

The Third PRESS



THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
EXALTING GOD / PROCLAIMING CHRIST / MAKING DISCIPLES

September 2021

“Essential Christianity”

1 John 1:1-4

Back when he was on TV, if you’ve ever watch Jay Leno at night you know that at times he did this thing where he would go to the streets and ask random people some basic questions whose answers one would expect everyone to know, like, “How many states form the United States of America?”

He called those episodes, “Jay-Walking”. And some of the answers he received from the most basic of questions were amazingly sad.

That noted, I would be curious to see what kind of answers Jay might get today if he asked people: “What is Christianity?”

I know others have done this in the past and received such answers as: “an organization”; an “ethical system”; and sadly, “a tool used by capitalists to repress the poor”.

Others have gotten to the subject from a different direction. They asked, “Who is Jesus?” Of course some knew, but many had no clue. For example, some said Jesus was merely a good person, or an inspirational leader on the order of Mahatma Gandhi, or Martin Luther King Jr. The sad truth is, there’s an ever growing number of people in our society – especially among our youth, who have no idea who Jesus is.

Of course, such confusion about Christianity, and Jesus, is not limited to those outside the church. Such confusion can be found even within a Christian church. In fact, it’s such confusion that led John to write this letter near the end of his life.

The sad reality is that many who call themselves Christians don’t really understand what Christianity is in its’ essence. And so John wrote to instruct the church, because John understood the ever-present threat of false teachers.

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A community of Christ
-followers where,

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The Lord Jesus Christ

The Ministers of the
Church are...
Every Believer

The Passion of the
Church is...
to be Spirit empowered
ministers of
reconciliation to God,
inviting all people to
faith in Christ Jesus
our Lord and
to holiness of life.

—
Our Mission:

To Love our God and
Neighbor

To Proclaim the Gospel
through Word and Deed

To Make Disciples of
Jesus the Christ



To see how John addresses the confusion about Christianity within parts of the church near the end of the 1st century let's look at how John begins this his first letter. There he wrote:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched -- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.”

In the early days of the expansion of the Christian church there was general agreement by the apostles as to what the faith they were spreading was. Unfortunately, over a relatively short period of time a variety of heretical movements started to crop up. And their charismatic leaders – those “wolves in sheep's clothing” -- were soon drawing people away for the true gospel to follow a distortion that was no gospel at all. (Gal 1:6-7a; Mt 7:15; Acts 20:29)

With this growing distortion of the message that was being proclaimed, it was only natural for believers to start asking: “What is Christianity? And, is the existence of Jesus really essential to my faith? And if not, what is essential?”

Those were important questions both because truth matters, and, because the assurance of one's salvation is dependent upon the foundation upon which their faith is built.

Those same questions are still important today, because unless we understand what it is we believe, and why, we will become easy targets for false teachers.

To the churches to whom John wrote, these questions regarding Christianity and what it is the people were to believe about Jesus needed to be addressed if the church was to stand fast in the faith against the growing tide of Gnosticism.

As you may recall, the two central tenets of Gnosticism were dualism and illumination.

Dualism is the belief that the material is evil and the spiritual is good. One implication of such teaching was that as long as one is devout in spiritual matters, how one lived in this world didn't matter. Also, because the material is evil, Gnostics didn't believe God interacted directly with creation.

Illumination is the belief that Gnostics have special knowledge of God. It was this “hidden knowledge”, along with their “secret rituals”, that they believed set them apart from the common person, and, was the cause of their salvation.

Obviously, the spread of Gnosticism within the church could unsettle believers, causing them to question their beliefs as well as the integrity and authority of the church leadership. In the opening verses of this letter John addressed many such concerns “head on” as he led off with a preface that reads like an introduction to a defense of the faith.

Wasting no time with pleasantries, John moved directly into answering the challenges brought upon the church by the false teaching of the Gnostics. In those opening verses John spoke of the essential core of Christianity, and the evidence we have for believing those truths.

Then, John spoke to the goal of this proclamation.

To see how John developed his “defense for the faith” let's first consider what he says about the essence of our faith.

The most important thing that John has to say in this preface to his letter is that Christianity is Jesus Christ. Without Christ – the Incarnate Son of God -- there would be no Christianity, for Christianity began with God's revelation of Himself in Jesus. Christianity is Christ or it is nothing!

Sounds basic to us, but it's amazing how many people believe or teach something different – to the point that some will even claim it's possible to be a “Christian” even if Jesus never really existed.

For John, Christianity was not merely about the idea of Jesus, but about the actual person and work of Jesus!

With that said we need to realize that the opening of John's letter does raise a technical problem. The issue in question is: "At what point in this preface did John actually start to mention Jesus?" And, a subsequent question is: "How did John do this?"

At first glance many readers would assume the answer is that John mentioned Jesus – although indirectly – when he used the word, "Word" which is translated from the Greek word "logos" (λόγος). And many would equate "Word" as used in the expression "Word of life" in verse 1, with Jesus, because this is clearly what John did in his prologue to his Gospel (Jn 1:1, 14). In fact, even our NIV translation assumes this with its capitalization of "Word".

If we assume this understanding, the word translated "life" (ζωή) then serves as the modifier. But that interpretation is probably not the best here.

As we read through John's letter, we discover that John's emphasis wasn't on Jesus as the "Word" who was with God and who was God – as was the case in the opening of John's Gospel (Jn 1:1) -- but upon Jesus as "the Life" (Jn 14:6), and even more, as the "Eternal Life" (1 Jn 5:20).

Jesus is the "Life" who was with the Father and has appeared to us. In turn, the "word of Life" is the message about Jesus.

For some reading this, what I'm saying may not seem to matter, but it did matter in the context within which John wrote. The Gnostics were quite comfortable speaking of Jesus as "the Word" because that left Jesus in the abstract – as a symbol of knowledge and illumination. But to speak of Jesus as "the Life" brought Jesus into the material world as a living person. To speak of Jesus as "the Life" opened the door for teaching about a relationship with God. And Gnostics had a hard time accepting that a holy God would have anything to do with sinful people. And so, to speak as John did here challenged the Gnostic idea that God would keep His distance from us.

Knowledge was important to the Gnostic, but to talk about "life", and even more, "eternal life" for material beings, created problems at the core of their theology.

By referring to Jesus as "Eternal Life" in verse 2, John was giving substance to the person of Jesus. What's more, to talk about the "Life" as one who was seen, touched and examined, means that the church already had before them all they needed for life – that there was no need for "special illumination". Contrary to what the Gnostics claimed, there are no "secrets" about how to know God because Jesus has made Him known (Jn 1:18). All we need to know about God for life and godliness has been revealed in the person of Jesus as testified to in the gospel – which is "the word of Life".

John's particular use of words here are meant to show that Jesus is the living God, and, to show that the "word of Life" is the only authoritative proclamation of who Jesus is. What's more, John's use of the word "beginning" speaks to the beginning of the Christian era when this gospel message began being proclaimed. And this message that was being proclaimed speaks to what John and others had heard, seen, beheld, and touched while Jesus was among them.

There's an important principle here. While it's true that it's impossible to proclaim Christ without doctrine – that knowledge and the illumination of the Spirit are fundamental in knowing God – it's equally true that Christianity is not about a system of thought so much as it is about a person. Jesus is the essential core of the Christian faith, and is to be always at the center of the message we proclaim. This also means that fundamentally, Christianity is not first and foremost "what" we believe "on", but "who" we believe "in".

The Gnostics had a system of belief, just as many religions do. But a system can't give life.

What Christianity has to offer, that no other faith system has, is life – eternal life in Christ through the life of Jesus.

After presenting the truth that the essence of Christianity is Christ -- John spoke to the evidence supporting this claim. Confronted with the Gnostic challenge regarding the incarnation of the Christ – that He was fully man while remaining fully God -- John first presented objective evidence of the person-hood of Jesus.

Speaking on behalf of all the apostles, John wrote to Christians saying that he examined the evidence and came to understand that Jesus is who He claimed to be – the Savior of humankind.

And John presented several “channels” to support what he was saying.

The first “channel” John mentioned was the ear.

John was writing about what he had “heard”, and in so doing was referring to the very words that came from the mouth of Jesus. And they were life-impacting words (Mk 1:22).

Recall how, when Jesus asked the disciples if they wanted to leave Him like the crowds who only followed for the miracles, Peter responded: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68). What’s more, when some officers came to arrest Jesus and heard Him speak they returned to the religious leaders empty handed, saying: “No one ever spoke the way this man does” (Jn 7:46).

When we open the Bible and read the words of Jesus and the testimony of the apostles and prophets we will be blessed – if we have ears to hear what the Spirit of God has to say to us. (Mt 11:15, 13:16-17)

The second “channel” through which John gained knowledge of Jesus was the eye.

John says that he saw Jesus. Of all the sense words used by John in this preface – words like hear, see, look upon, and touch – apparently this idea of “seeing” was most important to John since he repeated it in each of the first three verses.

So why should “seeing” have been so important to John?

Perhaps it was because of John’s experience at Jesus’ tomb that first Easter morning, where John used the word “saw” to describe his own “coming to believe” that Jesus is the Son of God.

As you may recall, chapter 20 of John’s gospel tells of the events of the morning of the resurrection, beginning with Mary’s arrival at the tomb. When Mary told Peter, John and the other disciples that the body of Jesus was missing, Peter and John ran to the tomb, with John running on ahead. In his Gospel, John wrote that he stopped at the door and “looked” in, and as a result, he “saw” the linen cloths in which the body of Jesus had been wrapped. The word for “saw” that John used to describe when he first looked into the tomb is the word “blepo” (βλέπω), which was the more common New Testament Greek word for “see” and usually referred to the physical sense of observing.

John then tells us that Peter arrived and went into the tomb. And John tells us that Peter also “saw” the linen cloths. But John used a different word to describe Peter’s “seeing.” The word attributed to Peter’s “seeing” is the word “theoreo” (θεωρέω) which means “to behold with intelligence, to perceive”. Apparently there was something about the grave clothes that caused Peter not merely “to look upon” them, but “to consider” what he was seeing and “to perceive” that something beyond the natural had occurred.

At this point, the significance of the grave-clothes must have got through to John, because he tells us that he too “saw”.

But this time his “seeing” – as in our passage today (ὁράω) -- meant not merely that he observed, but that he “got it” – that he came to understand what the absence of Jesus’ body meant – that he came to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of mankind; and that Jesus had risen from the dead, just as He said He would (Jn 20:8).

It’s this word for “seeing with insight” (horao = ὁράω), that John used three times in the preface of this letter (1 Jn 1:1-4).

Others might doubt that Jesus is the Christ, but John had heard Jesus speak, and looked closely at His life, and with insight and understanding came to believe. For John, such “seeing” is “believing”.

John and the other apostles “heard”, and “saw”, and, as he stated in verse 1, “touched” the One who is “Life”.

Here, John says specifically that they touched Him with their hands. Most likely what John was recalling was Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance in the Upper Room, when Jesus invited them to touch His hands and put their hand into His side, and know that He is alive and real and material – and believe (Jn 20:27; Lk 24:39).

John gave objective testimony in saying that he and the other apostles saw-and-heard-and-touched Jesus. In doing so he was maintaining that the gospel they proclaimed was based upon real, historical events from eyewitnesses whose testimony was as valid as that of any eyewitness in any age. What’s more, he maintained that the real human Jesus is also the eternal Son of God who has made Himself known to us.

The objective evidence is there for all who are willing to “see” the truth.

Although that should’ve been enough to silence doubters and false teachers, John continued his defense of the gospel by giving subjective evidence. It’s one thing to see, touch and hear the truth. It’s another when that sense experience works itself into our heart and soul and helps us to embrace the truth. This is what God did for John and the apostles. God revealed Jesus to their hearts.

This seems to be what John meant when he stated two times in verse 2 that this One who is Life “appeared” to them. This “appearing” (phaneroo -- φανερόω) refers to the point at which the apostles came to perceive the glory of the Lord – seeing Jesus as He was (Jn 1:14, 20:28).

No one today can repeat the apostles’ objective experiences of Christ – which is why we need their testimony of Jesus as preserved in the Scriptures. And even with that evidence, all we can do is receive it and make a rational determination as to whether or not we accept it. But what adds credibility to the objective evidence is that with it God also offers subjective evidence. As we come to God with humility and yield ourselves to receive the truth, God’s Spirit opens heart and mind so that we can see and perceive – objectively and subjectively -- that Jesus alone is Lord.

What John was defending is that the historical Jesus who walked this earth, performed miracles, taught like no other person, was crucified upon a cross, and rose from the dead, is the same Jesus who promises that as we trust in Him we receive the gift of eternal life.

The objective and subjective evidence come together in the surrendered heart to see-and-believe that Jesus alone is Lord -- and that knowing Him through faith is both necessary and sufficient for our salvation.

We need no other sacrifice.

We need no other special insight or religious ritual.

This is the message that John and the other apostles came to understand. But as John made clear, this message wasn’t just for them. This “word of Life” is for all people.

John was making clear that there was nothing secret about what He was sharing. Unlike the Gnostic teachers, John was withholding nothing in an attempt to set himself above anyone.

The Gnostics were notorious for withholding their secrets in order to bolster their position and feed their egos. The Gnostics wanted to establish a fellowship of the intellectually and spiritually elite.

The apostles, by contrast, were attempting to “proclaim” to all the world what they had received.

To that end John used three words in describing how the gospel was shared.

First he said, we “testify” (μαρτυρέω -- martyreo) to what we have seen and heard.

The word John used for “testify” is the same word from which we get the word “martyr”. Although we often use the word martyr to identify a person who is killed because of his or her faith, martyr actually applies more broadly to one who witnesses to what he or she has seen and heard.

All followers of Jesus are called to be such “martyrs” – to testify to the truth of the One who offers life and hope and joy. We’re to witness through our lives as our lives demonstrate the power of the gospel.

What’s more, we’re to speak the “word of Life”. In turn, John used the word “proclaim” (ἀπαγγέλλω -- apangello) which means to “announce or report a message”. This addresses our need to actually tell of what God has done for us, and not merely to hope that people will see “God in us” and be changed. The gospel must be proclaimed that others might hear and receive the good news (Rom 10:14-15).

But here “proclaim” speaks to more than just the action of announcing the gospel -- it carries with it a commission to take responsibility for announcing the gospel.

When John wrote that they proclaim to us the “word of Life”, he was indicating that the apostles had been sent forth to make that proclamation. But having been sent to proclaim the gospel also implies that they did so with the authority of the Sender. Jesus not only manifested Himself to the disciples to qualify them as eyewitnesses, but He gave them an authoritative commission to preach the gospel – a commission that becomes ours for our generation.

We read of this at the end of Matthew’s Gospel when Jesus said:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” (Mt 28:18-19)

John used three words in describing how the gospel was shared. The first is “testify” and the second is “proclaim”. The third word John used to describe how the gospel is shared is the word “write” (grapho -- γράφω -- to write).

The apostles bore witness to what they had seen and heard of Jesus, they proclaimed it with authority, and they preserved it in writing. And by God’s gracious provision we have those words, which can open our eyes to the truth, and, in turn, move us to share that truth with others.

In writing to confront the false teachers in the church, John jumped right in to the heart of the matter and reminded the church that what they were told of the gospel was the message God intended for them to receive. And it was and is sufficient. It needed nothing else to supplement it – no hidden teachings, no secret rituals, no “Watchtower Magazine”, no “Book of Mormon”, no “Koran”, no “Cabala”, no “Vedas”, no anything.

But there was still one question that John had to answer, and that is the question of why? Why was John writing to the church? Why was John so concerned about their life in Christ?

John answered that question in verses 3 and 4 as he talked about fellowship and joy, and what makes the two real and complete. John said that Jesus did what He did, and John and the other apostles proclaimed what they proclaimed: so that we may have fellowship – with our Creator God, and with our brothers and sisters in Christ; and, so that we, along with those who have gone before us, and those who follow, may know the fullness of joy in the Lord.

It’s interesting that John spoke of fellowship rather than salvation in these verses. And perhaps he did so because the false teachers were splitting the church with their divisive teaching.

But then, genuine fellowship with God and others can only occur where there is salvation. After all, genuine fellowship with God requires that we be reconciled to God – forgiven of our sins that we might draw near to Him. And genuine fellowship with others requires that we know how to love and serve others – which is a gift from God that can only be ours when we’re walking in right relationship with God.

What gets in the way of genuine joy-filled fellowship with God and others is sin. But the good news of salvation in Christ is that Jesus died for our sins that we might be forgiven, and that, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we might live as new creatures in a new relationship with God and others.

All who have come to Jesus in faith need to take the words of John seriously.

John said that the purpose of the great plan of God for the revelation of Himself to fallen humanity is fellowship.

But if that's God's goal for us, then as we seek to walk by faith we must be willing to rid our lives of any barriers that might get in the way of genuine fellowship – with God and others. It also means that we as a church mustn't be content with merely telling people about Jesus and calling them to faith in Him, we must work to build loving, lasting relationships within the body of Christ. And we must do this because real joy can only come where there are deep, loving relationships with God and with one another.

Real joy comes when we're living our faith in the presence of God and in the fellowship of believers.

Such is a joy that John wants the church to experience as we receive the "word of Life", and as we let that word draw us ever nearer to the One who is "Life".

May each of us be nurturing such joy, as we hold fast to the gospel and walk together in love. And may we be faithful in witnessing to the life and hope that's ours through faith in Jesus – Who is the essence of Christianity.

God's grace and peace be with you,

Pastor John

PS: As we seek to be the church in the world let us not forget our sisters and brothers in Christ in Afghanistan and in Haiti as both nations are going through disasters – man-made and natural. Let us pray for their protection and provision. And let us pray for the many in both places who don't know the Lord, that the light of the gospel might penetrate the darkness within that keeps many from knowing the One who is Life – Jesus the Christ.

Remember in Prayer...

Our Shut-ins at home:

Jan and John Pedersen

At the Eddy:

Dot Multunas

At Beechwood:

Edna Wells and June Foltz

Those dealing with health issues:

Stan Bentley, Marilyn Gibbs, Doris Calamaras

Those who cannot be with us in worship due to COVID-19 concerns:

Alice Bentley, Valerie Bidwell, Steve Dickson, Wendy and Rob Jensen, Diane Lewinski, Diane Morlock, Vaughn Skarzynski, Ginny Steffen, and the Taber Family (Ebot, Nessie, Arrey, Enjema and Ebot)

Our Church:

Pastor John and the Session

Our Community:

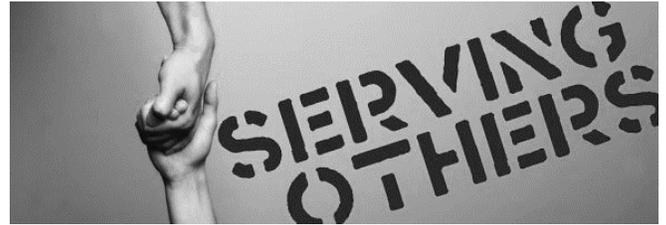
Those who don't know the Lord
Those dealing with financial difficulties
That our schools would be places of safety
Halting the spread of COVID-19
End to racial strife

Our World:

Missionaries serving around the world
Open doors for sharing the Gospel message
Persecuted Christians around the world

Our college students:

Brian Giddings (Roger Williams)
Dan McAuley (Gordon Conwell)
Angelina Solomon (SUNY Albany)
Christian Multunas (RPI)



Your giving to Third Church enables us to support a variety of ministries, both locally and around the world. The funds given and the prayers offered for our various mission partners are appreciated and we wanted to share some of the thoughts and comments we have received from those we support.

Perry Jones (Capital City Rescue Mission) – “Thanks to your prayer and support God is transforming lives. May entered the Rescue Mission’s women’s shelter after leaving an abusive relationship. She was also grieving the death of her brother and struggling with depression and addiction. Within 3 weeks she entered the women’s New Faith Program. Today she is healing and growing in her faith, eager to give back and help others. Her life has a new beginning. Thank you for your partnership in this compassionate work which offers hope and reconciliation in the name of Jesus Christ.”

Peter Halder (Bangladesh YFC) – “All over the country we were in hard lockdown until 14 July due to the delta variant. The lockdown was withdrawn for seven for a festival from 15 to 22 July. We are now locked down for another 10 days.

Presently most of our activities are online because of COVID-19. We do our best to meet in small groups of 4-7 people. Some activities take place in front yards, under trees, and in open spaces. We are also visiting kids and their families one at a time to listen to their struggles, encourage and pray with them.

Thank God that all the kids at BYFC Children’s Homes are doing well. Though they cannot go to school as all educational institutions have been closed since March 2020, they still are getting lessons from their respective house parents, and they do their daily chores.

Your investment is making a huge difference in many lives. Please hold us in your regular prayers.”

Newsletters from the Vissani’s, Niki Campbell, and Peter Halder are posted on the bulletin board in the narthex.



The kids are continuing in our Bible Reading Challenge. All have finished the Old Testament stories and are now reading through the Gospels and Acts.

They are working hard and more importantly; they are spending time in God’s Word.

Along with their reading they have worksheets to complete with questions about what they read.

Here are some of their responses:

“My favorite story was “Jesus Talks with a Samaritan Woman.” I like this story because it shows how she was brave enough to tell the people who cast her out about the Lord”

“I learned that God always has a plan.”

My favorite story was “The Blind Man Sees.” I like this story because he can see now and tells people about Jesus.”

“I learned that God works in many different ways.”

“I learned that God is nice.”

“My favorite story was “The Woman at the Well.” I like this story because Jesus was a Jew, and she was a Samaritan woman and was surprised that he wanted something from her.”

My favorite stories were all the parables. I like how Jesus used unique stories to get his point across.”

“I learned that God can heal people.”

“I learned that God cares about all different kinds of people.”

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

Hope 7’s food pantry has stayed open to serve families in need right here in our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. Any non-perishable food items and/or toiletries are always welcome. Currently they could use oatmeal, chicken noodle soup, pasta, and macaroni and cheese.

Donations can be dropped off at the church; taken to the food pantry (Monday through Friday from 9:30 - 11:45 AM); or you can contact Sue Laz to arrange for a pick-up.

General Financial Update for July Year to Date July

Total Income	\$ 96,232.00	\$ 11,857.00
Total Expenses	\$ 96,945.31	\$ 14,227.74
Difference	\$ (713.31)	\$ (2,370.74)



September Birthdays

9/1 Ebot Tabe
9/3 Sally Nolan
9/17 Brian Livolsi
9/24 Jaime Miller



September Anniversaries

9/19 Deena Dominy
& Howard Solomon

Bible Quiz for September 2021

As with August's Bible Quiz, the following questions come from chapter 6 of John's Gospel (It's a long chapter ☺).

1. Fill in the blanks: Jesus answered . . .
"Do not work for food that _____, but for food that endures to _____."
2. Fill in the blanks: Jesus answered . . .
"The _____ of God is this: to _____ in the One He has sent."
3. True or False: While they were wandering in the wilderness, Moses gave to Israel the "bread of heaven."
4. In John chapter six, what did Jesus "first" say was the will of Him who sent Jesus?
5. In John chapter six, what did Jesus say "second" was the will of Him who sent Jesus?
6. In their grumbling, who did the crowd say was Jesus' father?
7. Fill in the blanks: Jesus said, "No one can come to _____ unless the Father who sent me _____ them."
8. True or False: Jesus told the crowd that they had to eat of His flesh and drink of His blood if they wanted to have the life He came to offer.
9. True or False: After talking about bread and blood and His flesh, many more began to follow Jesus.
10. Fill in the blanks: "Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of _____ _____. We have come to _____ and to _____ that you are the _____ _____ of God.'"

(Answers: 1. spoils, eternal life; 2. work, believe; 3. False (God gave it); 4. Lose none of those He gave to Jesus; 5. That everyone who looks on the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life. ; 6. Joseph ; 7. Me, draws; 8. True ; 9: False ; 10. Eternal life, believe, know, Holy One.

Session Meeting August 9, 2021

The regular monthly business meeting of the Session of Third Presbyterian Church of Troy, NY was held August 9, 2021, via Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM by Pastor John, who opened with prayer.

Action Items

1. To allow Classical Conversations to use the building Thursdays from 9-4 beginning August 26th.
2. To allow Classical Conversations to hold a parent orientation on Monday, August 30th from 7-9PM.
3. To allow Dan McAuley to preach on September 12th.

Clerk's Report

- Communion was served July 25th, August 1st, and 8th.
- Average in-person attendance for July was 27.

Committee Reports

- Upward Ministry (Worship and Prayer): Worship Assistant training was held July 25th following fellowship time. We hope to resume this ministry in September; Choir will be back in worship beginning in September; Prayer chain and Sunday morning prayer time are ongoing.
- Inward Ministry (Congregational Care and Christian Nurture): Care ministries, Bible study, Sunday school, and fellowship time are all ongoing.
- Outward Ministry (Mission, Outreach and Communications): Mission spending for July -- Bangladesh YFC, \$ 1,000; InterVarsity, \$700.
- Stewardship
 - Finance – General Fund and Session Designated Funds: The General Fund treasurer's report was reviewed; Pledges are behind at the 7-month mark by \$2,455.
 - Property: Fire extinguisher inspection was completed July 26th; Weekly lawn mowing is ongoing; Working on sealing the wall cap joints on the church building and the seams and cracks in the driveway.
 - Nominating: First round of packets have been sent to prospective nominees.
 - Albany Presbytery: Next meeting is September 18th. This will be an in-person meeting at the Saratoga Church.

Pastor's Report

- Will be taking vacation/study leave September 12th and 19th. Sunday morning Sunday school (in person) and Wednesday Bible study (Zoom) ongoing.

Next Meetings

- August 23rd at 7:00. Informal/Study Meeting. Please read Chapter 7 of Devoted to God.
- September 13th at 7:00. Business Meeting.

Time was spent sharing congregational concerns. These will be included in the closing prayer.

The meeting was closed with prayer at 8:40 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Laz, Clerk



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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