

The Third PRESS



THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
EXALTING GOD / PROCLAIMING CHRIST / MAKING DISCIPLES

February 2024

“Free at Last – Life in God’s Grace”

With this newsletter I plan to begin a study of Paul’s letter to the church at Galatia. Much of what Paul expounded upon in his letter to the Romans has close connection to what Paul wrote in this letter, and so it seems fitting, as we study through Romans on Sunday mornings, that we study through Galatians -- what many scholars believe to be Paul’s first letter and most likely written around 49 AD -- in the newsletters over the next months.

Because we’re beginning a new book of the Bible, I am going to spend some time in this newsletter setting the context for Paul’s writing of this letter, reflecting upon who the Galatians were, why Paul wrote to them, and what the key issues were that moved Paul to write as he did.

As is often Paul’s habit in his letters, in his salutation (Paul’s opening greeting), Paul identified some of the key themes that he then developed throughout this letter. In this newsletter this month we will look at that salutation, recorded in Galatians chapter 1 and verses 1 through 5.

Those verses read as follows:

“Paul, an apostle -- sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead -- and all the brothers with me,

“To the churches in Galatia:

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.” (Gal 1:1-5)

Galatians has been called such things as “The Magna Carta of Spiritual liberty” and “The Christian’s Declaration of Independence.” Galatians has also been branded as the battle cry of the Protestant Reformation. In fact, Martin Luther’s call for “reformation” in the 16th century was fueled in large part because of his writing of a commentary on Galatians. It was out of the writing of that commentary that he championed the teaching of *“salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone.”* (Gal 2:16)

Pastor and author John MacArthur wrote:

“The message of Galatians is the message of liberty. It’s a message of freedom. It’s a message of release from the bondage of legalism.”

115 Winter Street
Troy, NY 12180

518-283-2420

www.thirdchurchtroy.org
office@thirdchurchtroy.org

 ThirdChurchTroy

—
A community of Christ
-followers where,

The Head of the Church
is...
The Lord Jesus Christ

The Ministers of the
Church are...
Every Believer

The Passion of the
Church is...
to be Spirit empowered
ministers of
reconciliation to God,
inviting all people to
faith in Christ Jesus
our Lord and
to holiness of life.

—
Our Mission:
To Love our God and
Neighbor
To Proclaim the Gospel
through Word and Deed
To Make Disciples of
Jesus the Christ



Of course, the legalism that Galatians addresses deals not so much with “works righteousness” – the belief that salvation can be earned through “good works” -- but with the sufficiency of Christ for one’s salvation, and the role of the Law regarding one’s new life in Christ. Practically speaking, at the heart of the Galatian issue is whether or not one needed to become like a Jew in terms of religious practice – needing to participate in things like circumcision -- for the reconciling work of Jesus to have effect!

We’ll see Paul’s response to this “legalism” in the weeks to come, but for now I think we can see how relevant this letter is for our day – a day when many talk of rights and freedom, but have no idea what true freedom is! We talk about freedom of speech, or freedom of choice, or freedom from moral mandates, all the while failing to see that much of what we call freedom only leads us into greater bondage, or suffering, or despair.

For example, some argue freedom means a woman should be able to do with her body as she chooses, even if it means ending the life of a child she is carrying. But what isn’t talked about is the consequent bondage of guilt that such an action brings upon that woman – a guilt nothing this world offers can ever remove. And then, of course, there’s the loss of the possibility for that aborted child to ever know what freedom is, in this world.

Some suggest that freedom means people should be able to express themselves sexually however they feel is right – with whomever they want, whether married or not. But sexual intimacy outside the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman not only diminishes the soul, but it often hinders future relationships, and contributes to the moral decay of societies – a decay that in turn robs people of true freedom!

Much of what we think brings freedom leads not to freedom but to the enslavement of body and spirit to our selfish passions and their hurtful consequences. And the only way out from such bondage is truth. For as Jesus declared, **“The truth will set you free”** (Jn 8:32). And that truth was revealed most perfectly in the Son of God -- His mission for us, and His message to us (Jn 14:6).

Paul wrote Galatians to confront lies that promised freedom but would bring only imprisonment. The central theme of Galatians is that true freedom comes in Jesus Christ alone. That’s a simple theme, and yet an essential truth for the 1st century church in Galatia, and for the 21st century church in America, as we live in a nation that claims it “lets freedom reign” while it suppresses the liberating truth of the gospel!

Now, Paul dealt with this theme of freedom on two fronts in Galatians – on the “salvation” front and on the “sanctification” front.

Regarding “salvation” Paul showed in Galatians how a person who has no freedom – who is dead in their sins and trespasses – can know the freedom salvation brings. When we come to Christ, He sets us free – free to live as God created us to live – in relationship with the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Regarding “sanctification” Paul addressed those who, although free in Christ, still submit themselves to needless rules and empty rituals, placing themselves in a spiritual bondage that’s not only unnecessary, but that can even keep them from knowing the peace and joy that God wants to give.

In essence Paul addressed two groups of people – those who aren’t free and those who are but who keep themselves trapped. But Paul’s letter is no simple discourse on the means and merits of salvation in Christ. Paul wrote out of deep concern for what was going on within the churches in Galatia.

So what prompted Paul to write this letter – and with a concern that evidenced more than a hint of anger? To see this let’s consider a little of the historical background for this letter to the Galatians.

Galatia, a predominantly Gentile region in Paul’s day, was a Roman province in what today would be central Turkey. On Paul’s first missionary journey, from 46-48 AD, Paul planted churches in four cities in the south of Galatia – the cities of Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. He returned to that region and those cities on his second missionary journey. However, before his second trip Paul received some disturbing

news about some supposed Christian leaders who were teaching a “different gospel” than what Paul preached (Gal 1:6).

These “Judaizers,” as they were called, affirmed the need to put one’s faith in Jesus, but they also taught that converts to Christianity had to be circumcised and observe other Jewish ceremonies. In other words they had to become as Jews in terms of religious practice (Acts 15:1-5). And these Judaizers weren’t primarily Jews who became Christians and wanted Christianity to look more like the Judaism they knew. Rather, it seems those “Judaizers” were pagan converts to Christianity who, in wanting to look different than the pagans, wanted their Christianity to adopt more “Jewish” practices. And these false teachers taught this because they believed that the Old Covenant should still be enforced even after the coming of the Messiah.

Of course the implications of this position would be devastating to the gospel Paul proclaimed. After all, if the Old Covenant were still necessary it would suggest that Christ’s sacrifice was insufficient to atone for the sins of humankind (Heb 9:14-15). But that would make Christ’s sacrifice nothing more than “an example of self-giving” -- serving no objective end. In essence, although those Judaizers called themselves Christians, they were cutting the legs out of the gospel leaving it powerless to save (contra Rom 1:16-17).

But then some Christians do the same today, although for different reasons. They deny Christ’s atonement – that Christ had to and did pay the penalty for our sins. Of course they must deny the atonement because they deny God’s wrath, and so they believe there’s nothing to be saved from that humankind can’t handle ourselves. Their authority for making such claims has more to do with what they want to believe about God than what God has revealed about Himself.

Well, like a bear robbed of her cubs Paul was angry with those false teachers. Paul was angry because those false teachers were proclaiming salvation by grace but with certain conditions. Paul first went to the region of Galatia to preach a gospel of freedom, but others were placing the churches there back into bondage.

Paul’s teaching was always “*salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ Jesus alone.*” In fact in chapter 5 and verse 2 Paul wrote:

“If you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all.”

Why would Christ be of no value to them?

Because if we try to be justified by the law then we must obey the whole law – perfectly (Gal 5:3)! And even Old Testament Israel knew this was impossible! Which is why Paul wrote in chapter 5 (verse 1):

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”

Paul confronted those false teachers because they were putting a burden upon Gentile believers that was not only unnecessary but that undermined the very work of Christ upon the cross. And one of the ways they tried to gain a hearing was by questioning Paul’s credentials. After all, if they could discredit his authority, it was a simple next step to discredit his message.

Now, although we don’t know exactly what those Judaizers said about Paul, his response in chapters 1 and 2 of Galatians gives us a clue. Apparently, they challenged his claim to “apostleship.” To understand the significance of that challenge we need to understand what it meant to be an “apostle.”

The term “apostle” means “sent one.” And in the New Testament the term had a general and a particular usage. In the general sense it was used, for example, to describe representatives sent out by the church on a mission. You may recall from your reading of Philippians that Paul called Epaphroditus “**your apostle and my minister in need**” (Phil 2:25). In 2 Corinthians 8:23, the men who were appointed by the churches of Macedonia to help Paul take money to the poor in Jerusalem are called “apostles of the churches” – men appointed by the churches to represent them in that mission.

But in Galatians 1:1, Paul explicitly denied that he was an apostle merely in this general sense. Paul wrote:

“Paul an apostle, sent not from men nor by man.”

Paul was saying, “Don’t classify me with those who come with letters of recommendation from men. I was not made an apostle by any church council.” Rather, Paul was made an apostle, **“through Jesus Christ and God the Father.”**

Paul knew his calling was very different from that of a congregational representative. He wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:1, **“Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”** And in 1 Corinthians 15:8 he wrote, **“And last of all Jesus appeared to me also”**. From those two texts we can see that “apostle” in the more particular sense means one who had seen the risen Christ, and not only had seen Him, but had been instructed and commissioned by Him (Acts 26:16–17; Gal 1:16).

Paul’s apostleship meant that Paul was among that “unrepeatable” band of first century “apostles” who together with the prophets of old were the foundation of the church (Eph 2:20).

Moreover, Paul’s apostleship was equated with Peter’s, for Galatians 2:8 says:

“God, who was at work in the ministry of Peter as an apostle to the Jews, was also at work in my ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles.”

And so we can conclude that the risen Christ, who is at the right hand of God, sent Paul to preach and teach and do wonders with the same authority that Christ had once given to the Twelve (Mt 10:40; Lk 10:16; Jn 13:20; Mt 28:16-20, 2 Cor 13:10). Paul’s authority to lead the churches of Christ rested on his apostleship: He had seen the risen Christ; Christ commissioned him as His representative to preach and teach with authority. And, as we see from 1 Corinthians 2:13, the Spirit of Christ worked in him to guide his words in truth (Jn 14:26).

I spent time on this because Paul’s apostleship is fundamental to his argument throughout this letter. But I also spent time on this because Paul’s apostleship is fundamental to how we treat all his letters. Too often people approach the Scriptures as if different parts carry different levels of authority – which can be one of the unintended consequences of “Red Letter” edition Bibles.

Now it’s true, different sections of Scripture have different applications, and not all the commands and warnings of Scripture apply to us today. But all carry equal authority for they all come from God. What that means is that Jesus’ words are no more authoritative than Paul’s, or Peter’s, or James’. Why not? Because all Scripture from God -- is God breathed (2 Tim 3:16-17).

I have often heard people say things like, “I like what Jesus says but I don’t agree with Paul.” Of course, they say this as if that gives them a right to dismiss Paul. But the truth is that when we hear Paul, we are hearing Christ because Paul was an apostle of Jesus!

Isn’t it interesting how many believers long for a word from Jesus – some revelation to help us live our lives. And yet we have the Bible right before us and we either fail to read it or we fail to heed it. Many of the problems facing the church today are there because believers treat the Bible as a book of suggestions to be considered. What we need to do is submit all our ideas-and-attitudes-and-actions to the scrutiny and absolute authority of the Scriptures – which includes the words of the apostles.

In Galatians Paul first defended his apostleship so that he could then reiterate and reinforce his message – a message those false teachers were seeking to undermine. Paul summarized his gospel message in verses 3 and 4 where he wrote:

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.”

Now “grace” was a common greeting among Greek speaking cultures of Paul’s day. It carried the idea of “that which brings about joy.” But when Paul used grace, he was speaking of the real reason for joy. For Paul “grace” was God’s unmerited favor applied to sinful people that we might know God.

In the New Testament, “grace” focuses upon the work of God in Christ that has been applied to our lives according to God’s good pleasure. Grace is God working on our behalf, releasing us from the guilt of sin through the satisfying work of Jesus Christ. And God’s grace ought to humble us because there’s nothing we do, arising from our will, that causes grace to become ours. Instead, out of God’s great love, grace comes first, then we respond to the truth of the gospel.

“Peace,” then, speaks of what “grace” accomplishes in us and for us.

And the peace Paul spoke of was not merely a sense of tranquility, but reconciliation with God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. In this Paul was drawing attention to the truth that those who trust in Christ no longer live as enemies of God, and in turn are no longer the objects of divine wrath (Rom 5:10). As Christ has put away our sins by grace, He has made peace for us -- peace with God and peace with other believers. (Rom 5:1)

Paul reminded the churches in Galatia that they were at peace with God, having been justified by grace (Rom 3:24). At the same time Paul warned that by receiving a false gospel those same churches are in danger of forfeiting that peace!

It’s this same peace we’re in danger of forfeiting when we attach conditions to our salvation – whether those conditions involve adherence to a particular denomination, or the carrying out of certain rituals, or obedience to man-made rules.

Paul opened this letter with a reminder of the gospel message, a message that’s characterized by “grace and peace.”

Following those words of blessing and the reminder of the Galatian believers’ position with God in Christ, Paul then summarized the gospel message by declaring,

“[The Lord Jesus Christ] gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.” (Gal 1:4)

In this summary statement Paul identified three aspects of the gospel that will serve as a foundation for interpreting the rest of this letter.

The first aspect of the gospel that verse 4 brings out is the reason for Christ’s death. Jesus died because we’re sinners, and the wages of sin is death, and only the shed blood of Christ could pay the debt we owe. (Rom 6:23; Heb 2:17)

Jesus’ death wasn’t that he might be an example of self-giving love. Jesus’ death wasn’t the result of a plan gone badly. Jesus died as the only necessary and sufficient sacrifice for our sins! Jesus who knew no sin became sin for us that through faith in Christ we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21)

The first aspect of the gospel that Paul brought out in verse 4 addressed the reason for Jesus’ death – our sin!

The second aspect of the gospel that Paul brought out in verse 4 addressed the goal of Christ’s death. Jesus came to carry out a rescue operation – to free those held hostage to sin and guilt. The goal of Christ’s death was that we might be rescued from “the present evil age.”

Now the word translated “age” speaks to a temporary system, and in our context, a debilitating system. Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus allows us to live within a worldly system – a system that dishonors God, or ignores God, or merely gives a nod in God’s direction -- while not being absorbed into that system.

To be sure, Paul is not saying that everything and everyone in “this age” is evil. This is our Father’s world, and by the “common” grace of God there is much that is good in this world. Yet, this world is fallen, and its systems are fallen, and God’s call to believers is not to conform to the patterns of this world but to be transformed so that we might know and do God’s will (Rom 12:2). But we can only do this by living under God’s grace, through faith in Jesus.

The reason for the gospel is our sin.

The goal of the gospel is the rescue of sinners.

The third aspect of the gospel that Paul brought out in his opening words addressed the ultimate motive factor behind our salvation. Paul wrote that the ultimate motivating factor behind our salvation was Christ's desire to do the will of God the Father. That is why, while in the Garden of Gethsemane awaiting His imminent arrest, Jesus' prayed that the Father's will would be done, even if it meant Jesus' death (Lk 22:42)!

Why did Jesus endure the cross?

Because Jesus loves us? Yes!

Because Jesus hates sin and the hold it has on His creation? Again, Yes!

But ultimately Jesus gave His life on the cross because that is what the Father willed.

Jesus gave Himself to atone for our sins – that's the reason for His death.

Jesus gave Himself to rescue us from this "present evil age" – that's the goal of His death.

And Jesus did all this because this is what the Father asked of Him, and to honor and glorify the Father was Jesus' driving motive behind His sacrifice. (Jn 4:34, 6:38)

But, because of the Father's love for the Son, the grave did not hold Jesus. Rather, Jesus was raised from the dead, and sits at the right hand of the Father until that day when He will return in all His glory to call all God's people home, and to judge -- finally and completely -- this "present evil age." (1 Cor 15:4, 20-24)

It's this ultimate deliverance which is our hope. And it's a hope that can be ours only when it's based upon the true gospel – a gospel that does not call people to become "anything more" than faithful followers of Jesus.

We don't need to become Jews, or Americans, or Roman Catholics, or Presbyterians.

We don't need to pray in a certain direction, or at certain times, or in certain places, or in certain tongues.

We don't even need to fast or give 10% of our income to the church.

Yes, we do some of those things to nurture our spiritual health, to enable us to care for others, to provide means for reaching the lost, and, to express our gratitude to God! But all we "need" to do for salvation is to trust in Jesus and obey His commands. All we need to do is love God with all our being, and love our neighbor as ourselves. (Mk 12:30-31)

Of course this is beyond us, but for God's grace -- but for God's Spirit working in us to will and to do what is pleasing to God – a work God's Spirit will do in us when we give our lives to God. (Phil 2:13)

Paul wrote to the church to call them back to the one true gospel. And Paul presented his authority for giving such a charge by showing that he was an apostle sent by God, not man. Then Paul presented his message so that the church would know what gospel they were to follow. And that message spoke of:

- The reason for Christ's sacrifice – our sin;
- And the goal of Christ's sacrifice – our rescue;
- And the motive for Christ's sacrifice – the Father's glory.

Jesus was motivated out of obedience to the Father – to honor the Father. And Paul closed his salutation by claiming that same motive behind his passion for the churches in Galatia.

Yes, Paul wrote out of love for those churches. But ultimately Paul's motive for all he did was to bring glory and honor to God. And ultimately that must be our motive as well – our very purpose for living!

As we consider Paul's opening words, notice what Paul had done. He actually traced out the three stages of humankind's salvation. Stage one, the death of Christ for our sins -- which rescues us out of this evil age. Stage two, the appointment of apostles to testify to that salvation. Stage three, the gift to believers of the grace and peace which Christ won.

With subsequent newsletters we will hear again of the hope that is ours through faith in Jesus. But we will also hear some tough words from Paul – words that will challenge us, and confront us, and convict us regarding our life in Christ. We will be challenged to ask ourselves: Do I truly love God? Am I living for God’s glory or my own pleasures? Am I following the true gospel – trusting Jesus for my salvation? Or, have I created my own gospel with my own conditions in order to satisfy my own desires?

It’s my hope that in our study of Galatians all of us will experience “conviction as is needful for each of us,” so that we can experience “the grace and peace” that’s ours when we live in the freedom of the gospel of Christ Jesus.

God’s grace and peace be with you,

Pastor John



Your giving to Third Church enables us to support a variety of ministries, both locally and around the world. The funds given and the prayers offered for our various mission partners are appreciated and we wanted to share some of the thoughts and comments we have received from those we support.

From Perry Jones (Capital City Rescue Mission) – “Thank you! Your gift is sharing comfort and joy with our hurting neighbors this Christmas season. In addition to providing nourishing meals and safe shelter, you’re giving men, women, and children the opportunity to discover new life in the new year. Because of your compassion, they’re receiving counseling, life-skills classes, Bible studies, and other guidance to help them overcome homelessness...and experience the life-changing love of our Heavenly Father firsthand!”

From Andy Lightcap (Capital District YFC) – “Please know that we are so thankful for your partnership as we reach lost kids with the hope of the Gospel. Your support of this ministry allows us to impact kids with the hope of Jesus and we are so very grateful.”

From Peter Halder and Gloria Baroi (Bangladesh YFC) - “God expects us to give our hearts to Him so that He can pour out his joy and welcome us into His flock. Your partnership transforms lives, expanding the Kingdom of Heaven on earth.

We at Bangladesh YFC praise Him for you, and thank you for your generous giving to continue the work that He entrusted upon us to serve orphans (210 of them), and addicts at our rehab centers, homeless and destitute city street kids, Alpha Youth ministry, 3D Camp, mental health , depression, and anxiety prevention programs, Bible study groups, 6,500 BYFC Hi-Club students, discipleship follow-up, and 5,900 moms who are in BYFC Wake Up Deborah ministry.”

Newsletters from the Vissani’s, Niki Campbell, and Peter Halder are posted on the bulletin board in the narthex.

Remember in Prayer...

Our Shut-ins at home:

Stephanie Miller, Marilyn Gibbs, Ginny Steffen,
Alice Bentley

At Peregrine Senior Living: Jan Pedersen

At Evergreen Commons: Stan Bentley

At Hawthorne Ridge: Howie and Ruth Dickson

Those dealing with health issues:

Stan and Alice Bentley, Marilyn Gibbs, Doris
Calamaras

Our Church:

Pastor John and the Session

Our Community:

Those who do not know the Lord.
Those dealing with financial difficulties.
That our schools would be places of safety

Our World:

Missionaries serving around the world.
Open doors for sharing the Gospel message.
Persecuted Christians around the world

Our college students:

Christian Multunas (RPI)
Adam Stacey (RPI)
Jesse Ofori (Wake Forest)

Help Fill the Shelves at Hope 7's Food Pantry!

Any non-perishable food items and/or toiletries
are always welcome. Currently they are in need of
soap, toothpaste, deodorant, and shampoo.

Donations can be dropped off at
the church; taken to the food
pantry (Monday through Friday
from 9:30 -11:45 AM); or you
can contact Sue Laz to arrange
for a pick-up.



February Birthdays

2/7 Diane Morlock
2/23 Joan Wocher



LENTEN PROGRAM

Wednesday evenings at 6:15
beginning February 14th

The Upward Ministry Committee invites
you to join us during this Lenten season
for a time of worship and fellowship. We
will gather on **Wednesday evenings at
6:15 beginning February 14th** for a light meal of
soup and bread followed by an informal time of
worship.



If you would like to contribute to the meal you can
bring a pot of soup, bread or cookies to share.

General Financial Update for December

	Year to Date	December
Total		
Income	\$ 182,276.76	\$ 19,983.00
Total		
Expenses	\$ 176,337.72	\$ 19,478.11
Difference	\$ 5,939.04	\$ 504.89

Opportunity to Serve – and Have Fun!



“For I was hungry and you
gave me something to
eat....” *Matt 25:35*

We have a long tradition of helping serve meals at
the Capital City Rescue Mission. We will continue
that on Saturday, February 17th. Meet at church at
5:00 for carpooling (or you can meet us at the
Mission at 5:30).

Serving involves setting the tables, serving the
meal, and cleaning up the tables afterwards.

Come join us for the privilege to minister to those in
need – and the fun – by giving of your time on
Saturday, February 17th. If you can help, please
speak with Peter Laz.

Bible Quiz for February 2024

As we continue with our sermon series on the New Testament book, “Romans”, February’s Bible Quiz will be on chapter 3 of Romans. (Note: All questions are connected with the NIV (2011) translation.)

1. True or False: After raising the question regarding the advantage of being a Jew, Paul said there is no advantage at all.
2. True or False: Our unfaithfulness will nullify God’s faithfulness.
3. True or False: Since our unrighteousness brings out God’s righteousness more clearly, one of the best ways we can witness for God’s glory is to sin so that God’s grace may abound.
4. True or False: Despite the Jews having an advantage over Gentiles in that they were given the Law to direct their lives and to know God, when it comes to righteousness both Jews and Gentiles are alike under the power of sin.
5. What Psalm is Paul quoting from in chapter 3 and verses 10 through 12?
6. True or False: Paul admits that although in our fallen nature most people don’t seek God, there are some who, in their own righteousness not only seek God but know Him, love Him, and honor Him.
7. Fill in the blanks: “Therefore ___ ___ will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our _____.”
8. Fill in the blanks: “For all have _____ and fall short of the _____ of God.” (and, identify the verse number)
9. True or False: God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of His blood – to be received by faith.
10. Does faith in Jesus the Christ nullify God’s law?

(Answer key: 1. False, 2. False, 3. Uh . . . No!, 4. True, 5. Psalms 14 and 53 (which are essentially identical), 6. False, 7. No one, sin, 8. Sinned, glory, verses 23, 9. True (this is a direct quote from verse 25), 10. No, (such faith actually upholds the law (v. 31).)

**Session Meeting
January 8, 2024**

The members present, which did constitute a quorum, were Deena Dominy, Peter Laz, Sue Laz, Abby McAuley, Andy Miller, Bill Multunas, Holly Steciuk, and Kelly Valerio. Also present was Irene Ofori.

Action Items: Motion were carried -- to use \$6,500 from the Endowment Fund to pay the deposit for the sanctuary window contract; to transfer \$600 from the General Fund to the Mission Envelope Fund; to transfer \$5,350 from the General Fund to a restricted General Fund account titled "Capital Improvements"; to use \$9,500 from the Endowment Fund and \$5,473 from the Building Fund to pay for the new windows and electrical upgrades.

Old Business: Further discussion was held concerning changing the name of the church. We will consider this in more detail at our next meeting.

Clerk's Report: average in-person attendance for December was 29; Sal will be preaching February 4th. Bill is next in the rotation.

Committee Reports:

- Upward Ministry (Worship and Prayer): planning for Lent, which begins February 14th.
- Inward Ministry (Congregational Care and Christian Nurture): Christmas floral arrangements and Christmas cards were sent to our seniors and shut-ins; made contributions to Capital City Rescue Mission on behalf of three seniors who have asked not to have flowers sent; Ten individuals have responded to receive the commentary on Romans; A few changes have been made to the card ministry team.
Will be hosting a potluck luncheon along with the annual meeting on January 28th.
Kelly Valerio will be taking over as chairperson of the committee.
- Outward Ministry (Mission, Outreach and Communications): Mission spending for December -- Capital City Rescue Mission (note next serving there 2/17/24), \$1,300; Capital District YFC, \$600; "Church Around the World" inserts, \$48; Operation Christmas Child, \$100; Adopt-a-Family, \$500; ECO Leadership Initiatives, \$875.
- Stewardship
 - Finance (General Fund and Session Designated Funds): there was a positive cash flow during December of \$504.89 (increases the YTD surplus to \$5,939).
 - Property: City of Troy came to check for lead pipes on January 16th (no visible issue); Issues with the front door overhang will need to be addressed in the spring; looking into sealing the roof; Electrical upgrades completed (three electrical boxes replaced; a fourth one will need to be replaced in the future); looking into replacing the lights in fellowship hall.
 - Personnel: 2024 Salary Agreements have been prepared; W-2 and W-3 statements are being prepared and will be distributed by the end of January; the NYS Disability and FML Insurance has been paid.

Pastor's Report: Sermon series on the book of Romans, Wednesday Evening Bible study, and Sunday morning class are ongoing.

Next Meetings: February 12th at 7:00 at the church. Business meeting.

Time was spent sharing congregational concerns. These will be included in the closing prayer.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Laz, Clerk

*Every good & perfect gift
is from above. James 1:17*

Using our



Time



Talents



Treasures



Trials

To the glory of God



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Third Presbyterian Church
115 Winter Street
Troy, NY 12180