

# The Third PRESS



THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
EXALTING GOD / PROCLAIMING CHRIST / MAKING DISCIPLES

October 2022

## “Being a ‘Plan A’ Christian”

In our study of John’s first letter we have seen a twin agenda developing. First, John wrote to expose those false teachers who were distorting the truth of the Gospel both through what they taught and how they lived. They were promoting a spiritual elitism that assumed salvation was all about achieving a level of enlightenment, and that if one had achieved such enlightenment it didn’t matter how he or she behaved. Second, John wrote to reassure those who were walking in the truth of the Gospel and upholding the teachings of the Scriptures that they were indeed children of God, and that nothing and no one can take that from them. (Rom 8:38-39)

John wrote to the believers to warn them of false teachers, to equip them to recognize the truth from a lie, to encourage them to walk in the light. To this end, sometimes John’s words sound harsh – both in his confrontation of the false teachers and in his admonitions of the true believers. But his motivation was love – love for God, love for the church, and love for the lost.

I remind us of this background because without an awareness of the context within which John wrote, and the intention of his writing, much of what he wrote can be misinterpreted. For example, in our passage for today, John talks about how true children of God don’t sin – that instead we evidence true faith in Jesus by living holy lives. But John didn’t write this to cause us to question our faith every time we sin. John isn’t warning us that with each sin we’re one step closer to being kicked out of the family of God. In fact, in verses 1 through 3 of chapter 3, John went out of his way to assure believers that they were “children of God” – and always will be!

At the same time, John does want to encourage believers to stay on course – the course of living for Jesus. To that end, in our passage for this newsletter John talks about the nature of sin, and the work of Christ to bring reconciliation between us and God. And, he talks about the work of the devil -- to lead people astray; and, the work of the God’s Spirit -- to keep His children close to Him. As we seek to reflect upon John’s words of encouragement and admonition, let’s first read from our text – from 1 John 3:4-10 – where John wrote:

115 Winter Street  
Troy, NY 12180  
518-283-2420  
www.thirdchurchtroy.org  
office@thirdchurchtroy.org  
 ThirdChurchTroy

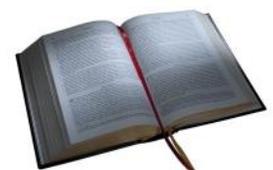
A community of Christ  
-followers where,

The Head of the Church  
is...  
The Lord Jesus Christ

The Ministers of the  
Church are...  
Every Believer

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

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



**“Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.**

**“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother.”**

This passage can be divided into two sections: verses 4 through 7 and verses 8 through 10. And both sections make the same essential point -- but with a different emphasis.

A summary of the first section of our passage, verses 4 through 7, could read as follows:

“Because sin is serious rebellion against God, and because sin is totally opposed to Christ and His character, true Christians do not live in sin, but instead walk in righteousness.”

In other words, those who wish to honor God and imitate Jesus will choose not to make sin a habit.

A summary of the second section of our passage, verses 8 through 10, could read as follows:

“Because of the origin of sin – being from the devil; and because of the purpose of Jesus’ coming – to defeat sin, death and the devil, true Christians cannot live in sin.”

In other words, those who do choose to sin habitually are not children of God, but instead, are children of the devil.

To see how these two parallel concepts are developed let’s look more closely at our text.

Looking to our first summary principle, our passage tells us that:

“Because sin is serious rebellion against God, and because sin is totally opposed to Christ and His character, true Christians do not live in sin.”

The first thing I want to note is that John tells us that sin is serious rebellion against God (1 Jn 3:4). John brings this out by describing sinful behavior as lawlessness. Here, John alludes to the place of the Law in the Old Testament, and the fact that any violation of that Law is a violation against God.

John is saying that sin, at its core, is much worse than merely some outward breaking of a commandment. To practice sin (And here, as we shall develop later, the language John used speaks not to an occasional sin but to the intentional, habitual act of sinning without repentance.) sin is to openly and defiantly rebel against God.

And John, in writing to assure believers of the security of their new life in Christ, emphasizes this character of sin because a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of Christian salvation. But then, if a person doesn’t realize the dangerous nature of his or her soul’s disease, it’s no wonder such a person might be content with false teachings that offer false hope. After all, in their thinking they have no reason to fear a holy God.

If we do not have a Biblical view of the seriousness of sin, we will not think that we need anything as radical as a Savior to take away those sins (1 Jn 3:5). If we think our only need is for a few pointers on how to have a happy life, or how to improve our self-esteem, or how to be a success in the world’s eyes, or how to avoid making mistakes that may hurt us, then there will be no need for talk about God’s wrath, and some guy named Jesus who died upon a cross to atonement for our sins (1 Jn 1:7, 2:1).

Like many of the false teachers within Christianity in our day, the false teachers whom John confronted were no doubt minimizing the serious nature of sin – both to draw followers, and, to justify their behavior. But then, Satan’s strategy has always been to get us to focus more on the pleasure sin affords and less on the travesty it brings – whether that travesty be to ourselves, to our loved ones, or to our relationship with our Creator.

Satan wants us to lift ourselves up and pull God down, not because he believes we’re wonderful creatures, but because he wants to rob God of the praise and glory He deserves. Satan wants us to think that we’re essentially good people who deserve to dwell in heaven. And Satan wants to deceive us into believing this because then we will no longer look for a Savior, but will at best look only for a role model.

And that's exactly what many people look to Jesus for. He's no longer seen as the only Savior of humankind who had to shed His blood for our salvation, but merely as a good person who lost His life in an unfortunate twist of events.

In essence, Satan works overtime to undermine the cross. But once we let that happen, we eliminate any possibility of salvation from sin and reconciliation with our Creator God. And of course, Satan is good with that – good with leaving people to believe that they will get to heaven, when in fact their end is hell.

Sin is serious rebellion against a holy God. Which means that Jesus Christ is totally opposed to sin. And, sin is totally opposed to Jesus Christ.

Of course, John's readers knew this – unlike the false teachers John confronted; and unlike many today who think they can go on sinning and still be “followers” of Jesus.

John expressed this opposition between sin and our Savior when he wrote that Jesus appeared in order to “**take away our sins**” (1 Jn 3:5; Ps 130:12). In other words, Jesus didn't come primarily to give us a moral example to follow, or to leave us with a manual for godly living – although He certainly did both. The main reason for Jesus' coming – in terms of His ministry to humanity -- was to take away sins. And the way He did that was by paying the penalty our sins deserve.

Of course, what this required was that Jesus be completely without sin – that He be the Lamb of God without blemish -- which He was – and which is why John made the point to declare that “**in Him was no sin.**” (Jn 1:29; 1 Jn 3:5b)

Jesus' virgin birth through the Holy Spirit preserved Him from original sin – which, by the way, is why belief in that virgin birth is so important, for, to compromise that fundamental doctrine is to compromise the sinlessness of Jesus, and, in turn, to invalidate His substitutionary death.

But even beyond His birth, Jesus lived in perfect obedience to the Father. (Jn 8:46)

And, because of His sinlessness, Jesus was able to offer Himself as that perfect, complete and final sacrifice for our sins. (1 Pt 1:19; Heb 10:10, 14, 18)

Knowing and affirming these truths about Jesus makes John's conclusion in the first half of our passage undeniable, namely, that true “followers” of Jesus do not remain in sin. And this conclusion is clear since, as John declares, if sin is rebellion against God, and if Jesus and sin are incompatible, then, anyone seeking to abide in Christ – anyone who knows, loves and honors Jesus -- will not live in ongoing, habitual sin.

But the sad truth is that many Christians think they can live in sin and still be faithful followers of Jesus. Many Christians think they can choose to skip worshipping with other believers despite God's command not to neglect meeting together (Heb 10:25). Many Christians think they can hold a grudge against another person despite God's command to forgive one another (Mt 6:14-15). Many Christians think they can engage in sexual immorality despite God's clear mandate that sexual intimacy is to be between one man and one woman in the covenant of marriage (1 Cor 6:13, 18). Many Christians think they can use the material resources God gives us to get more and more things we don't need while ignoring the poor, the hungry, and the homeless, despite God's admonition that anyone who sees a need, and has the means to help but doesn't, sins (1 Jn 3:17). Many Christians think that we can claim Jesus as our Savior while refusing to let Him be our Lord.

John is saying that, to live that way – to consistently and willfully choose to disobey God -- is not only to rebel against God, but is to deny the person and work of Jesus.

On the other hand, those who do know Jesus, will seek to consistently and willfully do what is right in God's eyes. Yes, we will still sin, but when we do we will repent of that sin. And we in turn can and will know in our hearts that we are children of God.

Which begs the questions: Are you seeking to do what is right in God's eyes? And, when you sin, do you acknowledge that sin, and repent? Are you striving to abide in Jesus?

John wants to encourage the church and he does so with a sobering word. John says in essence, “Do not be deceived: a true follower of Jesus **‘does what is righteous, just as Jesus is righteous.’**” (1 Jn 4:7)

With that said, John moves on to make the same case for a call to holy living, but from a different angle. This comes out in verses 8 through 10 of our text. Recall that we summarized these three verses saying:

“Because of the origin of sin – being from the devil; and because of the purpose of Jesus’ coming – to defeat sin, death and the devil, true Christians cannot live in sin.”

Stated another way, not only do genuine believers choose not to sin, but in fact, John says that they cannot sin. And this leaves us with a dilemma, since not only did John already say that anyone who claims not to sin is a liar, but we know from experience that we all sin (1 Jn 1:8, 2:1). Which of course means that we can sin.

So what are we to make of John’s words? Has he raised the bar of discipleship so high that no one can hope to be saved? If so, he didn’t do a very good job of encouraging believers that their salvation is secure. Instead he seems to have made salvation impossible!

But obviously that wasn’t his intent, so let’s see how we’re to understand his words.

First we need to note that much of what follows in verses 8 through 10 repeats what we already considered in verses 4 through 7. And, of course, the mere fact that John repeats many of the same thoughts in different words should alert us to the seriousness of what he’s saying. Simply put, John believed his message was worth repeating!

I’m reminded of the preacher who gave the same sermon several Sundays in a row. Not surprisingly, it took a while for some of the congregation to catch on; but when they did they went to him to complain that he was being lazy by using the same sermon over and over, to which he responded: “When you start doing what I’ve been preaching I’ll start preaching a different message.”

So, John repeats himself, but from a different angle. For example, both verses 4 and 8 speak of sin, but whereas verse 4 speaks of the nature of sin – as lawlessness, verse 8 speaks of the origin of sin – as being from the devil.

And John does this to show that those who practice regular, willful sin are not only living in rebellion against God, but they are doing the work of the devil. In turn, John will go on to call them “**children of the devil**”. (2 Jn 3:10)

In his argument, we see that John really only allows for two groups of people. We’re either “**children of God**” – born of God and adopted into His family through faith in Jesus; or, we’re “**children of the devil**” – people who, whether we realize it or not, belong to the evil one – with whom we will spend eternity!

I want you to think about what you just read for a moment because not only is it contrary to what much of our world thinks – but, it conflicts with what many Christians believe – as we all too often want to make concessions for people we like and care about, but who care little or nothing about Jesus.

There is no “third group” of people whom God will save merely because they’re good and kind.

If one is not living for Jesus, he or she is ultimately living for the devil. (Mt 12:30)

Now, as we know, God created Satan and all the angels as good. But Satan rebelled against God and led a rebellion of other angels as well, and they were all cast from God’s presence (Isa 14:12-14). John refers to this by saying that, “**the devil has been sinning from the beginning**” (1 Jn 4:8). The devil was and is all about his will, not God’s. But to put one’s own will before God’s is rebellion against God – is idolatry. And so, when we put our wills before God’s we’re living like Satan.

In other words, any action that originates in the human will that’s not in submission to God is devilish – even if outwardly it seems like a nice, humanitarian action.

John is repeating in verse 8 what he said in verse 5 when John spoke of Jesus’ coming to take away sin. But in verse 8 the focus is on Christ’s coming to destroy Satan’s works. And those works speak primarily to Satan’s work of promoting sin throughout the human race. Jesus came to “loose” us from the chains of sin, and set us free. And in so doing Jesus broke sin’s power over us.

What this suggests then is that if one is truly a Christian, not only will he or she not live in sin, but, John says that he or she cannot live in sin. And a Christian cannot live in sin because God’s “seed” is in us. And God’s seed is in us because a true believer is born of God – is born in, through, and with God’s Spirit.

So what does all this mean?

And how can John say that a Christian cannot go on sinning when the truth is that most of us can't go five minutes without sinning in some way?

To see what John is saying in verse 9, we need to dig a little deeper into the language John uses, otherwise, John's words will seem to contradict both the Scriptures and reality (Ps 14:1-3).

Remember that earlier in this letter John wrote that if anyone claims to be without sin he is a liar (1 Jn 1:8). Consistent with all of the Scriptures, these words affirm that not only can believers sin, but we do sin.

So how should we to interpret his "cannot" in verse 9?

To answer this we need to note that in the Greek, John uses the present tense throughout our passage. And while the present tense in the Greek doesn't always refer to continuous, ongoing action, the context of our passage calls for its use here.

For example, when John writes that the devil has sinned from the beginning, John clearly means that from day one, until the present, and into the future, Satan not only sins but is characterized by sin.

Likewise, when John says that those born of God cannot sin, he's saying that from the moment a person comes to faith in Jesus that person – having the Spirit of God in him or her – cannot be characterized by sin.

Yes, we still commit particular sins.

But, having been made into a new creation in Christ, sin is no longer fundamental to our character as it is to that of the non-believer (2 Cor 5:17).

Such "sinning" is impossible, not because we're suddenly incredibly good, kind and honest people, but because the Spirit of God has brought us from death to new life in Christ.

Now, to be sure, that new life takes time to grow, even as a child conceived in the womb needs time to grow. But, once that child is conceived, what was merely a seed and an egg gets transformed into a new creation. And once conceived there is no turning back.

All this to say that John isn't talking about sinless perfection when he says that the believer can't sin. Instead John is talking about the direction of the believer's life. If God has imparted new life to us so that we have become His children, we cannot go back to living as if we are not. What's more, when we do fall into sin, we will recognize that we can't stay there.

It has been said that a pig and a sheep may fall into the same mud hole, but their response will be different. The pig will love it and wallow in it because that's his nature. The sheep will want to get out of it as quickly as possible, and will seek to avoid falling into it again, because that's his nature.

If God's "seed" abides in us – as John says it does for every believer – then not only won't we want to, but by our nature we can't wallow in the mud of sin.

On the other hand, if we find ourselves liking the mud and not wanting to get out of it, the truth is that we're not children of God – no matter how much we may claim to be so. We're in fact children of the devil -- still dead in our sin.

John concludes our passage noting how one can identify the difference between a "**child of God**" and a "**child of the devil**". And the difference is seen in the behavioral pattern of the child. The "child of God" practices righteousness – a righteousness that presents itself both in the seeking to do what is good and right, and, in the seeking to live in a right relationship with God, and with other believers -- a righteousness where the believer strives to love God, love one's neighbor, and even love one's enemy! (Mk 12:29-31)

The modern church has fallen into serious deception on the matter of sin. The popular view among many Christians today is that there are two options for the Christian life – "Plan A", and "Plan B".

"Plan A" is for the really committed Christian. They're the ones who trust Jesus as Savior and live with Him as their Lord. And that's tough to do. That requires repenting of one's sins, forgiving those who hurt us, giving up the option to spend our time and money as we want, and refusing to give in to the enticements of the world no matter how pleasurable they are. "Plan A" may even require leaving our current lifestyle behind and going to some faraway place to share the Gospel with those who have never heard it. In fact, "Plan A" may lead to being killed for the Gospel.

But, if that's too difficult, the church is quick to offer "Plan B" – a less radical more reasonable response to the gospel.

In "Plan B" we accept Jesus as our Savior but limit His Lordship to what we feel is sufficient. With "Plan B" we give until our giving gets in the way of our getting. With "Plan B" we maintain moral purity and ethical integrity as long as

they don't rob us of our fun. With "Plan B" we share the gospel when and where it's convenient, and we keep it to ourselves if speaking of Jesus makes us uncomfortable. With "Plan B" we lay hold of the hope of going to heaven, but we live as if the rewards of this world are what really matter.

Of course the truth is God only offers a "Plan A", which means that this "Plan B" that seems so attractive, and that so many of us choose to follow, doesn't come from God. In fact, if we read the fine print of "Plan B", we would find the handwriting of the devil all over it. "Plan B" comes from the pit of hell -- and it will lead to our destruction.

The only plan that brings forth eternal life is "Plan A". And that's the plan John exhorts the church to follow. And that's why I exhort you, even as I exhort myself -- let's be "Plan A" Christians -- let's live as true "**children of God**"!

God's grace and peace to you,

Pastor John

PS: I want to thank everyone for their prayerful consideration regarding seeking dismissal from PC(USA) and joining with ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. Many of you were able to come to the congregational meeting on September 18, 2022 so that we could have a majority present. The motion to seek dismissal along with the agreed upon terms between the Albany Presbytery Administrative Commission and the Session was passed. We now need to wait for final approval by the Albany Presbytery. They will be voting on our dismissal agreement at their November 19 Presbytery meeting. If they approve, our actual dismissal will take place at the start of the New Year, January 1, 2023. We have already been approved to be received by ECO and only need to await dismissal from PC(USA). Please continue to pray for Third Church and the Session as we move through this time of transition and seek to discern God's leading in the coming days.



**October Birthdays**

- 10/2 Dan McAuley
- 10/9 Andy Miller
- 10/13 Kelly Valerio
- 10/19 Sue Laz
- 10/21 Natalie & Alida  
Scechitano
- 10/23 Peter Laz
- 10/25 Patty Gruner
- 10/28 Nessie Tabe



**October Anniversaries**

- 10/25 Natalia & Bill  
Multunas

**General Financial Update for August**

	<b>Year to Date</b>	<b>August</b>
Total Income	\$ 112,113.00	\$ 12,374.00
Total Expenses	\$ 112,740.17	\$ 13,002.54
Difference	\$ (627.17)	\$ (628.54)

## Remember in Prayer...

### Our Shut-ins at home:

Stephanie Miller, Marilyn Gibbs, Edith Lovell

**At Van Rensselaer Manor:** Don King

**At Peregrine Senior Living:** Jan Pedersen

### Those dealing with health issues:

Stan Bentley, Marilyn Gibbs, Doris Calamaras

### Our Church:

Pastor John and the Session

### Our Community:

Those who do not 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

### Our college students:

Christian Multunas (RPI)

## 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 juice, chicken noodle soup, toothpaste, and soap.

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.



### Winter Collection for Capital City Rescue Mission

Throughout the winter months we will be collecting new and gently used coats, 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. Donations can be brought to the church and placed in the box provided or

you can contact Sue Laz to arrange for someone to pick-up your donations.

## Operation Christmas Child A Gift of Joy and a Message of God's Love

Millions of children all over the world live in difficult situations and long to know that they are loved. Since 1993, *Operation Christmas Child* (OCC) has shared the Good News of God's love with hurting children around the world.

Through simple shoe boxes filled with toys and other small gifts children receive what may be their only Christmas gift as well as the assurance that God loves them.



We will once again be participating in Operation Christmas Child. More details will be coming soon!

## Congregational Meeting October 9th

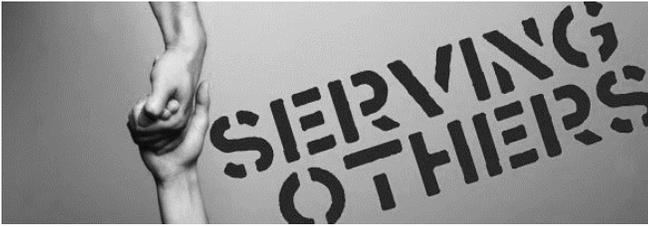
There will be a congregational meeting following the morning worship service. The purpose of the meeting is to receive the report of the Nominating Committee, to elect officers to begin serving in 2023 and to conduct any other business to come before the congregation.

## Serving at Capital City Rescue Mission

The Outward Ministry Committee would like to restart our ministry of helping to serve the evening meal at Capital City Rescue Mission. This is something we had been doing for years prior to the COVID pandemic.

We would meet at the church at 5:00 for those wishing to carpool to the mission or you could meet us there around 5:30. Serving involves ensuring the tables are set for dinner, serving the meal, and cleaning up the tables afterwards. If you are interested in participating in this ministry please speak with Andy Miller or Sue Laz.





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.

**From Niki Campbell (InterVarsity at RPI and Russell Sage)** – “Twenty-nine months and ten days! That is the length of time I was off campus due to the pandemic and school regulations during that time. I was so excited, and surprisingly nervous, to be back, in-person, serving the newly arriving students at RPI. It was thrilling to be back, greet new students, and share the love of Jesus with them in Word and Deed.

Thank you for all the prayers you have given us as we continue to follow Jesus into life on campus. Pray that we continue to hear from the Spirit and discover new corners and new opportunities where He is at work already.”

**From Perry Jones (Capital City Rescue Mission)** – “Don came to the Mission about 2 years ago. His marriage had fallen apart, and he had almost died twice from alcohol poisoning. He emphatically adds, “I needed help desperately.”

After entering the New Life program, he began learning how to follow Jesus as his Savior and friend. Today he has been on staff for about a year, encouraging other guys who enter the Mission facing the same struggles he once had. Don finds joy in helping others.

Thank you for your partnership in this compassionate work which offers food, clothing, shelter, recovery, and life-change in the name of Jesus Christ. May it give you joy as well.”

**From Kevin Post (Capital District YFC)** – “Stabilize and Grow is my focus for this new school year. I have two goals in mind, one is to increase the number of ministry volunteer leaders that are investing their Christ-centered lives into the teens alongside of our current ministry site teams. The other is to establish Community Support Teams that are comprised of volunteer leaders that serve in a support role for our ministry sites.

I am convinced that prayer is where I need to start and then keep praying to see our ministry sites strengthen and then increase by God’s hand.

As we pursue lost 11–19-year-olds will you recommit yourself to pray daily for our ministry by setting an alarm on your phone or watch to remind you at either 9:38am or 9:38pm to pray and ask God to provide volunteers for our current ministry sites?

Matthew 9:38 (ESV) says, “therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Thanks again for your generous faithfulness as together we observe God do amazing transforming work in the lives of teens in the Capital District.”

**From Peter Halder (Bangladesh YFC)** – “In the midst of many ups and downs, He is using us according to His way, the best way.

The Light House program among the poorest and darkest communities in the western part of the country is going well. The teens and youth, as well as their families, are happy about what we are doing for their betterment here and in eternity. One of the teens is very happy that he was able to attend one of the teen clubs and had an opportunity to play, learn songs and computer skills, and came to know about Jesus Christ. The gospel of Jesus Christ changed his life, which he had never even thought about. It was the work of the Holy Spirit who transformed his life to become a follower of Jesus Christ. The gospel will not go in vain.

It is not an easy task to run the ministry in such a country where we are located, but He is bigger than our hemisphere and imagination. Our government is also so happy with our work. As a matter of fact, we have been given recognition one more year for our excellent service toward the teens and youths in the country.

Thanks for your kind prayer, care, and support. God’s grace and your partnership are making it possible. All praise and glory be to Him. Pray for all the staff, so we can make a more positive impact in the life of many as we serve in the days to come.”

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

## Bible Quiz for October 2022

This Bible quiz will consist of questions pertaining to “The Gospel of John”, chapter 15.

1. Who is the “vine” about whom Jesus spoke? And who is the gardener?
2. What does Jesus say will happen to the branches that do not bear fruit for God?
3. What does Jesus say His followers must do if they are to bear fruit?
4. Fill in the blanks: [Jesus said], “Apart from Me you can do \_\_\_\_\_.”
5. Fill in the blanks: “If you \_\_\_\_\_ in me, and my \_\_\_\_\_ remain in you, \_\_\_\_\_ whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”
6. Fill in the blanks: [Jesus said], “You are My \_\_\_\_\_ if you do what I command.”
7. Fill in the blanks: [Jesus said], “I no longer call you \_\_\_\_\_ because a \_\_\_\_\_ does not know his master’s business.”
8. True or False: Speaking to His disciples, Jesus affirmed that He didn’t choose them but they actually chose Him.
9. True or False: Jesus promised His disciples that because they belong to Him they will never be persecuted.
10. Fill in the blanks: [Jesus said], “Whoever hates Me hates \_\_\_\_\_ as well.”

(Answers: 1. Jesus, the Father; 2. Will be cut off; 3. Abide/remain in Him; 4. nothing; 5. Remain, words, ask; 6. Friends; 7. Servants, servant; 8. False; 9. False; 10. My Father.

*From Music and AV Ministries... The "Hymn (and Him) of Heaven"*

I know you're all discerning listeners of our Sunday worship music. (You are, right? 😊) So you must have detected the use of a new contemporary song done by our Acoustic Worship Team in the last few months, most typically during Communion. It was written by a well-known contemporary songwriter, Phil Wickham in 2020 at the height of Covid pandemic anxiety. The lyrics are based primarily on words we find toward the very end of the Scriptures--Revelation 21:1-4: *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

Whenever I served at Brunswick Church for a funeral and my colleague, Associate Pastor Kate Kotfila was doing the Benediction, she would often recite that passage from memory. She always brought such great emotion and pathos to it, particularly the words, *There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain*--pausing after each and each having even more weight than the previous. Indeed the Hope of Christ's Return and the ultimate new heaven and earth at the conclusion of Revelation provide all the comfort and encouragement any follower of Christ should need. Composer Wickham was recently asked about the impetus for the writing of his song and he wrote this:

*It was written in the height of social unrest and COVID. There were a couple of weeks there that I felt things were falling apart, watching the news and all that stuff. And I was talking with my friend who I write a lot with and as we were talking, we were talking politics, as we do once in a while. And just the world and family, and we just landed on Jesus and what He's done and who He is. Then we landed on what He's promised for all of us. And it's just this idea that if you're a believer, you believe that one day Jesus will not take us away to some other land. The Bible teaches that He's going to renew the creation He's made and that we're going to be with him. And instead of living under the rule of sin and death. We're going to live under the rule of Jesus. And even right now, it's hard to hold back tears because that promise is true. 2020 has made me say, "I cannot wait for the day when we are looking, not at a man or an ideology as king of this world, but we're looking at Jesus as King of this world and it's everything that it's meant to be.*

Wickham's "Hymn of Heaven" could just as easily been titled, "Him of Heaven" for its focus on our Lord and Savior, whose return will usher in the glorious eternity for all who love Him and call Him that. Truly our God gives us life beyond the grave. Here are the complete lyrics to ponder--

*How I long to breathe the air of Heaven where pain is gone and mercy fills the streets  
To look upon the One who bled to save me and walk with Him for all eternity  
[Chorus]  
There will be a day when all will bow before Him  
There will be a day when death will be no more  
Standing face to face with He who died and rose again  
Holy, holy is the Lord  
And every prayer, we prayed in desperation--the songs of faith, we sang through doubt and fear  
In the end, we'll see that it was worth it when He returns to wipe away our tears  
[Chorus]  
And on that day, we join the resurrection and stand beside the heroes of the faith  
With one voice, a thousand generations sing, "Worthy is the lamb who was slain"  
So let it be today we shout the hymn of Heaven  
With angels and the saints, we raise a mighty roar  
Glory to our God who gave us life beyond the grave  
Holy, holy is the Lord*

P.S. In a lighter vein, you can join in the conversational debate the Acoustic Team has had over the line, *Standing face to face with He who died and rose again*. We're not at all convinced that it's grammatically correct to say "with He" rather than "with Him." What do you think?

**Session Meeting  
September 12, 2022**

The regular monthly business meeting of the Session of Third Presbyterian Church of Troy, NY was held September 12, 2022, at 7:00 PM at the church.

**Clerk's Report:** Average attendance for July: in-person - 34; online -10.

**Committee Reports**

- Upward Ministry (Worship and Prayer): Choir has started up again.
- Inward Ministry (Congregational Care and Christian Nurture): Subscription for the Upper Room devotionals has been renewed; Will be look at the possibility of using Ed Paul Youth funds to offer scholarships to our youth; Will be discussing senior and shut-in ministry at our October meeting.
- Outward Ministry (Mission, Outreach and Communications): Budgeted mission spending for August -- Capital City Rescue Mission, \$ 1,100; Capital District YFC, \$600; Theology Matters, \$100.
- Stewardship
  - Finance – General Fund and Session Designated Funds: The General Fund treasurer's report was reviewed. There was a negative cash flow during August of \$628.54. This results in a YTD deficit of \$627.54. We are short \$80 per month above current giving to break even. Planning for the 2023 General Fund budget is underway.
  - Property: National Grid has indicated that they will repair damage to the property when the work has been completed. So far, some top soil and hydro seeding has been put down; 2022 Fire Extinguisher inspection has been completed; Solar Panel System is repaired and functioning again.
  - Personnel: Need to investigate changes to Pastor John's compensation package as we leave PC(USA).
  - Nominating: Those being presented to begin service on the Session in 2023 (with years of term being suggested) include -- Kelly Valerio (3), Andy Miller (3), Peter Laz (3), Abigail McAuley (2), Holly Stecuik (2). A Congregational meeting will be held October 9<sup>th</sup> following the worship service to receive the report of the Nominating Committee and to elect elders to begin serving in 2023.
  - Albany Presbytery: Our Dismissal Proposal will be voted on at the November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting of Presbytery to be held at the Westminster Church in Albany.

**Pastor's Report:** Sermon series on the Gospel of John is continuing and should run up to Holy Week of 2023; Sunday School class on New Testament Theology is ongoing; Wednesday evening Bible study is ongoing; Plan to the National Gathering of ECO in January.

**Next Meetings:** October 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00. Business Meeting.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan Laz, Clerk



Third Presbyterian Church  
115 Winter Street  
Troy, NY 12180  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED