

From the Pastor

Discernment, discernment, discernment – you will be hearing from me about that more and more. I’ve been talking about it through sermons and newsletter articles for a while now.

It’s one of the most important things we do as disciples of Jesus Christ. We serve a risen Savior, one who is not present with us in the flesh in the same way we are with one another. Nor is Jesus Christ sending us clear emails or postcards about our daily lives, telling us what will make us more joyful in God, or what we need to change for our future, or what job or trip we should take. According to many theologians, prayer is the first and most important work of the Christian, the first and most important act of Christian faith.

This is for a few reasons, but the one I want to focus on at this moment is practicing prayer so that we can discern God’s leading in our lives, day in and day out. The roots of the word “discern” draw our attention to the careful sifting we do, on a daily basis, to figure out the best answer to a question or the best next thing to do out of many options. In some families, the last couple of years of high school are full of discernment as students try to decide between different options for the year after graduation: a gap year maybe? Where? How would it be funded? Or maybe the military? Which branch? Heading into what kind of work? Or college? Which one? Focused on what kind of study? How would it be funded?

For Christians, discernment undergirds all of these questions above and so many more. In Christian discernment we practice listening to God, a lot, and paying attention to what we already know. It is important for each one of us to practice discernment through prayer, through some sort of daily spiritual practice, through personal study of scripture. How is God calling us to grow? Is God calling us to a new form of service or a deeper version of the service we already do?

Discernment is also vital for a congregation. Like

individual Christian disciples, our congregation needs to practice discernment together: how is God calling us to change? Why? For what purpose?

Yesterday at a workshop at the presbytery meeting in Monticello a few of us were speaking about the fact that as disciples and congregations we are part of Christ’s church that will last through the ages. The Church isn’t dying, unless we mean the current institutional forms. Christ’s church will not die. So one of the questions we need to be asking is how is God calling us forward to be part of the future of the church we won’t be alive for? With the lives we lead, what are we helping to build for the future?

There are many versions of this basic idea. Here we have it from Rev. Peter Raible:

We build on foundations we did not lay
We warm ourselves by fires we did not light
We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant
We drink from wells we did not dig
We profit from persons we did not know

Just think about it: in the future there will be people who build on the foundations we have provided, who warm their selves by a fire we lit, sit in the shade of trees we planted, drink from the wells we dug, profit from our contributions without knowing us.

And consider this: one person of the very first generation of this congregation said something spiritually wise to someone younger, who passed on that wisdom in a new form to someone younger, etc. until here we are – still! – 177 years later! – worshiping the Triune God and seeking to serve Rensselaer.

My point is this: we are vital to the church of Jesus Christ, even when future generations don’t know our names or even realize what we did that enables them to live out the gospel of Christ.

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This impacts our discernment. Our service in the gospel now is part of something much bigger than us. It is part of God's fellowship with the world over time and space.

To support our discernment as a congregation, I will be beginning a sermon series on Sunday October 4, about the Six Great Ends of the Church. In our Book of Order, these six great ends comprise everything we do. Another way to put it is that everything we do fits into these ends in one way or another. I will begin on October 4 with "the Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind" and then pick it up after I return from three weeks of study leave which begins October 11.

The second Sunday of the series, on November 3, "The Shelter, Nurture, and Spiritual Fellowship of the Children of God," will coincide with the first Sunday of our upcoming Adult Education series, "Practicing Joy." Please check out information about the series, which I will be leading, elsewhere in this newsletter.

The sixth and final Sunday of the series, "The Exhibition of the Kingdom of Heaven to the World," will coincide with the first Sunday of Advent.

Poetic, right? For Jesus Christ, the king of heaven, lived out what that kingdom looks like, and taught the first disciples how to live it out in their time and place. Here and now, we seek to understand together what Jesus teaches us about the kingdom, and how we can exhibit it.

Our time and place matter. In the biblical sense of being the body of Christ we aren't a church simply in Rensselaer, but for Rensselaer. It is in this time and place that our discernment is practiced. Our prayer, our active listening to God in times of quiet, or conversation, or study of scripture. Your love for Rensselaer and commitment to this city is one of the reasons I accepted this call. Here, in Rensselaer, we are receiving the baton handed to us by previous generations, and we are even now passing the baton to those who come after us. They may not know our names. But wouldn't it be wonderful if, like us now, they rejoiced in God's call in Jeremiah 29? Our discernment is figuring out how to do this:

"But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its

welfare you will find your welfare."

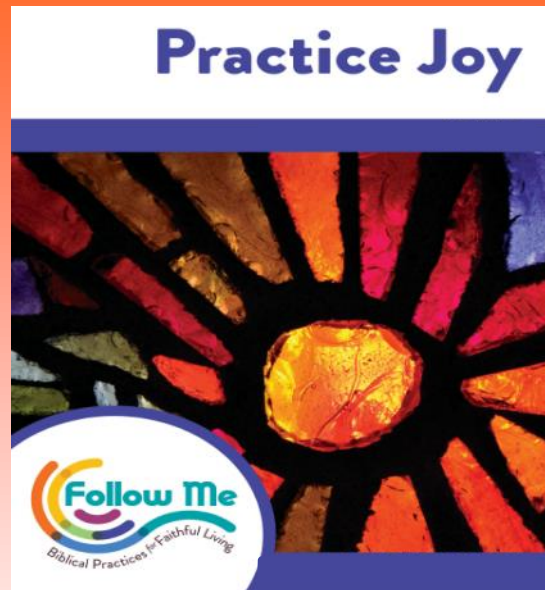
May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Michelle

Choir Practice
**Choir will be practicing
Oct. 16th & 23rd at 6:30-
7:30 to sing in worship on
Oct. 27th.**



Church Discussion Group
**The 1st meeting of our discussion
group went well with lively conver-
sation. We need to adjust a regular
time to meet, but our next meeting
will be at 5pm central/6 eastern on
Monday, October, 7.**



Adult Education offering:

3:30-5:30p(Central) Sunday afternoons in November: 3 - 10 - 17 - 24.

This is open to all, and a light supper will be provided. Invite a friend! Light supper will be provided. As there are printed materials, please reply to the Church Office your intention to attend, please!

Explore biblical texts that illuminate four dimensions of the Practice of Joy:

One: See Joy in God's Creation -- Psalm 65: 5-13; Genesis 28: 11-22

God's glory is all around us; the practice of joy invites us to notice it and savor it.

Two: Rejoice in God's Mercy ---Psalm 30; Luke 5:17-26

God's mercy has overflowed to us, as individuals and in community; the practice of joy encourages us to take notice and stand in awe of God's grace.

Three: Share Others' Joy -- Luke 15; Romans 12:15; 1 Corinthians 12:26

God's blessings have embraced those around us, both enemies and friends; we are invited to rejoice in these with one another.

Four: Practice Joy in All Times -- John 16:1 - 24; Philippians 4: 4-6

The practice of joy urges us to celebrate fully the abundant providence

First Presbyterian Church
2024 Chili Supper & Cookie Walk
December 7th 5-7pm

Volunteers Needed!

- Setting up
- Tearing down
- Getting chili prepped the morning of
- Baking cookies (volunteers will need to bake cookies on their own)
- Overseeing cookie tables
- Putting out yard signs
- Delivering flyers



Nehemiah 8:10,12

10 Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our Lord; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.” ... 12 And all the people went their way to eat and drink and to send portions and to make great rejoicing, because they had understood the words that were declared to them.

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH CALENDAR



2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	2 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	3 Bridge Club 12:00pm	4	5 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
6 Worship 9:30 am Communion	7 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	8 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	9 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	5 Bridge Club 12:00pm Session Meets 4pm Forestry Council 5pm	11	12 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
13 Worship 9:30 am	14 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	15 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	16 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	17 Bridge Club 12:00pm	18	19 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
20 Worship 9:30 am	21 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	22 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	23 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	24 Bridge Club 12:00pm	25	26 AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm
27 Worship 9:30 am	28 AAA-Abuse Awareness & Accountability 5pm-8:30 pm	29 Dance Magic 3:30 pm Bible Study 4pm	30 Youth Group 5:00-6:30pm	31 Bridge Club 12:00pm		AA-Alcoholics Anonymous 7pm

First Presbyterian Church
220 North Cullen Street
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What happened at Session?

*This capsule of the most recent session meeting will help us save room in our newsletter. Copies of the full session minutes will always be available in the church office.

We didn't have any new business in September, but we spent time on the ongoing education part for session meetings. We considered two quotations from The Confession of 1967 in our Book of Confessions.

9.35 Wherever the church exists, its members are both gathered in corporate life and dispersed in society for the sake of mission in the world.

9.40 The church thus orders its life as an institution with a constitution, government, officers, finances, and administrative rules. These are instruments of mission, not ends in themselves.

We focused our conversation on session, but what is true for the session is true for every church member. The service and activities you so at church, the service you do in the community, and the ways you help one another are all holy work, for you are serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This holy work has guidelines from scripture, and you probably already know them:

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?

Micah 6:8