worship service.



Serving This Month

March 6th

Worship Assistants: Kelly Valerio and James McAuley
Greeters: Valerie Bidwell, Vaughn Skarzynski
Head Greeters: Christian Multunas
Nursery: Alice Bentley
Communion: Jen McAuley
Fellowship Hosts: Ofori Family

March 13th

Worship Assistants: Deena Dominy, Jesse Ofori
Greeters: Alice Bentley, Deena Dominy
Head Greeter: Mike Giddings
Nursery: Jen McAuley
Communion: Jerry Whitman, Mike Giddings, Natalia Multunas, Pat Gilmaier
Fellowship Hosts:

March 20th

Worship Assistants: Sue Laz and Sue Stierer
Greeters: Christian Multunas
Head Greeter: Peter Laz
Nursery: Deena Dominy, Angelina Solomon
Communion: Peter Laz, Rob Jensen, Sue Laz, Vera Whitman
Fellowship Hosts: Wendy, Brian, Michael Giddings, Susan Muse

March 27th

Worship Assistants: Peter Laz and Christian Multunas
Greeters: Joe Pasinella
Head Greeter: Andy Miller
Nursery: Wendy Giddings
Communion: Andy Miller, Bill and Christian Multunas, Dean Calamaras
Fellowship Hosts: Valerie Bidwell and Vaughn Skarzynski

Help Fill the Shelves at Hope 7's Food Pantry!

Hope 7's food pantry serves families in need right here in our own community. The need is great and has been growing every year!



During the month of March we will be collecting peanut butter and jelly.

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

Fellowship Hosts Needed

Hosts are needed for Fellowship Time throughout the upcoming months. Fellowship hosts are asked to bring a few snacks for after worship. Coffee, sugar, cream, cold drinks, cups, napkins, and plates are provided. In addition to snacks, you would also be responsible for setting things up and cleaning up afterwards.



You can host on your own or you could work together with others to make the job easier. There is a sign-up sheet near the kitchen showing the Sundays where a host is needed. If you have not hosted before and would like some assistance or if you have questions, please speak with Natalia Multunas.



LENTEN PROGRAM

Wednesday evenings at 6:15

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

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



March Birthdays

3/11 Serena Solomon
 3/12 Dolores Robb
 3/13 Irene Somerville
 3/21 Ann Dwyer
 3/22 Vaughn Skarzynski
 3/25 Sue Stierer
 3/26 Chuck Davey
 3/30 Abby McAuley



General Financial Update for January 2016

	Year to Date	January
Total Income	\$15,027.00	\$15,027.00
Total Expenses	(\$13,951.97)	(\$13,951.97)
Difference	\$ 1,075.03	\$ 1,075.03

The Congregational Care Committee is working on revamping their visitation process. I am in charge of reorganizing this part of the Committee.

I know there are others who would like to be a part of our visitation, so I would ask anyone who is, or might be, interested in being somehow involved, please let me know in person or by phone 283-4147, so we can get together and work through what we can do to help our shut-ins or any member who needs contact.

Thank you for your concern.

In Christian Love,

Vera Whitman
 Inward Ministry Member and
 in charge of our visitations

Ministry Job Openings at Capital City Rescue Mission

Capital City Rescue Mission is looking for a few individuals with a heart to help the desperate, the destitute, and the hungry in Jesus name. Two positions are currently available. One is for a nurse in the free medical clinic. This position is part-time, 16-20 hours per week. The second position is for a female resident assistant for the women and children's shelter. This position is full-time, live-in. More information is posted on the bulletin board in the church office.



Horizon's International Student Game Night



March 5th from 4:00-9:00 PM

We will have the privilege of hosting a game night for International Students and their friendship partners on March 5th. There will be snacks and time to play games throughout the afternoon. Then we will have pizza and end the night by watching a movie that presents the gospel message. This is a wonderful opportunity to interact with individuals from all around the world. Everyone is encouraged to come and join in the fun for all or just part of the evening. If you can help with set up, clean up, or serving snacks please speak with Pastor John or Sue Laz.



A Meal for the Unseen An Evening With Libby Little Friday, March 11th at 6:00 PM At Loudonville Community Church

The Unseen – the marginalized people of Asia and the Arab world – live in conditions of material and spiritual poverty. Most have never met a follower of Jesus, but God has not forgotten them.

Come and enjoy a simple meal featuring flavors from their world and glimpse how God is reaching out to them through Interserve partners.

There is no cost for this event but an offering will be received to support this work.

Please RSVP by March 7th.
Email: mealforunseen@gmail.com
Phone: 800-809-4440

Bible Quiz for March 2016

As we move through the Lenten season our sermon series has been and will be on the "I Am" statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John. And so the following questions will be connected in some way to those seven statements.

1. Traditionally, in John's Gospel, how many "I Am" statements are associated with Jesus (those statements by Jesus that make a comparison of Jesus with some thing or person or event)?
2. How often does Jesus make the statement, "I am the Vine"?
3. How often does Jesus make the statement, "I am the Bread of Life"?
4. What is Jesus' final "I Am" statement as recorded in John's Gospel?
5. Which of the seven "I am" statements was made on the last day of the "Feast of Tabernacles"?
6. What miracle did Jesus perform right before He declared, "I am the Resurrection and the Life"?
7. What two miracles did Jesus perform shortly before He declared, "I am the Bread of Life"?
8. When Jesus said "I am the door/gate" to what was He the "door/gate" for?
9. When Jesus declared "I am the Good Shepherd", to whom was He contrasting Himself?
10. What did Jesus say that a "Good Shepherd" is willing to do for His sheep, in contrast to the actions of a hired hand?

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 ourselves. 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 61. What is forbidden in the Fourth Commandment?

The Fourth Commandment forbids the omission, or careless performance, of the duties required, and the profaning the day by idleness, or doing that which is in itself sinful, or by unnecessary thoughts, words, or works, about our worldly employments or recreations.

Q 62. What are the reasons annexed to the Fourth Commandment?

The reasons annexed to the Fourth Commandment are: God’s allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, His challenging a special propriety in the seventh, His own example, and His blessing the Sabbath Day.

Q 63. Which is the Fifth Commandment?

The Fifth Commandment is, “Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you.”

Q 64. What is required in the Fifth Commandment?

The Fifth Commandment requires the preserving the honor, and performing the duties, belonging to everyone in their several places and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals.

Q 65. What is forbidden in the Fifth Commandment?

The Fifth Commandment forbids the neglecting of, or doing anything against, the honor and duty which belongs to everyone in their several places and relations.

Q 66. What is the reason annexed to the Fifth Commandment?

The reason annexed to the Fifth Commandment is a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God’s glory, and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment.

In Sunday school (preschool – sixth grade classes) we are going on a journey through the Bible beginning with Genesis.

So far we have learned about creation and thought about all the wonderful things that God created. Shortly after God created this beautiful world, the serpent tempted Eve and sin entered the world. But we learned that God already had a plan to save his people from sin.

In time the world became filled with sin and God decided to destroy the world he had made with a great flood. But Noah was a righteous man so God saved Noah and his family. God promised that he would never again flood the whole earth and he gave the rainbow as a sign of that promise. We discovered that God is trustworthy and will keep all of his promises to us.

We are now learning about the Patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We learned that Abraham trusted God and was obedient to and worshipped God. Abraham was also thoughtful and unselfish as he let Lot choose which land he wanted first.

We are also creating a Bible timeline in the hallway outside the classroom. Stop downstairs and check it out!



From Music and Audio-Visual Ministries...

“*Passion-ate About Steak*”

Crazy title, right? Give me a minute--I'll get there! With our early Easter this year, (can't the various popes get their heads together and fix ONE date for every year?!) the gap between the joyous revelry of Christmas music and the more somber strains of Lent and Holy Week is particularly short. Just in Handel's *Messiah* alone, if you move directly from the final chorus of the Christmas portion into the first movement of the Passion section, you're likely to strip an emotional gear. The major key and raucous, "His Yoke Is Easy" gives way to the minor key dirge of "Behold the Lamb of God." Surely, we need a lengthy intermission before taking that step!

The undisputed master of sacred/classical music, Johann Sebastian Bach, wrote two *Passions*--one according to St. John's Gospel and the other set to St. Matthew's. These are both large-scale works which take the listener through the passion readings in both gospels, utilizing choruses, arias, and *recitatives* (short declamatory movements in dialog form that move the narrative of the story along). They are integral to the storyline, obviously, but what hearers wait for are the beautiful melodies of the arias and the majestic power of the choruses. Forasmuch as Bach's music is held in such high regard now, it was not the case immediately following his death in 1750. Many of his prized musical manuscripts were carelessly trashed or tragically sold for mundane purposes.

Enter the young Felix Mendelssohn, who was born nearly 60 years after Bach's death. His life was short (38 years) but we owe him a huge debt of gratitude for how he single handedly led revivals of Bach's music and for how he rescued so many of his treasured works in printed form. Felix, like Bach, got his start as a church organist and introduced the world to many of Johann Sebastian's gems for that instrument. It was one of those *Passions*, though, that produced one of the more amusing stories of how such masterpieces came to be. You see, one of the more run-of-the-mill purposes for which Bach's scores had been disposed of after his death, was to be sold to a local meat market in Leipzig, where both Bach and Mendelssohn lived and served. Ream after ream of manuscript paper was used to wrap steaks, roasts, chicken, and fish. And no one thought anything of it. Until Felix Mendelssohn, that is.

Felix's mother came home from the market one day and he spied how the meats she had bought home were wrapped. "Where did you get this?", he exclaimed, as his mother identified the local market. Aghast at his discovery, Mendelssohn ran to the market and bought up all the "manuscript" meat wrapping paper the butcher had. And as he began to piece it all together, he discovered, yes--the great "St. Matthew Passion" of Bach! Before long, musicians and singers were gathered, rehearsed, and the world made a tremendous new discovery.

Mendelssohn never quite made a tremendous name for himself as a composer (though I've probably played his "Wedding March" from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* a few hundred times in almost fifty years of playing weddings). But he has definitely earned a place in countless hearts over the last 300 years for his role in rescuing the nearly lost art of church music's most ardent champion. The name "Bach" in German may mean, "brook," but it was Beethoven who said, "Not *brook* but *ocean* should be his name!"

With Joy in the Journey,

Sal Scicchitano



Mission Spotlight: Capital City Rescue Mission

The Capital City Rescue Mission (CCRM) is dedicated to proclaiming the life-changing Gospel of Jesus Christ to the homeless and needy of the capital region. Providing for the whole person - body, mind and spirit- that they will return to society maturing in Christ as productive citizens.

CCRM serves 3 nutritious meals daily, 365 days a year without cost to the homeless and to poor and needy residents of the community.

The computerized Learning Center at the Mission serves the homeless, program residents and needy community members at no cost. As an individualized, learning-based program it provides an innovative alternative to conventional education.

The NOVA program is the core of the Mission's Education Center. It focuses on character, education and employment. A certified teacher administers the following: Adult literacy; Detection and correction of learning problem; Reading, writing and thinking skills; GED readiness; Computer literacy; Development of career employment skills.

Emergency Shelter for men is provided for 30 consecutive nights in the 60-bed dorm, as well as up to 30 overflow mats downstairs.

Men who are residents of the "New Life" discipleship/recovery program and women who reside in the New Faith Family Center are sheltered for 9 months to a year as part of their program which includes education and career development, work therapy, Bible study and counseling, life skills, addiction recovery, anger management, parenting skills, health care, and child care.

A free on-site medical clinic at the mission is staffed and administered by an experienced Nurse Practitioner to address episodic, primary care for the poor.

Each evening folks gather in the Chapel to sing and hear the message of hope and salvation from God's Word. The good news of Jesus is the central message.

Donated, clean, usable clothing supplied by generous donors is given away free of charge at the Mission's clothing distribution center, Blessingdale's.

Because of the numerous services and spiritual hope the Mission offers, it has grown to be the largest shelter in the city.

Rev. Perry Jones, executive director of the mission, writes, "*Thank you for meeting the challenge and giving generously to help Albany's neediest, most down and out men, women, and children. More than food, more than shelter, clothing, medical care and recovery you are offering hope for today and hope for eternity.*"

Please remember Capital City Rescue Mission and our other mission partners – Hope 7, Ronald McDonald House, Capital District YFC, InterVarsity (RPI/Sage and HVCC), the Medical Benevolence Foundation of the PC(USA), Voice of the Martyrs, Peter Halder in Bangladesh, Gideons International, and our sponsored children, Emerson in El Salvador and 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.

SESSION MEETING-THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH-FEBRUARY 8, 2016

ORDER OF THE DAY

- Sal Sceccitano gave a presentation for a proposal to upgrade the Sanctuary Video Projector, monies could come from any combination of Worship Resources Fund, Technology Capital Fund, or Memorial Fund.
- A detailed discussion was held, action will be taken at the February 22nd Session meeting.

ACTION ITEMS

1. A motion was made to approve the minutes of January 11th and 25th.
2. A motion was made to approve the Annual Clerk's Statistical Report.
3. A motion was made to approve the expenditure of \$495 from the Manville Mission Fund to sponsor Abby McAuley on a Mission Trip with InterVarsity from Boston College, to New Orleans in early March, to assist with rebuilding from Hurricane Katrina.

UPWARD MINISTRY

WORSHIP & PRAYER

- Recordings of the Sunday sermons have been well received and appreciated by our shut-ins and others.
- We will be updating the Prayer chain.

INWARD MINISTRY

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

- **College Student Ministry** – Will be sending out gifts to our college going students for their Spring semester.
- **Visitations** – Will be setting up a visitation schedule and to get others involved with visitations to our shut-ins.

CHRISTIAN NURTURE

- **Women's Bible Study** – will be starting a study on the Letters of the Apostle John.
- **Seniors Ministry** – Working on a date for Spring gathering.

OUTWARD MINISTRY

OUTREACH AND MISSIONS

- Spending for February: \$500-Capital City Rescue Mission, \$1,200-Medical Benevolence Foundation, \$300-InterVarsity (Hudson Valley Community College) (Nate Smith is working on fundraising and hopes to be on campus by March 1st)
- Still working on a church logo and a tagline. Nate Smith is a graphic artist and will be helping us with this.
- The Mission budget for 2016 was handed out and will be included with these minutes.
- We are looking at doing the Special Mission Offering again this year.
- We will be doing the Community Garage Sale again this year.

STEWARDSHIP

GENERAL FUND/FINANCE

- The January 2016 financial report was handed out and reviewed. We had a positive cash flow during January of \$1,075.03.

PROPERTY

- During January:
 - 1 ½ pews were moved from the balcony to Post Memorial Hall.
 - New racks were built for the tables and chairs, and they were moved to the stage area.
 - Chairs and Storage Cabinets were moved to the balcony.

Easter Celebration!

March 26th 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!!

(A parent or guardian is expected to stay.)

*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