



John's Journal

As I write this my concern and prayers for our dear music director Chris Bagley continues to weigh heavy on my mind. I know you will join me in prayers for Chris'

recovery and that he will be back with us soon, so that we can continue to be beneficiaries of his wonderful music and presence among us.

In conversations over the past few days it has become ever more likely that Chris may be out for several weeks. To that end, we are working to secure substitutes who can fill in for him until he is well enough to return. We are hopeful that our search will be successful.

As I write this I am in Little Rock, Arkansas participating in my annual conference of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE). It's Monday and I have spent most of the day parked in the lobby of the hotel with my laptop tending to church stuff.

The great thing about being in the lobby is that I can see folks as they come and go and greet my friends as I see them. This is my 23rd consecutive (25 or so years altogether) APCE. Over the years, with service on what was the Governing Cabinet, including serving as President, and then serving in the new structure, plus being the conference photographer for the past several years, APCE has become engrained as a part of my DNA.

Worshipping in new ways has helped me think outside the box (which is the theme for this year's conference) when it comes to worship and to try some new things that I might not have otherwise tried.

Attending workshops on different topics has deepened my understanding and appreciation of so many elements of Christian Education and church in general.

Plus, taking advantage of some of the off-site visits has certainly been useful and memorable. Being in

Little Rock this week will give me the opportunity to visit Central High School and to learn more about the Little Rock Nine and the courage it took to take steps to end segregation. The conference is also having a reception at the Clinton Presidential Library. This will actually be the second presidential library I've visited through APCE as I saw the Gerald Ford library when APCE was in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

So, there are many aspects of this conference that are appealing to me, and that feed my soul and help make me a better pastor and educator. But the icing on the cake is reconnecting with the friends that I have made through this organization over the past 25 years - some even longer!

Seeing people that you care about, and care about you just once a year is unique. But, as you surely know from connecting with old friends, you just pick up where you left off and the year being apart seems to melt away.

I am grateful to have the time for continuing education in my Terms of Call, and to have the funds available that enable me to attend this and other events. The week is full and I am quite busy, but I always come away grateful for the experience and definitely better for having been here.

In other news, as you will notice on the next page, I am excited about the opportunity to be on sabbatical this summer . . . and grateful to Rick Purcell for holding down the fort while I'm away. This will be a much needed time of rest and renewal, as well as exploring a topic of study that I am very interested in. Over the next three months I'll be doing all that is necessary to insure that things run smoothly over those three months, and that the mission and ministry of this great church continues as usual.

I would encourage you as well, to check out our new Lenten study, *The Walk*, that will begin on the first Monday of Lent, March 2nd. See the article for more info.

As always, I am grateful to be your pastor.

Grace & peace,

sabbatical

rest | refresh | refocus

During much of 2019 I updated you monthly on the status of my application to receive a Lilly Grant for my proposed sabbatical leave in 2020. Unfortunately, I was informed in August of 2019 that my application for the grant was denied. So, I have spent the last several months considering my options for my sabbatical.

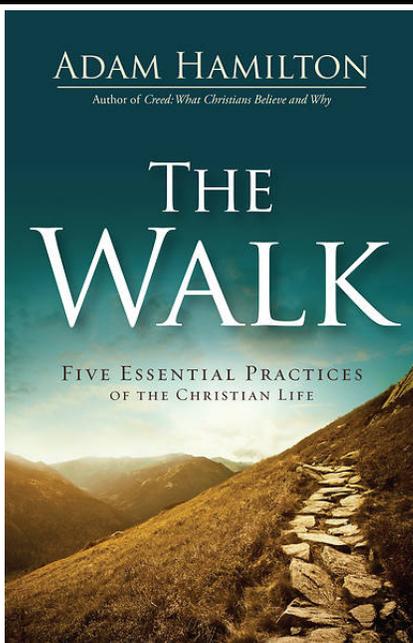
I am excited to let you know that - pending another application for a grant from the Board of Pensions - I will be taking my sabbatical leave from June-August of this year. My last Sunday prior to being away will be May 31st (Pentecost Sunday!), and my first Sunday back with you will be September 6th. I will return to the office on September 1st.

As was previously planned, Rick Purcell, who is a Certified Ruling Elder (CRE) and has significant training and experience in church related matters, will serve in my place during those three months. He will be contracted for 20 hours per week, and will preach on Sundays and tend to any pastoral care matters that may arise, as well as moderate the Session. He will be available for funerals as well during that time, in the unfortunate event that there is a death in the congregation.

Due to the considerable decrease in funding from the Lilly Grant to the Board of Pensions grant, I have had to make significant changes in the plans for my sabbatical. My focus of study will remain largely the same, looking at how technology plays a part in church life, and how to reach those who are not as "plugged in" as others. I will specifically be looking at worship life, and how that can be more interactive and engaging - both technologically and otherwise. I will be doing reading and research in these areas, looking at different options for improving what we do here.

As always, part of the focus of a sabbatical is rest and renewal. To that end, I will be attending - as is my custom - the Montreat Conference on Worship and Music at the end of June. Much of July will see Debbie and me hit the road on a tour of National Parks, ending up in Minneapolis visiting Jackie. August will include my annual Atlanta Braves Weekend with friends.

I am very much looking forward to this time of rest, renewal, and study. June will mark 41 years of ministry, and this is my first sabbatical. I appreciate your wisdom in including this in my Terms of Call, and I look forward to sharing my experiences and the fruits of my study upon my return. I covet your prayers during this important time in my ministry.



It's hard to believe that Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26th! But the observance of Lent as we journey together to the cross during March, gives us the opportunity to explore another study as we strive to deepen our faith and our understanding of our discipleship.

We are excited to offer this unique study entitled "*The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life*" by Adam Hamilton. We have participated in several of his studies, and have come away richer for these experiences.

This six-week series will be held on **Monday evenings, beginning on March 2nd**. The topics are as follows:

- March 2nd: Worship and Prayer: A Living Hallelujah
- March 9th - Study: The Importance of Listening and Paying Attention
- March 16th - Serve: Here I Am, Lord, Send Me
- March 23rd - Give: Where Your Treasure Is
- March 30th - Share: Going Fishing, Reflecting Light
- April 6th - The Five Practices from the Cross

Each participant will be responsible for purchasing their own book, available on Amazon for \$9.99 (Kindle version) or \$13.99 (paperback). There will be a reservation form on our website (www.bethanypreschurch.org), or just email John

to let him know that you are signing up for the course (pastor@bethanypreschurch.org). Come join us for this lively and engaging study during the Lenten season. **DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION IS SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23RD**.



FEBRUARY WORSHIP THEMES

February 2nd:

TBA - John away

TBA

February 9th:

1 Corinthians 2:1-16

Smartphones and the Smart Cross

February 16th:

Matthew 5:21-37

Kiddie Pool or Olympic Pool

February 23rd:

Matthew 17:1-9

Sharenting the Transfiguration

February 26th - Ash Wednesday:

Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

An Invitation to Take

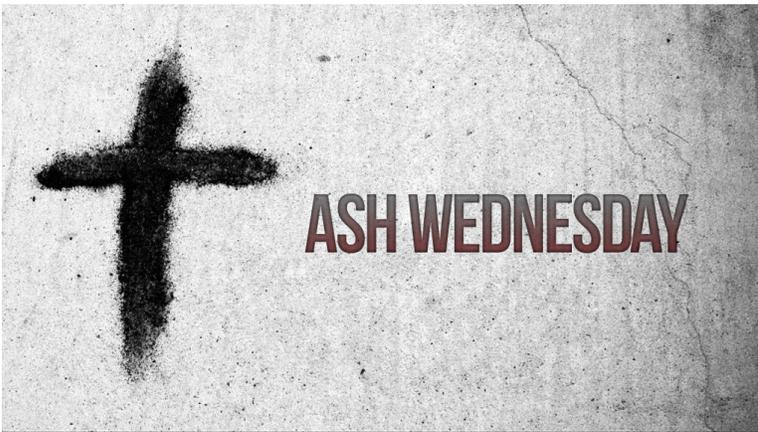


Missed a Sunday? Check out our sermons online!
There are three ways to listen to audio of our Sunday sermons:

- On our website: www.bethanypreschurch.org
- On our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/bethanypresbyterian
- Or by going to: www.buzzsprout.com/9198



Join your Bethany family for our annual Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper, which will take place immediately prior to the Ash Wednesday Worship Service on February 26th. This is a project for our youth as they raise funds for their summer conferences. There is no cost but donations are gratefully accepted. Come hungry!!



Join us for our annual **Ash Wednesday Worship Service on Wednesday, February 26th at 7:00 pm.** This always moving and meaningful service will include music, prayer, silence, scripture, and the Imposition of Ashes, symbolically entering into a time of penitence as we begin our Lenten journey to the cross. Make your plans to join us.



Lent 2020
Begins February 26th

prayer
penitence
fasting

Your Church Staff:

Pastor: Rev. John W. Johnson

Director of Music: Christopher Bagley

Office Administrator: Joy Saleeby

Bookkeeper: Pam Hurt

Elders:

Bill Abplanalp

Chip Allen

Helen Brown

Randy Cousins

Karen Maxwell (Clerk of Session)

Tina Patterson

Nancy Purcell

Ben Russell

Tracey Troxler

Glenn Patterson (Treasurer)



The Session met for its regular monthly stated meeting on January 14th. Here are some highlights:

- Heard a devotion from Nancy Purcell
- Continued in our book study of *Canoeing the Mountains*, by Tod Holsinger
- Heard joys and concerns of the congregation
- Received a treasurer’s report from the treasurer
- Continued a discussion of issues around our cleaning service.
- The Session was reminded of the Pancake Supper and Ash Wednesday Service on February 26th
- Approved plans for John’s sabbatical June-August of this year

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH
ELDERS OF THE MONTH FOR FEBRUARY
RANDY COUSINS AND BILL ABPLANALP**



Super Bowl LIV is on Sunday, February 2nd, which means that this is also the day when we receive our **Souper Bowl Offering**. All of the money donated on that Sunday will be reported to the national Souper Bowl office, but it will all stay in this area, donated to a local cause that fights hunger. On the day when food is at the forefront as we watch the big game, let’s remember those who may not know where their next meal is coming from.

This first Sunday of the month is our usual **Pennies for Hunger Offering** day, so it makes sense that our Souper Bowl Offering will also go to that wonderful cause. There will be a big soup pot on the table to collect your offerings during the final hymn.





FINANCIAL REPORT - END OF DECEMBER 2019	
Year-to-date Actual Income	\$156,267.73
Year-to-date Actual Expenses	\$162,033.88
YEAR-TO-DATE BUDGET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	-\$5,766.15
INVESTMENTS INCOME (LOSS)	\$25,873.49
TOTAL YEAR-TO-DATE SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$20,107.34

You may notice a little difference in our monthly financial report. Each month the Session receives a report on our finances and where we stand. This report not only includes our budgeted figures, but also our investments. Although we don't include these in our budget (since it's almost impossible to predict what they might be), we do include these figures in our bottom line, because it is income.

So, even though our budgeted figures for 2019 did end up in the negative, the good news is that they weren't where the Session anticipated. In other words, our shortfall wasn't as much as we had budgeted. This is good news!

This includes the great news that your giving far exceeded the anticipated giving, which enabled us to be in the position we are in! Add to that the positive returns on our investments, and we ended the year in a very good place!

Your generosity to Bethany enables us to continue the mission and ministry of this great church. We are grateful that we can build upon a strong foundation as we move into a bright tomorrow!



The Session has called for a **Congregational Meeting and a Meeting of the Corporation** to immediately follow worship on **Sunday, February 16th**.

The purpose of the Congregational Meeting is to share the 2020 budget with the congregation and to answer any questions pertaining to that.

As an incorporated entity, we are required to have an annual Meeting of the Corporation, and to elect officers. This year the Session is submitting the names of Karen Maxwell as corporation president (Karen serves as our Clerk of Session), and Glenn Patterson as Treasurer.



February Birthdays and Anniversaries!

Happy Birthday to:

Bobby Peele	February 7
Kayla Donley	February 8
Laura Mitchell-Ayers	February 16
Joyce Peele	February 18
Rick Purcell	February 21



Children & Youth Ministries

- **Sunday school for Youth and Children** / Meets on second floor of Education Building at 9:45 each Sunday
- During **Worship**, children are invited to sit in designated pews (front rows on north side) / there are activities provided
- Our **Nursery** is staffed by a professional, paid worker, as well as volunteers each Sunday.
- Watch your calendar and inbox for special activities for our young people throughout the year.



Christian Education Opportunities

The Fellowship Class - Bible study class using our denomination's *Present Word* curriculum.

Winter Bible Study - watch for news about an upcoming winter study beginning soon!

Bethany Prays



Bill Faucette
Shirley Lane
Ida Whitney
Diane Miller
Jack Cook
Joan Richardson
Teresa Wilborn
Tiffany Tauchren
John & Ann Sutton
Peter Slater
Joey Leake
Shannon Russell
Mary Moore

Rachel Poteat
Jeremy Harden
Mike Sutton
Stewart Dillard
Shelvia Russell
Ruby Martin
Katherine Turner
Jean Berry
Christy Lutterloh
Eleanor Thompson
Nancy Sutton
Norma Proctor
Randy Thompson

Barbara Cousins
Pat Kennedy
Donna Mitchell-Ayers
Pete Campbell
Alex Thomas
Robert Sykes
Frederica Beatty
Glenn Thompson
Family of Foy Bayliff
Ritchie Fishburne
Janie Holt Clapp
Ben Johnson
Carol Brooks

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