



John's Journal

Six months! It's hard to believe that after nearly 42 years of ministry, I've only got six months left until retirement.

I hope you all have heard my news by now

about my plans for retirement. In case you somehow didn't get the letter that I mailed out earlier in February, you can see a copy of it on the next page. I read that letter to the Session at its meeting on the 9th, and the letter was mailed out that same day. I have been so appreciative of the words of encouragement and support and congratulations that I have received from so many people.

As I approach this new phase of life, I do so with a full heart. I hear in my head so many times the tagline of the hit TV series *Friday Night Lights*: "Clear eyes, full heart, can't lose!" And that is so true.

I have made this decision with clear eyes. I actually started to think about retirement some time back knowing that taking a sabbatical would certainly help in my need for renewal and some time away. And it certainly did. I returned from my sabbatical with renewed energy and motivation to serve you good folks to the best of my ability. But I also returned knowing that I really needed to think more seriously about retirement.

The practice of the presbytery and denomination is that a pastor commit to one year of service in a congregation or call following the end of a sabbatical. As I came to the end of my sabbatical last August, it was with clear eyes that I knew that it was time. I talked to many colleagues and friends who have reached this point, and they all assured me that when it was time, I would know it. And they were right.

And so it was with clear eyes that I came to the decision to plan for my retirement effective at the end of August this year. The usual practice is to give a six-month notice to a congregation so that plans for a transition can begin. I decided to go a little earlier than that giving my notice about six and a half months out.

Plans are already underway to begin this transition. The Commission on Ministry (COM) of Salem Presbytery will soon appoint a liaison that will work with the Session and the soon-to-be appointed Transition Team to plan for this transition in the life and ministry of Bethany.

I also enter this time with a full heart. I know that the next six months is going to be filled with nostalgia, as I think back over all the experiences in all the churches I have served over these 42 years. Each one holds a special place in my heart, and my heart is indeed full as I remember the faces of those who became friends and remain a big part of my life. Each person along the way has informed my ministry and helped shape me into a better pastor and educator.

Of course, my heart is full as I remember the support and love of my family. The foundation that was established by my parents - a pastor and a Christian Educator - as they instilled in me a love of God and a love of Christ's church; the support and love of my dear sisters who have followed my career over the years; the unending and loving support of my dear wife Debbie over the past 28+ years, and the joy that Jackie and Stephanie brought to me when they came into my life as well. My heart is indeed full!

And so, with all that going for me, I surely can't lose. As I enter this transition time and approach my retirement, all of these experiences make it clear that I just can't lose. The next phase of my life will surely be different. People have been asking me what I'm going to do. As you may know, I have been doing some work with the presbytery as the Communications Coordinator, and I plan to continue that. I also eventually may work with small churches who need some help with technology, websites, and communications. These are areas that I enjoy and maybe this is how I can continue to serve the church I love so much.

Thanks again for your support and encouragement. Let's make these last six months the best yet!

As always, I am grateful to be your pastor.

Grace & peace,

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bethany presbyterian

love learn serve



February 9, 2021

Dear Members and Friends of Bethany Presbyterian Church:

In June of 1979 I began a journey that has blessed my life beyond measure. Over the past nearly 42 years I have had the privilege of serving congregations from 40 to 4000 members. I have served as a Christian educator, Youth Director, Stated Supply Pastor, Designated Pastor, Interim Pastor, Interim Associate Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Pastor. I have literally given blood, sweat, and tears in my service to my Lord and His church.

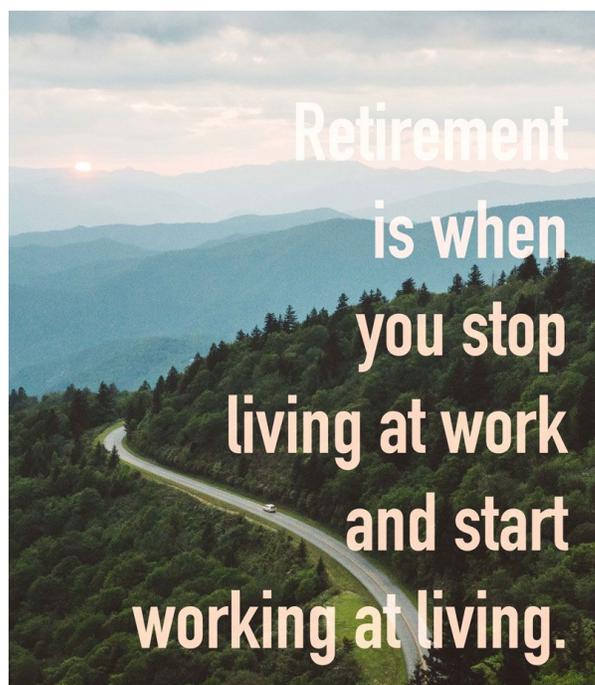
After much soul-searching, countless hours of prayer, and finally clear discernment, I am announcing my retirement from active ministry, effective August 31, 2021. Please know that this decision has not been taken lightly, but also please know that it is one of which I am certain and am at peace.

Over the next few months I will be working with the Session to identify a Transition Team who will work with the Commission on Ministry of Salem Presbytery in moving forward so that the mission and ministry of this church can continue seamlessly.

I will be forever grateful for what will be my eight and a half-plus years of ministry with you here at Bethany. To have this time with you as my final pastorate is truly a gift. I will be praying for you as you approach this time of transition, and I covet your prayers as well for Debbie and me as we enter this new phase of our lives. It has been the privilege of a lifetime to serve alongside you in ministry. To God be the glory!

Grace & Peace,

John W. Johnson
Pastor, Bethany Presbyterian Church



"I
AM"

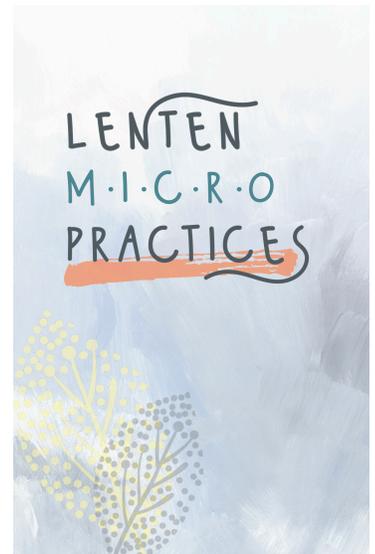
The Bread of Life
The Light of the World
The Door
The Good Shepherd
The Resurrection and the Life

Coming for Lent

As we began our Lenten journey on February 21st, we embarked on a new Sermon Series to help us along this road. This year we will focus on five of Jesus' "I Am" statements in the Gospel of John. They are noted in the graphic above.

We are also pleased that to make available the Lenten Micro-Practices booklet, which offers specific suggestions for each day of Lent to focus our attention on the important things. This booklet was distributed to those who came for our Drive-Through Imposition of Ashes on Ash Wednesday, and was subsequently mailed out to others. If you did not receive one and would like to, please contact Joy in the office. These micro-practices are also displayed on our Facebook page each morning during Lent.

As we make our way through this meaningful season, let us remember always the journey that our Lord made as he made his way to Jerusalem, and ultimately to the cross. As March turns into April, we will focus on those last days that he was on earth, and the joy of the resurrection that we will celebrate on Easter Sunday, April 4th.



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. At the February Session meeting, the Session evaluated the current situation, looking at trends and determined that it would be wise to continue **online only worship through mid-March. At its March 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.

SCOUTS OF BEAR DEN PACK 9 BUILDS BIRD HOUSES

The Scouts of the Pack 9 Bear Den completed their achievement requirement of building bird houses. This effort included the use of many tools, planning & building, with the final step of painting the houses. The Scouts plan to deploy the birdhouses around their homes to house birds for shelter and future observation. The Scouts built some great houses and had a great time building. Many thanks to Mr. Paul Newberry for leading the event and providing great Scout Leadership.





March 7th - Third Sunday in Lent:
John 10:1-10
I Am . . . The Door

March 14th - Fourth Sunday in Lent:
John 10:11-18
I Am . . . The Good Shepherd

March 21st - Fifth Sunday in Lent:
John 11:17-27
I Am . . . The Resurrection and the Life

March 28th - Passion/Palm Sunday:
Philippians 2:5-11
Kings, Colts, Crowds, Cloaks, and Kenosis

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



We continue to explore new avenues to make our virtual worship services on Sunday morning the best experience possible for the viewer. We have been primarily focusing on using the Zoom platform, as well as streaming live to Facebook and YouTube. The utilization of streaming software has made this effort a little easier, but we are still learning! We appreciate your patience.

In an effort to make it easier for viewers to find what they need to find, we have created a new **“Watch Worship Online”** page on our website. On this page you will find a link to download that Sunday’s bulletin, a “Connect Card” link as a way of getting information from possible visitors to our site, a link to our online giving platform, a link to the live stream for that Sunday’s worship, as well as a link to the Zoom gathering. There are also videos of previous services that are available, and a link to our YouTube channel (please subscribe!). If you are reading this online, you can access the page **HERE**. If you are reading a paper version, go to www.bethanypreschurch.org, and follow the Watch Worship link on the home page.

Our goal has always to have our online worship experience as close as possible to the in-person worship. We know that is a goal that is difficult, if not impossible, to attain. But we keep trying! And we know we must be doing something right because you keep coming back each Sunday. The plan is to continue online worship options even when we are back worshipping in person. We know this is a wonderful gift to those who are unable to get out.

Thanks for your patience as we continue to learn!

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 February 9th. Here are some highlights:

- Heard a devotion from Nancy Purcell
- Participated in an ongoing Officer Training program, utilizing videos and discussion - different topics each month.
- Received a positive update on the sale of the property from Glenn Patterson
- Received a treasurer's report from Glenn
- Discussed plans for returning to in-person worship / aiming for mid-March with final decision at March Session meeting
- Received a report from the meeting of Salem Presbytery from Ben Russell and John
- Received correspondence from John announcing his plans to retire at the end of August

**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, MARCH 9TH
ELDERS OF THE MONTH FOR MARCH
CHIP ALLEN AND TRACEY TROXLER**



It was a different Ash Wednesday this year. Here's John at our Drive-Through Imposition of Ashes. This was followed by our virtual Ash Wednesday Service.



Thanks to the generosity of Katie and Lexie Glenn, deceased members of Bethany Presbyterian church, a bequest was left to the church for a scholarship fund. Since 1988, Bethany has offered scholarships to students planning to further their education beyond high school. The purpose of the scholarship fund is to provide financial assistance to qualified students who have

demonstrated that their financial need and resources are such that they can benefit from a scholarship award. The funds can only be used for pursuing a course of study at a level above that of high school.

Scholarship Info:

- First priority for scholarship assistance will be given to students from Bethany Presbyterian Church (membership is not a requirement if the student has been participating in the program of the church or applicants related to church members or church employees).
- The scholarships are awarded for a period of one year.
- Funds are awarded annually and are not guaranteed for subsequent years in which you make application.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must be pursuing a course of study at a level above that of high school
- Acceptance or pending acceptance in a college/university or other institution of higher learning

Application Procedures:

- Complete Scholarship Application
- Provide a cover letter with summary of your educational and career plans

All applicants meeting basic application requirements will be considered by the scholarship committee. Recommendations for awards will be submitted to the selection committee for final awarding of all scholarships. Follow-up information or interviews may be requested at the discretion of the scholarship/selection committee.

Scholarship funds will be awarded in the form of a check, made payable directly to the parent, student, or the educational institution at the discretion of the committee. Scholarship is dependent upon official acceptance of applicant into an institution of higher learning.

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS MAY BE PICKED UP AT THE CHURCH OFFICE. APPLICATIONS AND SUPPORTING MATERIALS MUST BE RETURNED TO THE CHURCH NO LATER THAN APRIL 1, 2021.



THE WAY

The way to Jerusalem
looks suspiciously like Highway 40,
and the pilgrims
look suspiciously like you and me.
I expected the road to Jerusalem
to be crowded with holy people...
clerics and saints...
people who have kindness wrinkled in their faces
and comfort lingering in their voices,
but this is more like rush hour...
horns blowing, people pushing, voices cursing....
This is not what I envisioned!

O God, I've only begun and already
I feel I've lost my way.
Surely this is not the road
and surely these
are not the ones
to travel with me.
This Lenten journey calls for
holy retreat,
for reflection

and repentance.

Instead of holiness
the highway is crammed
with the cacophony
of chaos.
Is there no back road
to Jerusalem?
No quiet path
where angels tend
to weary travelers?
No sanctuary
from the noise of the world?
Just this?
Can this hectic highway
be the highway to heaven?

your compassion + generosity propels missions

GIVE+Church

Giving to your church is as easy as 1-2-3

Go to the App Store or Google Play and search for "GivePlus Church" to download for FREE.



Financial Reports

FINANCIAL REPORT - END OF JANUARY 2021

Year-to-date Actual Income	\$7,521.92
Less Year-to-date Actual Expenses	\$16,270.67
Plus Other Income (from investments)	\$0.84
YEAR-TO-DATE BUDGET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	-\$8,747.91

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



Thanks for Keeping Your Pledge Up-to-Date

We are so grateful that we were able to end 2020 with such a positive bottom line. In a year of such turmoil and uncertainty, your generosity was amazing and so greatly appreciated.

As you can see from the above numbers, January has been challenging. We hope that as we settle into 2021 that that red number will continue to decrease so that our mission and ministry can continue. Remember that there are several options you have of making your pledge or donation:

- Drop your donation off at the church any time. Joy is at the church in the morning and John is usually at the church most of the day.
- Mail in your pledge to the church, to the attention of Pam Hurt, our bookkeeper.
- Or use our convenient and secure online giving platform. Use the QR code above, or go to our website and go to our online giving page there.

Thanks again for your continued support of Bethany.

Update on Sale of the Property

At a recent meeting of the congregation, you approved the sale of the property that the church owns across Main Street where our rental house now stands. That process has proceeded through all appropriate channels, and as of now, the **closing is set for March 9, 2021**.

We are grateful for Glenn Patterson and his tireless work in getting this sale finalized. The Session will make a determination as to the best use of these funds. And we look forward to seeing work begin soon on the building of housing units on the property.

March Birthdays and Anniversaries

Happy Anniversary to:

Lisa & Russell Donley

March 11th

Happy Birthday to:

Russell Donley

March 2nd

Glenn Thompson

March 3rd

Merritt Russell

March 4th

Bill Brown

March 8th

Macie Smith

March 12th

Danny Smith

March 16th

Helen Byrd

March 18th

Grace Dampier

March 18th



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.



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
 Penny Rice

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