



John's Journal

Here we are on the verge of heading into Lent - that 40 day journey towards the cross. I have always cherished the rhythm of the church year - that anticipation of the

security of knowing what's coming up on the calendar, but yet in its sameness each year, there is an opportunity to hear something new - to experience the divine in the ordinary.

Lent has always been a meaningful time to me. I relish in the celebration of Advent and Christmas, but the observance of Lent takes me deep inside myself to explore what this life of faith really means.

And each year, it seems we just get the Christmas stuff put away, and here we are at Lent. Our focus needs to shift, and maybe this can help.

As you may know, one of my favorite authors/poets is Ann Weems. The following comes from her book *Kneeling in Jerusalem*, and the title is *For Love of Bethlehem, For Fear of Jerusalem*.

*Just when we were beginning to
to enjoy the play,
the stagehands came out
and dismantled the manger.*

*From its wood,
they built a cross.*

What kind of drama is this anyway?

*The happy ending wasn't
an ending after all,
but just act I.*

*Before the play is over,
most of the audience has left,
but the Director goes on,
content with the remnant
To whom is promised
a smashing finale.*

*Shall we, too, go home early - -
before we get stuck in the traffic?*

*We can always read
what the critics have to say,
and if it's really good,
we can be assured
it will be repeated.*

Yes, we can certainly be assured that this drama will be repeated. We return to it year after year, remembering the march of Christ to the cross, the anticipation that we feel in the drama.

We often talk about "giving up something for Lent," which is a noble thought as we remember the



sacrifice that has been made on our behalf. And if giving up chocolate or Facebook or whatever for six weeks will make you a better person of faith, then by all means, go for it!

But, how about this . . . how about **adding** something to your life this Lent instead of giving something up? What if your Lenten discipline was adding something that would make someone else's life better? What commitment can you make over these 40 days that will impact someone's life in a positive way?

My prayer for all of you is that Lent 2019 will be a soul-filling experience. As we worship remembering the last words of Christ on the cross, as we hear those words sung by our choir, as we gather at lunch on Wednesdays to ponder that those words mean, may Christ enter our hearts in new and glorious ways!

As always, it is a privilege to be your pastor. Grace & peace,

John

sabbatical

rest | refresh | refocus

The last three newsletters have given you a little introduction to the advance planning that is continuing as I prepare for my anticipated three-month sabbatical, May-July of 2020. The Sabbatical Support Group (Helen Brown, Ron Kimrey, Sandy Russell, and Tracey Troxler) have met several times and we are in the final stages of completing the extensive Lily Clergy Renewal Grant application.

I am hopeful that we can get the Session's endorsement at the March meeting. I will then share more of my plans in the Sunday bulletin, as well as during a Moment for Mission during worship.

As a way of further keeping you informed, over the next few months, I will share in this space the responses to one of the narrative questions that is included in the application. So, here's question #2, and the response:

- 2. Provide a clearly articulated rationale for engaging in the clergy renewal program. Include a discussion about why this is an appropriate time for the pastor and congregation to participate. To present a strong application, please give careful thought to the connection between the purpose, the proposed activities and your rationale. Programs that are coherent, well-integrated and possess a degree of thematic unity often are the most compelling. Your responses to these first two questions should convey these characteristics.**

2019 will mark forty years serving the church in varying capacities. In applying for this grant for a proposed sabbatical in 2020, will mean that I will have served 41 years, and this is the first sabbatical that I have taken. For twenty-plus years, I served as an unordained church educator, following my graduation from the Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia. After receiving my M.Div. in 2000, I have continued to serve as a pastor in several different churches.

After my long tenure of service to the church, I sense a need for renewal, for refreshment, and for finding resources that will enable me to continue to serve with creativity, new ideas, and a sense of awe in presenting the gospel in new and exciting ways.

I have been in my current call at Bethany Presbyterian Church for six years. The congregation is aging, although there are younger members as well. The church is on relatively stable footing compared to other similar sized churches. But there is an ever-present need to look to the future and tackle the on-going questions of how we minister to both an aging and a younger population. This sabbatical will come at the seven-year mark of my ministry here at Bethany, and will be a unique opportunity for the congregation and the pastor to explore new opportunities and new possibilities for current and future ministries.

In his book *Digital Disciple*, author Adam Thomas says this: *"Following Jesus Christ is first and foremost about connection, about the arms of love reaching from the cross to embrace everyone. The Word became flesh in Jesus Christ in order that we might see more clearly the connection that God yearns for us to have with one another and with God."*

Just as following Jesus Christ is all about connection, so too, I believe, is ministry. The task of the pastor is to connect to each and every congregant, and thus to help all connect in a more real way to Jesus Christ. As I focus on finding ways to minister in a digital world which includes non-digital believers, I believe this sabbatical will enable me to do that in the following ways:

- Spending time studying through the Digital Theology program at the University of Durham in England will give me access to those who live in this world of digital theology all the time, and will provide me with outstanding resources to bring back to my ministry at home.
- Exploring the Holy Land will give me the opportunity to see how this part of the ancient world uses technology in religious life. I would look at websites of various religious entities (Christian, Jewish, and Muslim), as well as their social media presence, to see how they are interacting with the digital world.
- Touring various cities in Europe, I will also have the opportunity to explore how churches use technology in their ministries.
- In addition to spending much time online researching how churches in the Holy Land, Europe, the UK, as well as the United States are using technology, I will also have the time to read and research on this subject, with the goal of having a plan of action and implementing that plan on my return.
- This time away will allow me to pause and reset - focusing on connecting in new and positive ways with my congregation on my return.
- This sabbatical will enable me to have the time to be detached from the rigors of my work for an extended period of time - something that hasn't happened in 40 years! I believe it will give me a new perspective on my work with renewed energy and motivation.

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On each step of my journey during this sabbatical, I will constantly be attentive to the question at the heart of my purpose: *In an increasing digital world, how can we share the Gospel message in new and creative ways in settings that are not as "plugged in"?*

Adam Thomas also says in his book *Digital Disciples*: *"The Tech has added a new dimension to our lives; we are physical, emotional, spiritual, and now virtual people. But I believe that God continues to move through every facet of our existence, and that makes us new kinds of followers. We are digital disciples."*

We are digital disciples. Our challenge is to share the gospel with those who may be on the edge of this digital world. I am certainly looking forward to tackling this challenge on this sabbatical journey.

The extensive travel during the first part of the sabbatical is something that I would be unable to do without the financial help of this grant. And getting to do this with my wife is just icing on the cake! The time spent at the University of Durham in the UK has the added bonus of more family time. My niece is on the faculty there so it will be great to have some time with her and her husband, as well as my young great-nephew, and extended family.

The backend of the sabbatical will be at a more leisurely pace, with vacation time exploring some of the country's national parks, and also visiting our daughter and her husband in Minneapolis.

As a lead-up to the sabbatical, my plan is to engage interested folks within the congregation in a pertinent book study on this area of digital theology and technology. I will also suggest that interested members participate in a book or Bible study in my absence, on topics to be determined, and led by those who would have expertise on the subjects chosen.

On my return, I would anticipate some sort of congregational dinner or event where I can share photos (another one of my hobbies) and experiences of the sabbatical, and I would plan to present a sermon series highlighting insights I may have gained from the sabbatical. I would also hope to explore options for streaming our worship services, which could be a benefit not only to those unable to attend worship, but could be an evangelistic tool as well.

So, no matter what aspect of the sabbatical we are looking at - rest, prayer, reading, travel, or study, the opportunities for personal growth are staggering. After seven years at Bethany, I will have the opportunity to step back and see where we've been, and where we need to go over the next few years. My absence will also be an opportunity to tap into emerging leadership here at the church. One of our members is a Commissioned Ruling Elder (CRE) in the PCUSA, who has agreed to step into the leadership role while I am away. I am looking to other elders and members to see how they can contribute as well in my absence.

This sabbatical will come at the perfect time for me - and I believe for the church as well. It will provide for me a time of rest and renewal, travel and adventure, and exploring areas of interest in my ministry. It will also provide the church an opportunity to consider how we can minister to all in a more vibrant way moving forward.

Stay tuned. JWJ





March 3rd:
 Luke 9:28-36
The Moon Shot Effect

March 6th - Ash Wednesday:
 Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21
An Invitation to Take

March 10th - First Sunday in Lent
 Luke 23:26, 33-34a
Father, Forgive Them . . .

March 17th - Second Sunday in Lent
 Luke 23:32, 39-43
Today You Will Be With Me in Paradise

March 24th - Third Sunday in Lent
 John 19:25-27
Behold Your Son . . . Behold Your Mother

March 31st - Fourth Sunday in Lent
 Mark 15:33-36a
My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?

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

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



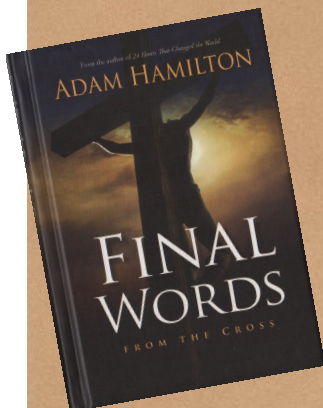
FINAL WORDS FROM THE CROSS

Lenten Sermon Series
 March 10 - April 18, 2019

Lenten Lunch & Learn Series

Beginning Wednesday, March 6th @ noon

FINAL WORDS FROM THE CROSS



Join us on the six Wednesdays during Lent as we explore these final words from Jesus from the cross. The sessions will be at noon each Wednesday and you are invited to bring your lunch!

Mark your calendars for this Lenten Lunch & Learn Series

Session 1: "Father, Forgive Them"

Session 2: "Today You Will Be With Me in Paradise"

Session 3: "Behold Your Son . . . Behold Your Mother"

Session 4: "My God, My God, Why Have You Forsaken Me?"

Session 5: "I Thirst"

Session 6: "It is Finished . . . Into Your Hands I Commit My Spirit"

ASH WEDNESDAY

WORSHIP SERVICE

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6th - 7:00 PM

March 2019

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|--|----------|--------|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Sabbatical Support Group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Disciple Bible Study: Into the Word, Into the World | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:00 AM Circle #1 7:00 PM Circle #4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Disciple Bible Study: Into the Word, Into the World | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ash Wednesday 6:00 PM Pancake Dinner 7:00 PM Ash Wednesday Service | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First Sunday in Lent Daylight Saving Time starts 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship with Communion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Circle #3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Session Meeting | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12:00 PM Lenten Lunch Study Series 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second Sunday in Lent St. Patrick's Day 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Disciple Bible Study: Into the Word, Into the World | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12:00 PM Lenten Lunch Study Series 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6:00 PM Fish Fry |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Third Sunday in Lent 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Disciple Bible Study: Into the Word, Into the World | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12:00 PM Lenten Lunch Study Series 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fourth Sunday in Lent Fifth Sunday @ Bethany 9:45 AM Sunday School 11:00 AM Worship | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10:00 AM Circle #1 7:00 PM Circle #4 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7:00 PM Disciple Bible Study: Into the Word, Into the World | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12:00 PM Lenten Lunch Study Series 7:00 PM Choir Rehearsal | | | |

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

Randy Cousins

Karen Maxwell

Ron Osborne (Treasurer)

Jean Payne

Nancy Purcell

Ben Russell

Tracey Troxler

Rick Purcell (Clerk of Session)



The following have made memorial gifts in February in memory of Faye Campbell:

Billy & Ann Anders

Tommy Lane

Norman & Joyce Mize

Jean Payne (Music Fund)

Don & Betty Boggs

Gail Nelson

Sylvia Hayes

Troy & Ray Fuller

Julia Howard

Diane Bullis (Music Fund)

Penny Compton, Melinda Diaz, Gary Cloutier,

Tracy Perkins, Paula Love

David & Becky Eatmon

Brenda & Robert Sykes

Kathy & Steven Martin

Robert & Carol Buhler



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

- Heard a devotion from Karen Maxwell.
- Shared in joys and concerns of the congregation
- Approved minutes from January stated meeting
- Heard a report from the meeting of Salem Presbytery from Chip Allen, including information about restructure of presbytery
- Heard an update from Glenn Patterson on the sale of the property.
- Heard an update from Glenn about ongoing plans for startup of Cub Scout Pack.
- Heard a treasurer's report from Ron Osborne.
- Approved the 2019 budget as presented by the Support Ministry Team, and called a Congregational Meeting and Meeting of the Corporation for February 24th.
- Received an update on several projects around the church from Buildings and Grounds elder, Chip Allen.
- Were reminded of Ash Wednesday worship on March 6th as well as Ash Wednesday Pancake Supper also on the 6th.
- John shared information about the APCE conference in Galveston, and also progress on the grant application for his sabbatical in 2020.

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, MARCH 12TH
ELDERS OF THE MONTH FOR MARCH
A. J. CAMPBELL AND RANDY COUSINS**

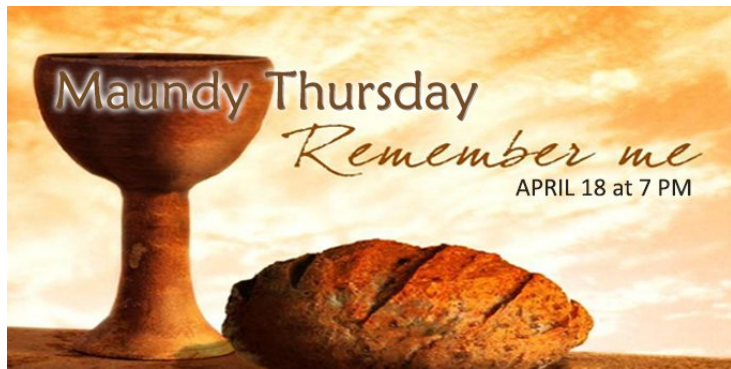
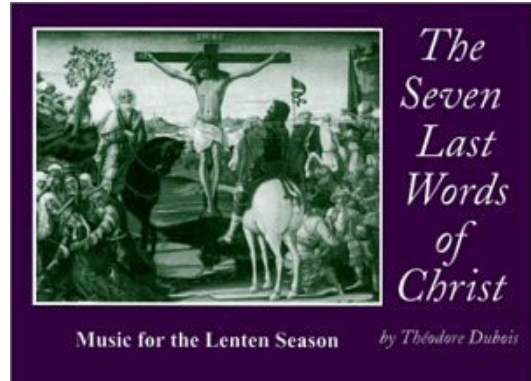


mark  your **Calendar**



All-Church Fish Fry
Saturday, March 23rd - 6:00 pm
Sponsored by Men of the Church
Proceeds go to our Youth Summer Conferences

Special Presentation by our Choir
“The Seven Last Words of Christ”
By Theodore Dubois
Sunday, April 14, 2019
During Morning Worship





Scholarships

It's scholarship season at Bethany! Thanks to the generosity of those who have come before us, our Scholarship Fund is available to disperse funds to qualified applicants for post high school education. Once the applications are submitted, a committee will consider each application and determine the amount of each scholarship.

Application forms are available in the mailboxes directly across from the church office, and **the deadline for applications is March 31st!**

If you have any questions, you may contact the church office, or Elder Ron Osborne.



Continue to keep **Salem Presbytery** in your prayers, as the proposal presented by the "Dream Team" was approved at the meeting of Salem Presbytery on February 12th.

This proposal concerns the future structure and mission of the presbytery.

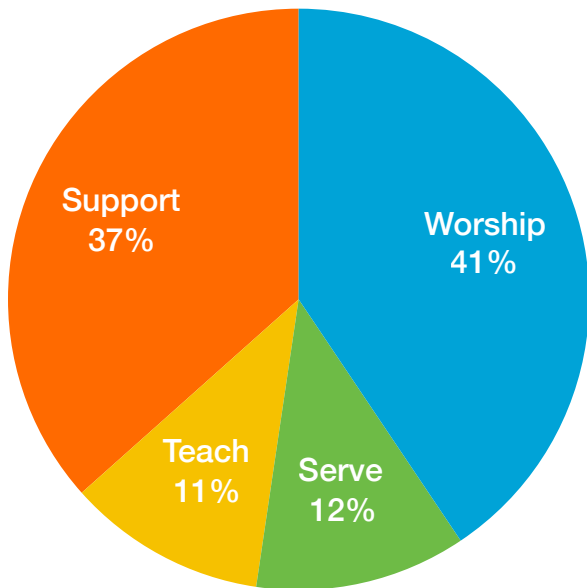
As we move now to the implementation phase, please pray for those who will be responsible for putting this plan into action, and especially our **presbytery staff**, as they now ponder what the future holds for them.

We move forward in the assurance that we live in the presence of God and that God has a plan for his church.



Financial Reports

| FINANCIAL REPORT - END OF JANUARY 2019 | |
|--|-----------------|
| Year-to-date Actual Income | \$15,910.05 |
| Year-to-date Actual Expenses | \$15,267.11 |
| YEAR-TO-DATE SURPLUS (DEFICIT) | \$642.94 |



| MINISTRY AREA BUDGET AMOUNTS | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| Worship | \$67,468.00 |
| Serve | \$19,532.00 |
| Teach | \$18,409.00 |
| Support | \$60,819.00 |
| TOTAL EXPENSES | \$166,228.00 |

love learn serve

At a duly called meeting of the congregation on February 24th, a **Narrative Budget** was presented, highlighting how our funds are to be allocated for 2019. This budget was approved by the Session at its meeting on February 12th.

As the budget was presented, there is anticipated income of **\$150,895.00**. The anticipated expenses total **\$166,227.91**, which projects a deficit budget of **\$15,332.91**. As was shared at the meeting on the 24th, even though a deficit budget is not something that we are pleased with, our history shows that this congregation comes through! For example, in 2018, the projected deficit was around \$29,000, and yet we ended the year with a surplus of around \$35,000, thanks to your generosity and a large gift at the end of the year.

Each month, you will see on this page of the newsletter, a report of our finances for the previous month. This will show our progress to date for the year. Please pay attention to these figures and pray for Bethany and also for what you can do to help alleviate the deficit.

We have so much to be thankful for in this place, and we pray that our mission and ministry may continue and grow in the years to come.

Total Anticipated Ministry Needs for 2019 - \$166,228

March Birthdays and Anniversaries!

Happy Birthday to:

| | |
|----------------|----------|
| Glenn Thompson | March 3 |
| Meritt Russell | March 4 |
| Liz Hodson | March 7 |
| Bill Brown | March 8 |
| Macie Smith | March 12 |
| Danny Smith | March 16 |
| Helen Byrd | March 18 |
| Grace Dampier | March 18 |



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.

Find your place!

ADULT MINISTRIES

Christian Education Opportunities

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

Disciple Bible Study - Into the Word, Into the World - meets on Tuesday evenings throughout the school year. New members always welcome.



Presbyterian Women Circles March Schedule!

- Circle #1:** Monday, March 4th at 10:00 am
- Circle #3:** Monday, March 11th at 7:00 pm
- Circle #4:** Monday, March 4th at 7:00 pm

Bethany Prays

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Bill Faucette | Mary Moore | Levi Byrd |
| Family of Faye Campbell | Rachel Poteat | Randy Thompson |
| Shirley Lane | Jeremy Harden | Barbara Cousins |
| Ida Whitney | Mike Sutton | Pat Kennedy |
| Diane Miller | Stewart Dillard | Donna Mitchell-Ayers |
| Jack Cook | Shelvia Russell | Pete Campbell |
| Joan Richardson | Ruby Martin | Ben Johnson |
| Teresa Wilborn | Katherine Turner | Family of Ruth Younts |
| Tiffany Tauchren | Jean Berry | Alex Thomas |
| John & Ann Sutton | Christy Lutterloh | Bill Abplanalp |
| Peter Slater | Eleanor Thompson | Robert Sykes |
| Joey Leake | Nancy Sutton | Randy Thompson |
| Shannon Russell | Norma Proctor | Dusty Kimrey |

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