



John's Journal

As we have begun a new year, and as we are now several weeks into our *Hamilton* sermon series - a few thoughts:

I have been gratified at the response to the

series. I was hesitant at first to offer the series, not only because of the different musical styles that the musical embodied, but also because of the challenge that it meant for me!

I am so thankful that I took on this challenge. It has been exciting for me to tackle something new and to see once again how the secular can inform the sacred. The scripture passages that were suggested by a colleague who was also offering this series were not ones that I would have immediately thought of when thinking about the themes. But they work! As of this writing, we are four weeks into the seven week series, and each text of scripture has been perfect to bring out the themes of the songs that are front and center for that particular Sunday, and for the overall themes for each week. I am excited to see what these final three Sundays offer us.

As this series comes to a close in a few weeks, it is hard to believe that we will be embarking on the season of Lent. Our Ash Wednesday service (as of now online only) will be held on Wednesday, February 17th at 7:00 pm. And the first Sunday of Lent will be on February 21st.

I will be offering another series that will help us on our Lenten journey. This series will look at five of the "I Am" statements of Jesus found in the Gospel of John. These will include the following: *I Am the Bread of Life*, *I Am The Light of the World*, *I Am The Door*, *I Am The Good Shepherd*, and *I Am The Resurrection and the Life*. I am hoping that looking at these familiar "I Am" statements in a new light will inspire and inform our understanding of the season of Lent and the passion of Jesus Christ.

I began thinking at the end of 2020 about where I wanted to go in my preaching for the new year. As you can see from what we've done so far and what is on the immediate horizon, I am venturing away from

the lectionary texts a bit and am exploring the sermon series format a little more. After Easter I will probably return to the lectionary for a few weeks, and then possibly another series or two for the summer. I'm still pondering on some ideas for that!

I have been so pleased with the first couple of weeks of our Virtual Winter Bible Study, looking at the Gospel of Luke with our guest leader, Dr. Donald Griggs. Don, a retired educator and pastor, and author of many Bible studies and resources (including the one we are using) joins us each Monday evening from his home in Livermore, California. We have 18 people in the study, including Don, and including a few non-members as well who heard about the study and were invited to join us. The discussions have been lively and engaging and we are all learning a lot more about Luke's gospel.

One other thought about the *Hamilton* sermon series: It is been fascinating to me how the series and topics for each week have been relevant to current events that have been happening in our country. With the horrific events in Washington, DC on January 6th and subsequent unease surrounding the inauguration, each Sunday's theme and scripture seemed to be perfect to help us understand our responsibilities as followers of Jesus Christ in responding to current events. We have heard calls for forgiveness, for grace, and have been challenged to think about our legacy and "what comes next." As we continue on towards Lent, I am hopeful that we will continue to be fed and enriched by our study of the marvelous work of art.

2020 had its issues and I think we were all happy to have it in the rear view mirror. Let us pray that 2021 will be much better, and that with the presence of vaccines and continued diligence in mask wearing, social-distancing and staying away from groups, that our lives will soon be back to what we might even call normal.

Thank you for all you are and all you continue to be in this little corner of the kingdom!

As always, I am grateful to be your pastor.

Grace & peace,

WORSHIP SERVICE UPDATES

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS

As we continue to follow guidelines that are set forth from Salem Presbytery, as well as following state guidelines and recommendations, we will continue to gather for worship online only. The presbytery suggested to remain online only until May (see article below). At the January Session meeting, the Session evaluated the current situation, looking at trends and determined that it would be wise to continue online only worship through February. At its February meeting, the Session will re-visit this decision and will make changes if the numbers are encouraging.

We are encouraged that vaccines are now available and hopefully soon will be available to a wide section of our population. When that happens, we should see numbers decreasing to a point where in-person gatherings are safer. Let us all pray for that day to be soon!

And let us continue to pray for all those effected by this deadly virus - for families of those who have succumbed to the virus, for first responders, and for front line health care workers who continue to do their jobs to the best of their abilities in the face of conditions that could never have imagined.

UPDATED COVID-19 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SALEM PRESBYTERY

January 25, 2021

Dear Friends –

When the Waterford Ball dropped in Times Square ringing in the new year from 2019 to 2020, we expected to go on with our lives in 2020 as we had in 2019. But maybe this time we'd make – and keep – a few new year's resolutions. Maybe we were looking forward to a special celebration for a special birthday. Maybe we would celebrate a wedding. Maybe we'd even be present for a graduation – nursery school, kindergarten, high school, college. When 2020 rang in on January 1, we had no idea that COVID-19 was looming around the corner, ready to disrupt life as we knew it.

When the Waterford Ball dropped in Times Square ushering in 2021, the city that never sleeps was all but empty. But from the safety of our homes, we were so glad to say adieu to 2020 and hello to 2021. We still don't know what is ahead. But as Christian people, we know that while we don't know what the future holds, we do know who holds the future. Clinging to that hope, we write to you today.

First, we want to acknowledge how incredibly hard these last ten months have been. And we want to thank all of you for the many precautions you have taken to keep yourselves and one another safe. We appreciate how incredibly worrisome these last ten months have been as we have watched those we love and care about across the many threads of our lives get sick from this virus. And we extend sincere sympathies to all who may have known – personally - one of the 400,000+ people who have lost their precious life to this insidious virus.

As people who know who holds our future, we greet 2021 praying that this year will be different. That this year we might be able to visit our grandchildren. That this year we might be able to take the long-planned trip. That this year we might find just a little normalcy. But we aren't there yet. *(Continued on Page 3)*

On Thursday afternoon, January 21, your presbytery COVID-19 task force met again to consider how our situation has changed (or not) since our last correspondence recommending that our church buildings remain closed until at least February 1. This time we included Ruling Elder Beth Hooten from First Presbyterian Church Burlington, who holds a doctorate in public health and serves on the COVID-19 Re-Entry Task Force for her congregation. Given the state of viral burden in North Carolina, we continue to recommend our church facilities in Salem Presbytery **remain closed** to in-person indoor gathering **until at least May 1, 2021.**

On Friday, January 22, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, in concert with the North Carolina Council of Churches, offered a webinar entitled, "The COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy and the Church." This webinar included a 30-minute presentation on the status of both the virus and the vaccines in North Carolina. The presentation slides can be accessed here at <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/COVID19-Vaccine-101-Deck-Final.pdf>. You may wish to consider sharing it with your congregation.

In addition to learning about the statewide vaccination efforts, the presentation included a question and answer session which has been summarized and is attached. (This can be found on Salem Presbytery's website [HERE](#).)

Of particular note are the following:

- 1) Given where we are with cases surging in North Carolina (99 counties are in the red or orange classifications on the state's county alert system), NC DHHS strongly recommends that faith organizations continue to gather virtually. If gathering in person, NC DHHS strongly recommends that people avoid singing to reduce risk of aerosolized viral particle spread. If and when you decide to reopen, it is recommended that you follow as many of the recommendations in NC DHHS Guidance for Places of Worship as possible. These included symptom/exposure monitoring, universal use of masks, physical distancing and hand washing. <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/NCDHHS-Interim-Guidance-for-Places-of-Worship.pdf>
- 2) North Carolina is currently vaccinating Group 1 (health care workers or long-term care staff/resident) and Group 2 (adults 65 years old and older). **The next group will be frontline essential workers, which includes people who must be in-person at their place of work AND work in one of the 8 essential sectors recommended by CDC (one of those sectors is Government and Community Services, which includes clergy and essential support for houses of worship). More details can be found in the NC DHHS Deeper Dive Group 3.** <https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/vaccines/Deeper-Dive-Group-3.pdf>
- 3) Churches have critical roles to play in helping to address the pandemic. These include providing reliable information to your members, helping people who need assistance in navigating the process to obtain the vaccine with technology and transportation and as the distribution process expands, potentially serving as a vaccination location (perhaps in partnership with neighboring congregations). To express an interest in serving as a vaccination site, complete this brief questionnaire - https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdaFEqfyH-0R9jhw5m-Wa_f4b3YEAn3ffLbgl28ldzd6bUQXw/viewform.
- 4) Additional information on the North Carolina Council of Churches COVID-19 resources may be found at <https://www.ncchurches.org>.

The way through this pandemic is together. Which means all perspectives should be heard. As you consider the appropriate time for reopening, seek consensus among your Session and clergy alike. All voices with a stake in the path forward should be heard. This includes not only representatives of the congregation but also church staff.

Soon, the weather will be getting warmer. And it will be easier to gather outside albeit masked and physically distant. So, we encourage you to gather outside even now as you are able. We encourage you to hold on, certainly longer than any of us would prefer, for the safety of all of God's children. We pray we will reach population (herd) immunity - estimated for COVID-19 to be 70-90% of the population having been immunized – SOON!

We pray for an end to this virus. And we continue to hold you and yours in our prayers.

Faithfully,

Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Smith
Transitional General Presbyter

Rev. Dr. Kyle Goodman
Alamance Presbyterian Church

Elizabeth Gerken Hooten, MSPH, ScD, CPH
Ruling Elder and COVID-19 Re-Entry Task
Force Member
First Presbyterian Church, Burlington

Rev. Paul Sink
Taylorsville Presbyterian Church and Salem Presbytery Moderator

Rev. Lindsey Altvater Clifton
Forest Hills Presbyterian Church

the gospel according to H★MILTON

We began the new year with something new . . . something different . . . something a little “out of the box” as they say with a new Sermon Series: ***The Gospel According to Hamilton***.

As we probably are aware, *Hamilton* is a wildly successful Broadway musical written by Lin Manuel-Miranda, that garnered sixteen Tony award nominations in 2016. Anyone who has been privileged to see the live performance, either in New York or in traveling companies, or even has seen the show taped for television, can attest to its quality and appeal.

Even if you aren’t thrilled with the type of music we see in *Hamilton* we can all appreciate the talent that the cast displays in every number, not to mention the compelling story itself of Alexander Hamilton.

The series began on Sunday, January 3rd, and continues for seven weeks, which will take us to Lent. Here are the final two themes in the series:

- February 7th - *The Gospel According to Hamilton: Take a Break*
- February 14th - *The Gospel According to Hamilton: Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?*

We talk a lot about seeing the message of the Gospel in the world around us. I strongly believe that God speaks to us through art, through music, through everyday events in our lives. God certainly endowed Lin Manuel-Miranda with incredible talents in writing this work of art. My prayer continues to be that I will be able to convey some of the themes that can relate to our lives as Christ’s followers.

Let’s enjoy these last few weeks of this fascinating series!

JWJ

Coming for Lent





FEBRUARY WORSHIP THEMES

February 7th - Fifth Sunday After Epiphany:

Luke 4:31-44

The Gospel According to Hamilton: Take a Break

February 14th - Transfiguration of the Lord

Luke 24:1-12

The Gospel According to Hamilton: Who Lives, Who Dies, Who Tells Your Story?

February 17th - Ash Wednesday:

TBA

TBA

February 21st - First Sunday in Lent

John 6:35-40

I AM The Bread of Life

February 28th - Second Sunday in Lent:

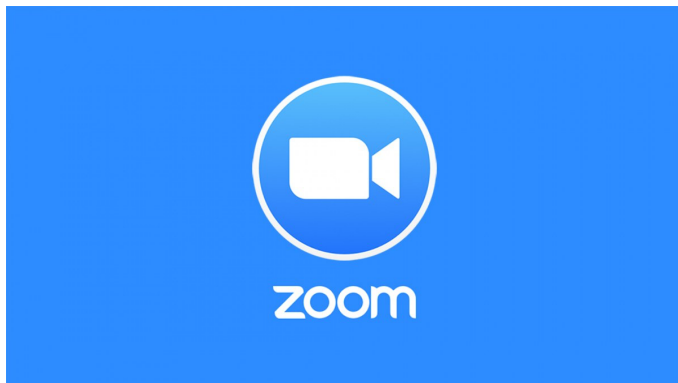
John 8:12-20

I AM The Light of the World



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



There are three options to gather for online worship: Zoom, Facebook Live and YouTube Live. Links for these options will be available in your usual weekly emails, as well as on our Facebook page.

February 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<div>31</div> <div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School (not currently meeting)</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> </div>	<div>1</div> <div> <div>7:00 PM Winter Virtual Bible Study</div> </div>	<div>2</div> <div> <div>Groundhog Day</div> </div>	<div>3</div>	<div>4</div>	<div>5</div>	<div>6</div>
<div>7</div> <div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School (not currently meeting)</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> </div>	<div>8</div> <div> <div>7:00 PM Winter Virtual Bible Study</div> </div>	<div>9</div> <div> <div>Salem Presbytery Meets</div> <div>7:00 PM Session Meeting</div> </div>	<div>10</div>	<div>11</div>	<div>12</div> <div> <div>Lunar New Year</div> </div>	<div>13</div>
<div>14</div> <div> <div>Valentine's Day</div> </div>	<div>15</div> <div> <div>President's Day</div> </div>	<div>16</div>	<div>17</div> <div> <div>Ash Wednesday</div> <div>7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Service</div> </div>	<div>18</div>	<div>19</div>	<div>20</div>
<div>21</div> <div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School (not currently meeting)</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> </div>	<div>22</div> <div> <div>7:00 PM Winter Virtual Bible Study</div> </div>	<div>23</div>	<div>24</div>	<div>25</div>	<div>26</div>	<div>27</div>
<div>28</div> <div> <div>Second Sunday in Lent</div> <div>9:45 AM Sunday School (not currently meeting)</div> <div>11:00 AM Worship (online only)</div> </div>	<div>1</div>	<div>2</div>	<div>3</div>	<div>4</div>	<div>5</div>	<div>6</div>

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 (Clerk of Session)

Tina Patterson

Nancy Purcell

Ben Russell

Shelby Smith

Tracey Troxler

Glenn Patterson (Treasurer)

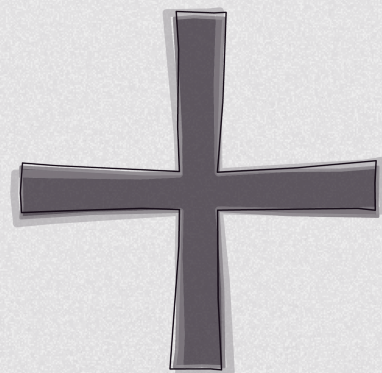


The Session met for its regular monthly stated meeting via Zoom on January 12th. Here are some highlights:

- Heard a devotion from Ben Russell
- Received a positive update on the sale of the property from Glenn Patterson / Called for a Congregational Meeting on January 24th to approve the sale of the property
- Received a positive treasurer's report from Glenn
- Received an outstanding report from our 2020 Stewardship Campaign
- Received an update on plans for virtual Bible study beginning in January, led by Dr. Donald Griggs (virtually)
- Approved a recommendation to continue online only worship through February - to be revisited at the February Session Meeting
- Called for a Meeting of the Corporation for January 24th for the purpose of electing officers

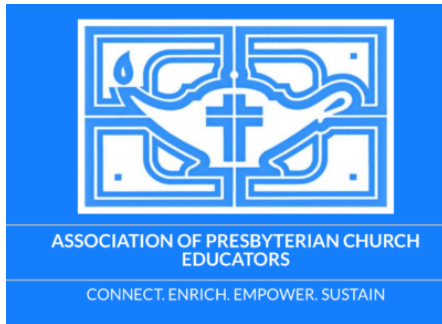
**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 9TH
ELDERS OF THE MONTH FOR FEBRUARY
NANCY PURCELL AND SHELBY SMITH**

Join us for a Virtual
Ash Wednesday Service
Wednesday,
February 17, 2021
7:00 pm



ASH
WEDNESDAY

APCE Annual Event Goes Virtual



Usually about this time of year I am headed to the Annual Event of the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators (APCE). It is something that I have done some 25 straight years! But not this year.

With the pandemic still raging, the decision was made some months ago that this year's event would be virtual only, and so the planned event in Chicago would be canceled. This was unwelcome news to all of us who gather each year, but especially so this year, as this would have been the 50th Anniversary Celebration. But that celebration has been postponed until the 2022 event, also to be held in Chicago.

And so on February 4-6, some 800 educators, pastors, volunteers, and students will gather on Zoom for worship, plenary sessions, workshops, and other gatherings. The large gatherings will be held as a Zoom Webinar, while the workshops and smaller gatherings will be via the regular Zoom meetings.

Having served in APCE leadership for most of these 25 years, that role has evolved as well, attending meetings on Zoom instead of in person. My role as conference photographer has also disappeared this year. I am serving as a Zoom host for one of the workshops, and am glad to help out in that capacity.

One advantage of the event being virtual is that more people can attend who otherwise might not be able to. I am thrilled that our own Nancy Purcell will be attending, receiving one of the scholarships that were made available. I know that Nancy will come away with lots of great ideas for her continuing work with the children and young people of our church.

As you can see from the graphic, the theme for this year's conference is "Anything but Ordinary Time," an appropriate theme considering our current situation. I will certainly miss gathering with my friends and colleagues next week, but am looking forward to attending the event and am grateful for the technology that allows me to do so.

Please keep APCE and its leadership in your prayers for a meaningful event that is always a gift to the church.

JWJ





Transfiguration

During the month of February, we observe a number of significant days in the church calendar year. We begin the month continuing the celebration of Epiphany which leads into the Lenten season. We will celebrate Shrove Tuesday on February 16, which leads into Ash Wednesday on the 17th.

During January, we were able to focus on some of those wonderful Epiphany songs, and I've always felt that among the most beautiful of hymns are those associated with Lent and the Passion which I will take a closer look at in the March newsletter. But what about Transfiguration Sunday?

What is Transfiguration Sunday? "Transfiguration Sunday" (celebrated this year on February 14) is the feast that celebrates Jesus' radical change of appearance while in the presence of Peter, James, and John, on a high mountain (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36). The Gospel of Matthew records that "he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light." At this moment Moses and Elijah appeared, and they were talking with Jesus.

While most hymnals don't include a section of hymns directly associated with the Transfiguration story, we often will include these familiar pieces when acknowledging Transfiguration: Be Thou My Vision, Beautiful Saviour, Crown Him with Many Crowns, Immortal Invisible God Only Wise, Rejoice, the Lord is King. Of course there are others, but these are just a few that we can use to remind us of this important time in our liturgical year.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher A. Bagley, Director of Music



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FINANCIAL REPORT - END OF DECEMBER 2020

Year-to-date Actual Income	\$169,326.52
Less Year-to-date Actual Expenses	\$168,438.71
Plus Other Income (from investments)	\$15,318.02
YEAR-TO-DATE BUDGET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$16,205.83

**Scan this QR code for direct access to
our Online Giving Platform**



2020 Stewardship Campaign Final Report

November of 2020 saw us engage in our four-week Stewardship Campaign, with the theme of "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come." Even though this year's campaign was very different, due to limitations of the pandemic, we are thrilled to report that because of

your generosity, our campaign was tremendously successful.

If we just look at the numbers that come from your pledges, there was an approximate 7.9% increase in giving. If we add into that anticipated pledges (from people who have pledged in the past but have not so far this year), and so anticipated income from investments, we are looking at at 13.44% increase. This is incredible!

All of us here at the church, from Pam, our bookkeeper, to Glenn, our treasurer, to the Session, and John were completely blown away when we saw these numbers. For you to respond to the call to give like this in the midst of a pandemic with all the uncertainties that face us, is truly a step of faith. This says that we are doing something right here at Bethany, and the Session understands its responsibility to budget wisely so that the mission and ministry of this great church can continue to grow and thrive.

A huge thank you to all who have pledged their support. Our prayers have truly been answered!

Also, you can see from the above end-of-the-year numbers, that we ended 2020 well in the positive numbers! Thanks to generous year-end gifts, and positive investment numbers, we are grateful that we were able to end 2020 on such a positive note!

February Birthdays and Anniversaries

Happy Anniversary to:
Helen & Glenn Byrd

February 28th

Happy Birthday to:

Bobby Peele
Kayla Donley
Laura Mitchell-Ayers
Joyce Peele
Rick Purcell

February 7th
February 8th
February 16th
February 18th
February 21st

Children & Youth Ministries

- **Sunday school for Youth and Children** / Meets on second floor of Education Building at 9:45 each Sunday (as announced during the pandemic)..
- During **Worship**, (when we return to in-person 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.

hello
FEBRUARY

Find your place!

ADULT MINISTRIES

Christian Education Opportunities

The Fellowship Class - Bible study class using our denomination's *Present Word* curriculum. The class will resume when we return to our normal schedules.



Bethany Prays

Christopher Bagley
Frederica Beatty
Jean Berry
Jack Cook
Bill Faucette
Christy Lutterloh
Norma Proctor
Joan Richardson
Nancy Sutton
Tiffany Tauchren
Eleanor Thompson
Randy Thompson
Grace Johnson

Karen Maxwell
Carol Brooks
Pat Kennedy
Peter Slater
Diane Miller
Barbara Cousins
Ben Johnson
Joey Leake
Pete Campbell
Shannon Russell
Alex Thomas
Sylvia Donley
Janie Holt Clapp

Stewart Dillard
Richie Fishburne
Jeremy Harden
Ruby Martin
Anne McDaniels
Shelvia Russell
John & Ann Sutton
Mike Sutton
Katherine Turner
Ida Whitney
Frank Wrenn
Bill Abplanalp

BETHANY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
1500 S. MAIN STREET
GRAHAM, NC 27253
336.227.4041

Email:

office@bethanypreschurch.org

Website:

www.bethanypreschurch.org

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/bethanypresbyterian

Twitter:

@bpresbyterian

