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NORTHMINSTER *Life*

JANUARY & FEBRUARY STUDY SERIES

Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life:
Such a Way, as gives us breath:
Such a Truth, as ends all strife:
Such a Life, as killeth death.

-George Herbert, "The Call" (1633)

Announcing our next church-wide study:

Poems for Presbyterian Pilgrims

Led by Pastor Ralph, we invite you to gather Sundays (in-person) or Wednesdays (online) in January and February. Together we will explore a handful of poems that have stood the test of time, speak to themes of Christian faith, and remind us of the gift of beautiful words in such a banal time in which we live.

In Person at church
Sunday Mornings
9:30am

January 16
January 23
January 30
February 6
February 13
February 27

Online via Zoom
Wednesday Evenings
7:00pm

January 19
January 26
February 2
February 9
February 16
February 23

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LETTER FROM YOUR PASTOR

The Presbyterian novelist Frederick Buechner once quipped that the frequent conflict between science and religion is akin to the debate between a podiatrist and poet. "One says that Susie Smith has fallen arches. The other says she walks in beauty like the night. In his own way each is speaking the truth. What is at issue is the kind of truth you're after."

We Presbyterians are after divine truth. Truth that rings true. Truth that outlives another Tucker/Maddow news cycle and transcends the time it takes to tweet another tweet. Truth that comforts when you lay your heavy head on that familiar feather pillow; truth that challenges when you grab your car keys and go forth again into an insane world. After all, insists our Teacher, "you will come to know the truth, and the truth will make you free." (John 8). That's the kind of truth we're after.

Furthermore, in the search for such truth, who wants a podiatrist preacher? Truth that has the power to set us free surely begs for more than a 3-point book report on neatly hole-punched paper. How did Presbyterian preachers get the notion that holiness is somehow verified by monotony? Too many sermons seem like overhearing your nephew's cousin report his friend's girlfriend's brother's experience of a Bowl Game. You may get some of the truth of what happened in Miami, but three points for podiatry.

So it is that folks of Biblical faith have long been friends with poetry. Poetry steps in when book reports fail to inspire. Poets take Mary Magdalene's hand, and then take ours, and being led themselves they lead us to an inexplicable empty tomb. Poems are the only way fourth- and fifth-hand overhearers of a divine encounter can in any truthful way experience it for themselves.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death" prays the psalmist. He could have said, "sometimes lived experiences cause a deficiency of our monoamine neurotransmitters and require the introduction of serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors." That may well be true, but that kind of straight-line speaking in the middle of the dark night is likely to leave us all flat-footed come the morning. If we want to love God (dressed in mystery) and want to love neighbor (dressed in annoyance) and want to love ourselves (dressed in nakedness) we need truth that sings a song. Banal explanations from a Podiatrist Preacher, however accurate, are not enough to get us out of bed in the morning with the same skip in our step that once raised a crucified Jew.

So says Walt Whitman:

*After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)
After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their works.
After the noble inventors—after the scientists, the chemist, the geologist, ethnologists. Finally
shall come the Poet, worthy that name;
The true Son of God shall come, singing his songs.*

So to some poems we turn as we turn the page of a new year — a year prefaced by the lowest collective expectations I've sensed in my lifetime. I'm calling our next study **Poems for Presbyterian Pilgrims**, during which we will wade into the waters of at least half a dozen poems that teach us to sing the song of the Good News afresh. We'll explore themes about creation, praying, wrestling (with faith), and witnessing (speaking poetically about the prose of life). And although there is never anything wrong with enjoying the beauty of beautiful words that "walk in beauty like the night," we will want to see through these poems (as with a good pair of bifocals) to catch also another glimpse of the goodness of God.



GOOD SAMARITAN

The scripture tells us to "love your neighbor as yourself." What better way could you love your neighbor than helping them in times of need. The Good Samaritan Offering does this for the needs in our community and for the needs of our congregation. **In the month of November, Centenary used some of our contributions to assist three different families with their power bill. A member of one of these families broke her food preventing her from working. Another family needed help with rent because of loss of job as a crossing guard, and another individual needed help with her water bill. She has been off work since 2016 and ha been living in a shelter since July and just found a new place to live.** Thank you for your generous support of the needy people in our community!

CHURCH-WIDE BINGO!



Everyone is invited to join us for what is sure to be a great time of fun and fellowship! We'll be having lunch and games of Bingo following worship on Sunday, January 23. This event will be an opportunity to raise money for the youth to attend their annual trip to Montreat. The church will be providing fried chicken, drinks, and paper products. Please bring a side to share (and cash for the games). If you're not yet comfortable with sharing a meal, please join in the fun anyway! You're welcome to bring your own meal or run home for a quick bite and be right back for the games.

THANK YOU, CHURCH FAMILY

I want to express my sincere thanks and appreciation for the many acts of kindness and love this church offered me during the recovery from my shoulder surgery. There are no words to adequately express the gratitude I have felt for your visitations, prayers, cards, emails, delicious food and phone calls I received. Even though I could not drive for 6 weeks, so many of you made sure that I was driven to my therapy appointments, to doctor appointments, and other places I needed and/or wanted to go. I'll never forget the care you have so lovingly given me. May you be blessed for the kindness you have shown and may your thoughtfulness find its way back to you.
Sincerely, Lynn Davis

Karen & Tom Jones would like to send a great big New Year's "Thank You" to our Northminster family for all the food, cards, transportation, warm wishes and love sent our way over the past six months. Things are going well for us with our respective diseases, lung cancer and End Stage Kidney Failure, considering the severity of the diagnoses. We give thanks to God for that.

Karen is going on five years since her initial diagnosis of lung cancer. She is active but suffers with some of the side effects of the medication she is taking. I am settling into a routine of dialysis four hours daily on three days a week. We look forward to the New Year with hopes for a kidney transplant for Tom and a full cure for Karen.

Our biggest needs currently are help with transportation home from dialysis and hopefully a living kidney donor in the near future when Tom is approved by the Emory kidney transplant program. If you are able to help us with either of these needs, please give a call to (478) 361-3682 for more details.

Northminster has been a wonderful spiritual home for us over the last thirty years. Thank you for all you have done for us over this time and for others in the community. We love you all. Wishing everyone at the Northminster a happy and prosperous New Year.

Your friends and fellow church members-
Tom & Karen Jones

2022 ELDERS

We thank our class of 2021 elders: Emily Brown, Lynn Denny, Charlotte Nolan, Sandra Ridgeway, and the late Beau Kitchens for their dedicated service to our congregation. This year, elders rotating onto the session include: Barbara Fatkin, Jinny McDuffie, Ray Mosely, Michael Napier, and Genny Whitaker. They will join our remaining currently-serving elders: Kari Alderman, Roland Hill, Jan Hirsh, Melissa McDougald, and Minor Vernon.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Jan 3 - Gene Kelly
Jan 13 - Kay Allen
Jan 24 - Minor Vernon

Jan 8 - Fran Mayhew
Jan 14 - Shelby Duffy
Jan 25 - Gail Rabai

Jan 11 - Paul Evans
Jan 20 - Rhonda Watwood
Jan 25 - Evelyn Clark