



John's Journal

As I am writing this article, it is not quite March yet, but it's almost March. Which means that it's almost spring. Which means that a young man's thoughts will turn to . . . March Madness!! In our part of the world,

March does bring us to this time of the college basketball season where our weekend schedules revolve around when our teams are playing and what are the chances of advancing in the "Big Dance."

We gorge on those first two days of non-stop basketball, and then settle in for the Sweet Sixteen, the Elite Eight, and then the Final Four. Such excitement as we cheer for our favorite teams to be playing on that last Monday night of the season.

But as people of faith, we have to juxtapose the excitement of March Madness with the reality of the Lenten season in which we are also a part. The frenzy of the culmination of the basketball season is such a contrast from the solemnity and reflective nature of Lent.

I found a blog the other day which got me thinking about this dichotomy. The blog is part of the online publication *Relevant*, and this particular blog was entitled "*Deeper Lessons of March Madness*." Here is an excerpt that I found interesting:

"You know the moment in a basketball game when your team is down by a dozen or so points, but makes a run and brings it to within two? And then the crowd rises to its feet, loudly cheering, and the team gets a new bounce in its step, hitting a long three to take the lead? That moment, with the deafening noise and dispirited opponents losing control—is a moment when you can touch the glory, where you glimpse—dare I say it—the divine. You get goosebumps, you slap a stranger's hand, and you raise your voice to the rafters for the glory to continue.

In these moments I envision God smiling at us humans and thinking, they are feeling it in small doses. Unfortunately, many of us leave these sporting "highs" without thinking that maybe they point to something greater that surrounds us. What if sport really is a gift from God? What if the blessings of sport are only a fraction of

what is available to us? I think it probably saddens God when the good things in life—sports, natural beauty, art, etc—are cheapened and seen only as ends unto themselves; not as the signposts to a greater grace that exists in the world. And so we should not cheapen basketball by writing off its "trivial" place in the grand scheme of things. Instead we should realize that the small wonders and momentary blessings matter in life. Why? Because the existence of rays of light implies a vast sun, and if we ever want to comprehend something that vivid, we should start by taking the light in small doses, wherever we can find it."

Yeah, I do enjoy college basketball and I enjoy this time of year as March Madness descends upon us. And maybe we can take away some lessons from the sport - winning/losing - grace in the face of adversity - sportsmanship, etc.

And though we may not think of sports as trivial, we must put it all into perspective. They are, after all, just games. In the grand scheme of things, their meaning doesn't reach great heights.

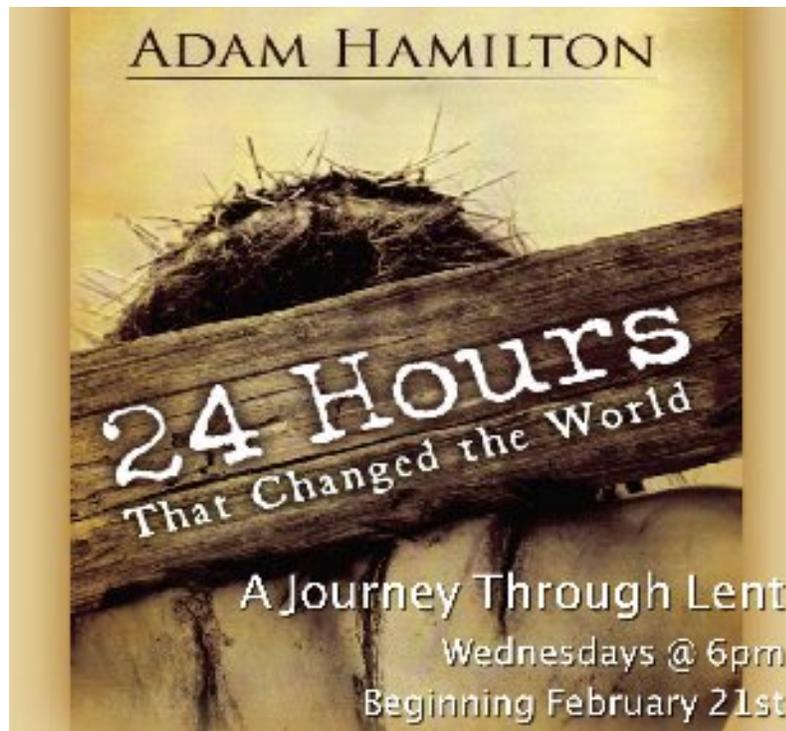
There are much more important matters to attend to, and they revolve around how we are to live our lives in response to the immense sacrifice that Christ has made for us. Talk about madness!

At the end of the championship game, after the confetti has dropped and the tears have been shed and the trophy presented, the winners bask in the joy and "One Shining Moment" is played on the jumbotron.

Well, as people of faith, we have a "one shining moment" too - and it outshines all other grand events. Our one shining moment happened on that first Easter Sunday nearly 2000 years ago, and it is a moment that still resonates and still is as true today as it was then.

So, let us enjoy the "madness" of this March. And as we gather on Easter Sunday, April 1st (the day before the championship game), let us celebrate our one shining moment - the glorious resurrection of our Lord! Thanks be to God! Enjoy the madness!

John





Once again our nation mourns for innocent lives lost in another senseless school shooting. On Wednesday, February 14th - Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day - seventeen students and faculty were gunned down at Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

This kind of event has happened so frequently that we have become desensitized to it. But as the days and weeks go by, perhaps we can see that this time, it may be different.

When the shooting happened at Sandy Hook Elementary, the victims and survivors were so young that they could not voice their outrage and fear. But the survivors here - these courageous and eloquent teenagers - can voice their outrage, their contempt, their fear, and their frustration perhaps better than any adult could.

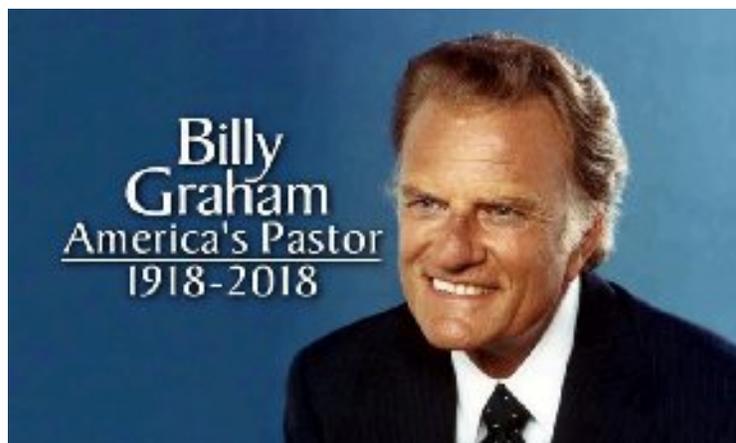
They have spoken at rallies and vigils. They have spoken in the offices of lawmakers in Tallahassee. They have

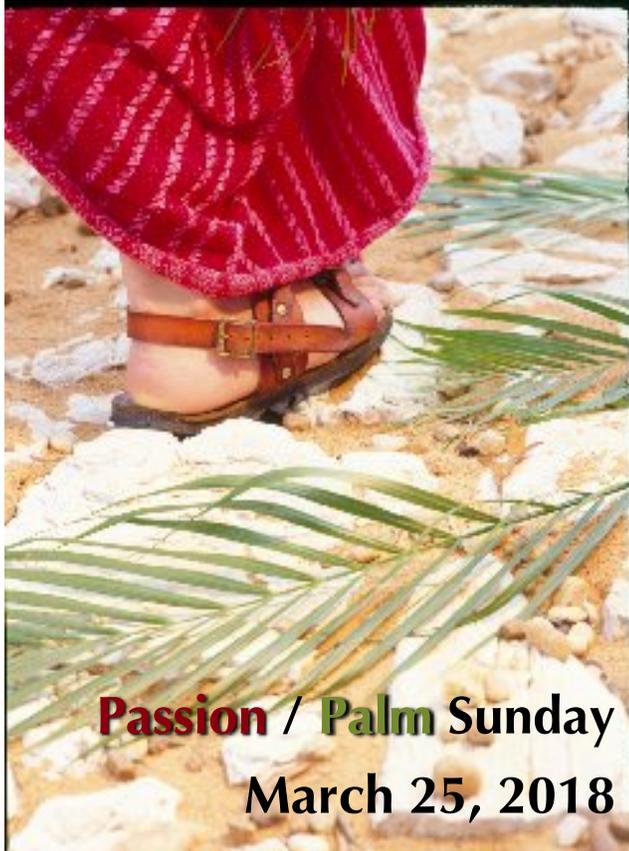
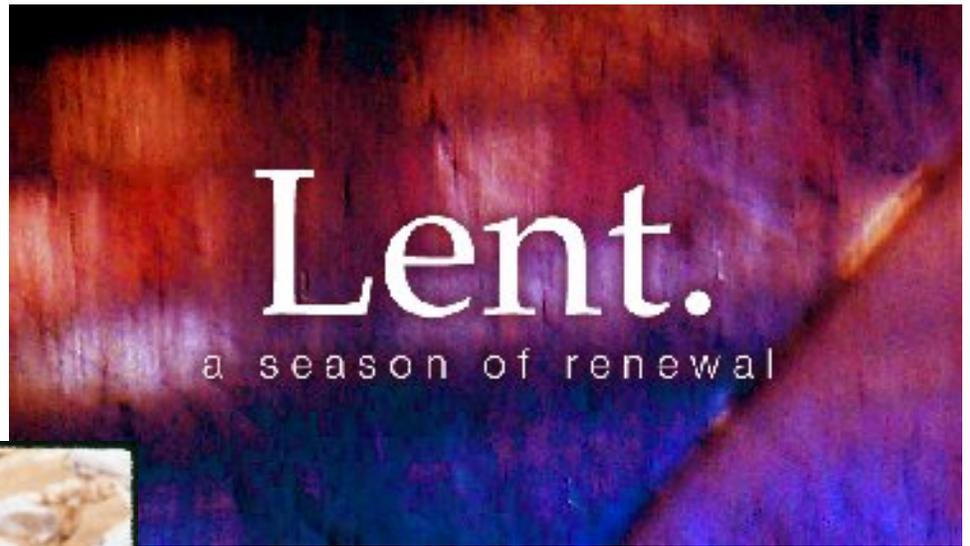
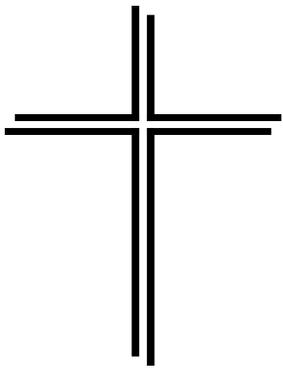
spoken directly to their representatives, their senators, and the president. As adults, we need to listen to what they are saying. Because they speak for their generation and those who come behind them who do not want to have to come to school every morning not knowing if they will return home that evening.

No matter where we may fall in the gun debate, certainly we can all agree that access to guns should be limited - limited by age, by mental stability, by training, etc. Access to assault weapons should be controlled at the highest level possible. If our country is not going to ban these weapons of war (which it did several years ago with a resulting decline in gun violence) then we need to severely limit access to them.

So yes, we mourn with our brothers and sisters in south Florida, and all who are still grieving the loss of loved ones due to gun violence. As we follow the Prince of Peace, we must constantly pray for sanity in our nation and that not one more innocent child or adult will die at the hands of those who would harm.

We pray for the families of those slain in Florida. We pray for the survivors who have been traumatized by what they have experienced and what they have seen. We pray for teachers and school administrators who must now deal with the aftermath of this tragedy. And we pray for lawmakers and those with the power to enact laws for sensible gun legislation that will keep our children safe. JWJ







MARCH WORSHIP THEMES

March 4th:

1 Corinthians 1:18-25

The Sign of the Cross

March 11th:

Ephesians 2:1-10

Mercy and Graced to Life!

March 18th:

John 12:20-33

Ain't Got Time to Bleed

March 25th - Passion/Palm Sunday:

Matthew 21:1-11

The Quirky Truth

March 29th - Maundy Thursday:

Various

Thursday Theology



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

Thanks to Rick and Nancy Purcell for the beautiful new Lenten Paraments that enhance our sanctuary during this season of penitence.



March 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>25</p> <p>Second Sunday In Lent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 	26	27	28	1	2	3
<p>4</p> <p>Third Sunday In Lent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p>11</p> <p>Fourth Sunday In Lent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 	12	13	14	15	16	17
<p>18</p> <p>Fifth Sunday In Lent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 	19	20	21	22	23	24
<p>25</p> <p>Palm/Passion Sunday</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship 	26	27	28	29	30	31

Your Church Staff:

Pastor: Rev. John W. Johnson
Director of Music: Christopher Bagley
Office Administrator: Joy Saleeby
Bookkeeper: Pam Hurt

Elders:

Chip Allen
A. J. Campbell
Sandy Cook
Karen Maxwell
Ron Osborne (Treasurer)
Glenn Patterson
Jean Payne
Nancy Purcell
Brandon Troxler

Rick Purcell (Clerk of Session)



Bethany's Annual Easter Egg Hunt
Saturday, March 24th
11:30 am



The Session met for its regular monthly stated meeting on February 20th (postponed from February 13th due to illness). Here are some highlights:

- Heard a devotion from Jean Payne
- Welcomed new members Ben and Sandy Russell by Letter of Transfer from First Presbyterian of Burlington
- Approved minutes from the January meeting
- Approved a deficit budget for 2018 / will revisit mid-year to consider options to balance
- Heard a financial report from Treasurer, Ron Osborne
- Approved by consensus the use of rental house for police officer training from Alamance Community College
- Heard about upcoming Salem Presbytery offering "Creating a Culture of Generosity" with a plea for several to join John in participating
- Heard a discussion of staff evaluation options
- Were reminded of Maundy Thursday worship / will be joined by friends from Shiloh Presbyterian / we are invited to join them at their Good Friday service
- Were reminded of the Forty Days-Forty Items Lenten Challenge
- Approved the suggestion to put a collection box in the Welcome Center for used eye-glasses that will be donated for Salem Presbytery Medical Mission trip to Chiapas, Mexico
- Heard a positive report on the Pancake Supper and Ash Wednesday Service
- Were reminded about the "24 Hours That Changed the World" Lenten Study series
- Heard a report about the meeting of Salem Presbytery
- Were reminded of John's participation in the NEXT Church Conference, February 26-28

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, MARCH 13, 2018
ELDERS OF THE MONTH FOR MARCH
KAREN MAXWELL AND SANDY COOK**





**Join us in celebration of the Resurrection
Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018
Worship at 11:00 am**



**Don't forget our Lenten Disciple Challenge!
Be sure to take pictures along the and send to
the church office!**



Financial Reports

REPORT THROUGH END OF JANUARY

Year-to-date Actual Income	\$24,314.72
Year-to-date Actual Expenses	\$12,402.78
YEAR-TO-DATE SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	-\$11,911.94

"LIFE IS NOT MEASURED BY HOW MUCH YOU OWN."

LUKE 12:15. NLT



As the Session gathered for its January meeting on the 9th, one of the continuing topics of discussion was our financial situation. We do have much to be grateful for. We finished 2017 in the black. As you can see from the figures above, we have started 2018 on a very positive note (thanks to a large donation that was intended for 2017 but was posted in 2018, and also to a very positive stock market). But still, the outlook for 2018 is challenging, in that the amount pledged for 2018 does not fulfill all our budgetary requests and needs.

The Session, at its February meeting, passed the 2018 budget which does include a considerable deficit. The January figures, and a positive start to February will help. But the challenges remain. The Session will continue to monitor our financial health, and will re-visit the budget mid-year to determine necessary steps to insure our continued mission and ministry.

In the meantime, if you have the ability, and would like to amend your pledge, this can be done at any time and would be greatly appreciated. You can do this by either putting a note in Pam Hurt's box, or by calling her at the church (she is at the church on Tuesday afternoons).

Bethany has been blessed in the past with very generous donors. The challenge for 2018 is to continue their legacy as we move forward in faith, so that the mission and ministry of Bethany can continue.



online GIVING
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www.bethanypreschurch.org/online-giving





- **Sunday School for Youth and Children** / Meets on the second floor of the Education Building at 9:45 each Sunday
- During **Worship**, children are invited to sit in designated pew (nearest the choir loft) / there are activities provided

- Our **Nursery** is staffed by a professional, paid worker, as well as volunteers each Sunday morning.
- Watch your calendar and inbox for special activities for our young people throughout the year.

find your place
Adult Ministry

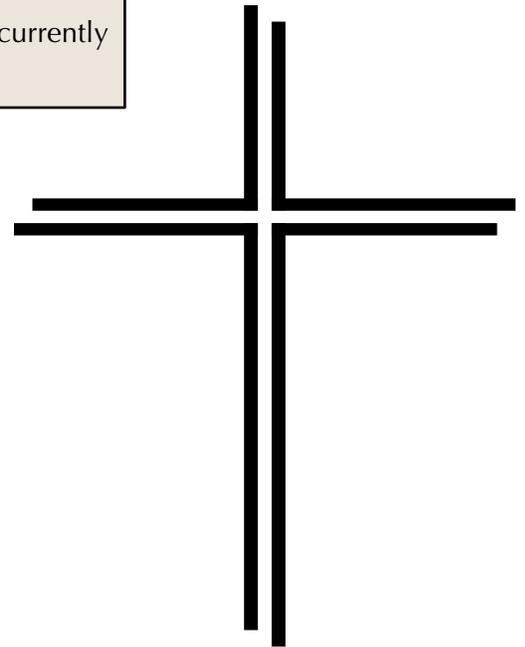


Christian Education Opportunities

The Fellowship Class - Bible study class using our denomination's Present Word Curriculum

The Young @ Heart Class - meets across from the church office / currently using the Uniform Lesson Series

The Seeker's Class - meets in the church office / currently using The Wired Word curriculum



Presbyterian Women Circles January Schedule!

Circle #1: Monday, March 5th at 10:00 am

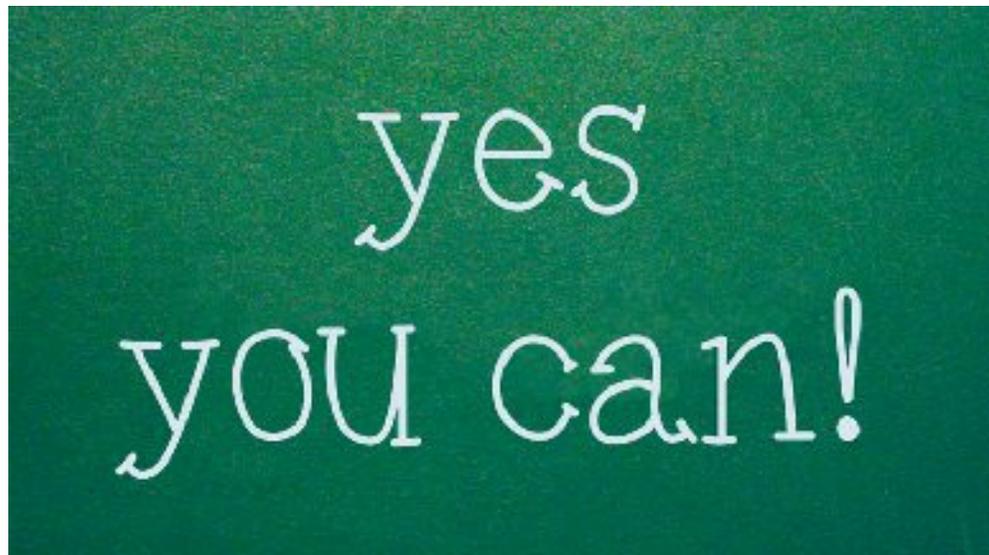
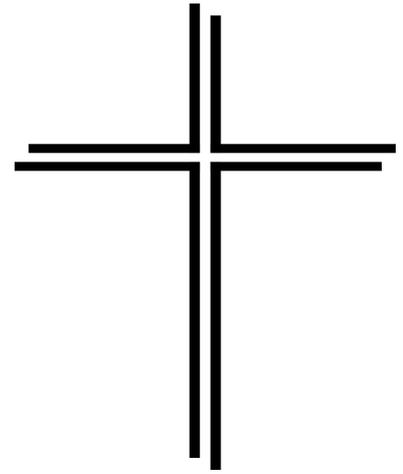
Circle #3: Monday, March 12th at 7:00 pm

Circle #4: Monday, March 12th at 7:00 pm

March Birthdays and Anniversaries!

Happy Birthday to:

Russell Donley	March 2
Glenn Thompson	March 3
Meritt Russell	March 4
Liz Hodson	March 7
Macie Smith	March 12
Danny Smith	March 16
Helen Byrd	March 18
Grace Dampier	March 18
Marcie Ruland	March 31



Bethany Prays

Bill Faucette	Jack Cook	Shannon Russell
Faye Campbell	Polly and Dick Wilson	Shelvia Russell
Frances Nolan	Teresa Wilborn	Mary Moore
Layla Benoklen	Tiffany Tauchren	Barbara Cousins
Ida Whitney	Jean Berry	Pat Kennedy
Rachel Poteat	Christy Lutterloh	Donna Mitchell-Ayers
Jeremy Harden	Eleanor Thompson	Pete Campbell
Anne McDaniels	Nancy Sutton	Carolyn Thompson
Mike Sutton	Norma Proctor	Ruby Martin
Stewart Dillard	John and Ann Sutton	Levi Byrd
Ben Johnson	Peter Slater	Ruth Younts
Diane Miller	Joey Leake	



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