

# Bedford Presbyterian Church

105 West Main Street, Bedford, Virginia  
From 1844 to 2020 (176 Years)



## Week of May 17<sup>th</sup>

We will continue sending out this combination of the newsletter and bulletin to keep you up to date on announcements, prayers, needs and scheduled activities until we can all meet together again comfortably.

Included will be the usual newsletter information along with prayers, scripture and a sermon.

We hope that you can utilize this format to keep up to date while being away from actual services, meetings, activities and watching the online sermon.

Please be in prayer for the end of the coronavirus and healing for those affected by it.



*A Biblically Guided Christian Community,*

*Loving God, Loving Others,*

*Serving the World & Growing Disciples*

**If you are watching the online service this Sunday morning,  
please have this bulletin ready to follow the service.**

**Prelude**

*“Crown Him with Many Crowns”*

**May the Peace of Christ be with you**

**Welcome and Announcements**

- The church will re-open for worship services on June 7th, following the state’s guidelines of social distancing.
- Additional announcements are on the last two pages.

**Let Us Join Together in the Call to Worship:**

One: We gather to worship God, who alone can heal us and make us whole.

**All: Open our hearts that You may transform our lives with Your healing touch.**

One: We gather to worship God, who alone speaks the Word that calls forth life.

**All: Open our minds that You may transform us with Your authoritative Word.**

One: We gather to worship God in spirit and in truth.

**All: Open our spirits that You may transform us by Your powerful Spirit.**

**Hymn:**

*“O Worship the King”*

**Let Us Pray together the Prayer of Confession:**

God, teach us how to love as You have loved us. Teach us to love the unloved and the unlovable. Teach us to see others as You see them. Teach us to see ourselves in the light of Your forgiving, forbearing love. And then, having been so taught, help us to be practitioners of Your peculiar way of doing things. Whose name is love and whose recipients are the very ones we might never have considered worthy or ready or in need. For that is how You loved us first. In Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Hear now our Assurance of Pardon:** (Psalm 103: 8,10-12)

The Lord is compassionate and gracious; slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness. He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His loving kindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

One: Friends hear and believe the good news.

**All: In Jesus Christ we have been forgiven**

**Children’s Sermon**

**Scripture:** Genesis 18: 16-26, Jonah 3:10, 4: 1-4, 11

**Worship Song**

*“I Stand in Awe”*

## **Sermon:** Bartering with God

Portions adapted from "Prayer For The Unworthy," by Jeff Strite @ SermonCentral.Com

In Europe in the Middle Ages, people had a strong belief in the power of prayer. They also believed that the purer and simpler the life you led, the more God would listen to you and since Monks were supposed to live purer and simpler lives than anyone else their prayers were seen as a hotline to God. So, rich people and warriors began to pay the monks to do all the praying they were too busy to do for themselves.

The Middle Ages were also times of great conflict. Lots of wars, lots of soldiers killed on the fields of battle and at the time, the Catholic church was conflicted about the command "Thou shalt not kill." They felt that the commandment also applied to killing in war (though it doesn't). So, in 1066 after the Battle of Hastings the Catholic church demanded that each soldier do 120 days of penance for every person they killed.

In his lifetime, William the Conqueror was responsible for the death of about 10,000 people. That meant he was required to do 1,200,000 days of penance or about 3,300 years up until the year 4366 just to cleanse his soul. Even today he would still be praying with another 2,000+ years to go.

William figured if the work was split up amongst a couple hundred monks he could have his soul cleansed in less than 18 years, so he founded a string of Abbeys throughout France - where monks would pray specifically for his soul.

Not only was that practice not Biblical... it was just plain silly! God doesn't work like that, but people have developed odd opinions about prayer for centuries. That's what happens when you don't pay attention to Scripture... you create all kinds of strange theologies.

The Bible actually has a lot to say about prayer, especially with regard to salvation and forgiveness of our sins which is each person's own individual responsibility. But William wasn't too far off in our need to be praying for others and having others praying for us. As James the brother of Jesus would remind us, the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective (4:16).

That's why the prayers we find in Scripture – like the one Abraham prayed in Genesis chapter 18 are so important. Here, God is showcasing Abraham's prayer for us – like He does other prayers in the Bible – we can see that prayer is both a very simple thing to do and what prayer can accomplish. So this morning, let's consider how and for what Abraham prayed.....

Abraham talked <u>WITH</u> God as a friend. He prayed humbly, boldly, and repeatedly.
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1st – Abraham **talked With God as if with a friend**. Now you might say... “Well, duh. Of course he talked with God.” That's what you'd think... but people don't always think of doing prayer that way.

Many people are hesitant to pray out loud, in front of a group, because they think that unless they have prepared some formal speech God would not be interested in what they had to say.

On the other extreme as even illustrated in our Bibles, sometimes people don't so much pray to God as they pray for show, using formal or dramatic language to impress others with their own holiness (Matthew 6:5-15).

Another mode of non-prayer is actually a covert attempt to give instruction to the audience rather than having a conversation with God. I've heard church leaders even pastors use what was supposedly a prayer as a rather obvious attempt to tell their listeners what to think or do.

But that's not how prayer works. **Prayer is talking WITH God like you'd talk with a friend.** That's what Abraham was doing here. Abraham “was called a friend of God.” (James 2:23).” Interestingly you might say that Abe's prayer actually began with casual invitation to have lunch – sit a while with me and refresh yourself – before turning to babies, future hopes and then the more serious matter of Sodom.

What? You don't think God likes to hear about your day and talk about babies?  
I do! I love this portion of scripture which teaches me,

*to not be anxious about anything,  
but in everything by prayer and supplication  
with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God*  
Philippians 4:6

Also when we talk with someone, when we have a conversation, we are expected in turn to listen to what they have to say. In the Genesis passage we read of Abraham first listening and then replying back to God who is listening to him. It is not just a one sided conversation.

In fact it is God, not Abraham, who began both the conversation about Sarah's future baby and now the future of Sodom and Gomorrah. Without such an ongoing two-way conversation, prayer cannot work. Prayer is speaking and listening. If you only speak to God when you have a request for Him to fill -- do not be surprised if you do not get a reply. God is not our heavenly concierge just waiting to do our bidding. God wants to be in conversation with us as we go through life. Like two friends walking side by side, speaking, listening and growing closer together through the years. This is what it means to have communion with God. This is what it means to pray.

As we spend time in God's word and begin to live our lives according to God's word and to pray according to God's word, and then to stop and listen ... then we will begin to hear from God as well.

On the matter of learning how to pray, my seminary professor told us a story of his visit with a terminally ill patient [let's call him Bob] who was afraid die. When asked if he had prayed about this Bob said he didn't know how to. At which point my professor grabbed a kitchen chair and set it down right beside Bob's bed, telling him to pretend like God had just walked into the room and sat down for a visit, they even rehearsed what a bit of that conversation would be like. By the end of the visit, Bob was greatly relieved and said he planned on having several long talks with God.

Sometime later when my professor called back to check on Bob, the family informed him that their dad had passed peacefully in his sleep, but that oddly when they found him he was leaning halfway out of the bed with his head resting on the chair.

That is what prayer is, two friends communing together. So first, Abraham **prayed with God**; speaking and listening in conversation, but 2nd, Abraham prayed **HUMBLY** before God.

Yes! God was Abraham's friend... but He was also God! He's majestic and all powerful. You don't approach God as if He owes you a favor, because He doesn't. God is God and, frankly, the closer you get to God, the less important you're going to feel.

A family spent the night camping at a National Park in Colorado. The clear moonless sky was so filled with stars that it felt like you could reach out and touch them. After they had all gone to bed, their youngest boy came into his parent's tent dragging his sleeping bag with him. What is the matter?" they asked. "Is it getting too cold?" "No," he answered. "I just never knew I was so small." (Reader's Digest 9/81 p. 126)

When you REALLY find yourself in God's presence that's kind of how you feel. When you REALLY sense God in all His glory you feel... small. That's why Abraham admitted how **SMALL** he felt, saying "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, ***I who am but dust and ashes***" (18:27). So, while it is right to think of ourselves according to our creature/Creator relationship with God, we are still nevertheless encouraged by the access granted us through Jesus Christ to come boldly – "with confidence" – before God's throne of Grace to make our requests known (Hebrews 4:16).

So Abraham talked **WITH** God as a friend and yet he talked **HUMBLY** with God recognizing their relationship, but that did not stop him from speaking **BOLDLY** and **REPEATEDLY** with God about a matter that deeply concerned both of them.

Why did God even bring up the matter of Sodom with Abraham? Scripture says that He wanted Abe to remember this event as an object lesson to teach to his heirs - so that when they, as promised, become a great nation, they will not forget to live righteously. But I think that there was more to it than that. I think God wanted to hear Abraham's opinion on the matter. God wanted to hear what was in Abe's heart and he wanted Abe to understand what was in His heart, concerning the lives that would be lost in the two cities.

When told that God was going to investigate the sinful reputation of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham could guess what the outcome might be, he knew those cities' reputation most likely by first hand business dealings with them. There was also the matter of his nephew Lot and family who had taken up residence there.

You might think that like the later prophet Jonah, Abraham would be glad to have those cities removed from what would be his future children's homeland. Maybe just get family out and do in the rest. But instead of asking just for Lot and family, Abraham prays for the entire city. Like God, his heart and mind first turned to how many innocent people might be harmed in the process.

This is a lesson about God that I want you to remember! Often times God in the Old Testament is depicted as unloving and judgmental as if He were a completely different person from God of the New Testament who is loving and forgiving, but they are the same person. Yes God hates sin, but He has always loved and has always sought to save ALL of His lost children who have wandered away from Him. Which is why I brought up the "prayer" of Jonah in this message. Jonah didn't care about the cost of innocent lives but God did!

Jonah was the one who wanted everyone in Nineveh wiped off the face of the earth. It was God who had to remind this hateful prophet that there were in this city, *more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who did not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals* (Jonah 4:11). Commentaries differ on whether God was speaking about the children in town, or about adults who just didn't know any better way of life. The point is that God was truly concerned about these innocent people ... and also about the animals in town. Just as God should be concerned about how many innocent people might be living in Sodom and Gomorrah – which He was.

So Abraham and God are actually thinking alike when he boldly challenges God, will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked .... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do what is just? Now Sodom in ancient times was apparently a big metropolis, so Abe's sum of 50 righteous people would be only a small minority in town and yet God assured Abe that even if He only found 50 righteous people He would spare both towns.

Now here is the interesting part. It was Abraham who had initially set the number at 50 and yet he keeps coming back time and again; 6 times!!! Until he has bartered God down to 10 righteous people being sufficient to spare the entire place. God would spare the two most wicked cities in history for the sake of 10 righteous people who might be living there ... that is how much the supposedly harsh, judgmental, God of the Old Testament would rather save than destroy people.

Abraham kept coming back to God again and again and again. Did this upset God? Apparently not. In fact, Scripture records this prayer of Abraham's because God wants us to see Abraham's boldness. His willingness to repeat his request until he gets a satisfactory answer from God.

In the Gospel of Luke, "*Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.*" The story was of a persistent widow who keeps returning to an unjust judge. Though the judge doesn't care, he eventually grants the widow's request because she repeatedly comes back to him. Jesus' surprising moral for his disciples is ...will not God give

justice to His elect who cry to Him day and night? ... I tell you He will give them justice speedily (18:1-7). The point being if the uncaring can be worn down by repeated requests, how much more quickly will our loving God respond to His children's repeated requests.

Why should we always pray and not give up? Because we have the privilege to boldly enter into the presence of God to talk with Him about what is on our hearts.

So Abraham boldly, repeatedly, came back to God asking not for his family and not only for the innocent, but for the entire CITY!!! Genesis tells us "... the men of Sodom were wicked, great sinners against the LORD" (13:13). And throughout Scripture Sodom was used as the classic example of evil, deserving of judgment (Jude 1:7).

Thus, asking God to spare an entire city of wicked people doesn't make any sense... unless that's what God wanted us to learn from this story. Scripture reminds us that these stories from the past were included to give us "hope" (Romans 15:4).

Abraham's prayer was focused on the lost. While God listens to all kinds of prayers... this is the kind of prayer that I believe that most gets His attention, because it is also in line with His own desires and so it's the first prayer God introduces us to.

Thus, the best kind of prayer is the one where we pass by the bars in town and pray for those who frequent them. It's the kind of prayer where we pray for the person we know who is addicted to drugs, or the person who is caught up in sexual immorality of one kind or another, or for both parties in a marriage that is breaking up. I believe God wanted us to see Abraham PRAYING for Sodom to be SAVED.

But now... why would God want Abraham to pray like that? To help us understand the answer to this question we need to ask another question, how many people in Sodom deserved to be saved? Obviously, there weren't 10! But were there at least 4 who deserved to be saved (Lot/wife/daughters?)

Well, while II Peter tells us that Lot was "righteous" (2 Peter 2:7), even his righteousness was tainted by the community in which he lived. If you recall, in protection of his visitors, Lot had even offered his own daughters for the crowd to gang rape. I'm pretty sure that decision didn't win him the "Father of the Year" award. He had lived so long in Sodom that his judgment had become warped.

Then there was Lot's wife. Commanded by the angels not to look back at the city, she disobeyed and turned around. She regretted having to leave the city she'd invested her life in and because of that, she never left. She turned into a statue of salt.

Then there were Lot's daughters. Having tried but failed to get their fiancés to come with them and fearing they would never find husbands elsewhere, they got their father drunk and slept with him so they'd have the children they coveted. Their two sons went on to father the nations of Moab and Ammon, who worshipped the idol Baal and who would later attempt to hire Balaam the prophet to curse Israel's entrance into the promised land (Deuteronomy 23:3-4).

This family hardly sounds like people who deserved to be saved. Thus, there weren't ANY people in Sodom who deserved to escape - not even Lot and his family. They all fell short of being righteous.

Hmmmm. Do you realize there's a lot of people who believe that they're going to be saved (at the judgment) because they've lived good lives? They help little old ladies across the street, contribute to charities and may even go regularly to church. They feel their good deeds are enough to earn them entrance into heaven. Again, had they been reading their Bibles they would have known that there are none who are righteous, no not one and the wages of sin is death (Romans 3:10, 6:23).

To which, in response, Paul writes to the Christians in Ephesus that: *“you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience — among whom WE ALL ONCE LIVED in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were BY NATURE CHILDREN OF WRATH, like the rest of mankind.”* (Ephesians 2:1-3)

In other words, every single one of us (both you and I) was dead in our sins. Not one of us deserved to be saved. We ALL once lived in the passions of our flesh and were by nature children of wrath... just like everybody else!!!

*But ... because of the great love with which He loved us,  
even when we were dead in our trespasses,  
God made us alive together with Christ*  
Ephesians 2:4-5

Now think about this. Historians estimate that the population of Sodom was around a quarter of a million people, but only 4 were saved. Every single person in Sodom was a sinner. No one who lived there deserved to be saved (including the 4 who were saved). So, if that's true... why did God save Lot and his family? Because they belonged to Abraham. That's the only reason they got out alive.

The Bible also teaches us that not one of us deserves to be saved. Not one of us is good enough to be good enough to spend eternity in glory. So, if that's true... why would God bother to save us? Because we belong to Jesus. That's the ONLY REASON we get to go to heaven. That's why Jesus said ...

I am the way, the truth and the life.  
No one comes unto the Father,  
except through me.”  
John 14:6



Now, as well as back then, we have only been saved by God's loving grace as His gift, which we, like Abraham can only receive by faith. As the Bible has taught from front to back; those who are righteous before God are those who live by faith in His power to keep His promises.

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The next day Abraham woke to see a cloud of smoke rising like a cloud from a furnace. Abraham now realizes that his negotiations were in vain since God could not find 10 righteous souls from the combined population of the two cities. That is all we get. We are not told how Abraham felt or what his reaction was, just that he moved.

So what did Abraham learn from his conversation with God?

- He learned that yes, he could negotiate with God and pose hard questions.
- He learned that God would keep His word.
- He learned that not 10 living souls in either of those cities were found righteous in Gods eyes.
- He learned that God preserved his life for a reason and wanted him away from these people forever.

Abraham had a heart for the lost citizens of those two cities and realized that he shared his world with them. But they did not share his belief in the Living God. Like Abraham, God wanted to spare the cities if He could have found some way – like Nineveh – of turning the residents around to repentance and righteousness. But neither got their wish, which is our lesson in the need for righteous living – not to be saved – but like the future nation of Israel to continue enjoying God's blessings upon our land.

That is why our Bible continues to encourage us to offer up, supplications, prayers intercessions and thanksgivings for EVERYONE, not only so that we might live peaceful, quiet and Godly lives, but also because it is pleasing in the sight of God who desires ALL people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Let's pray about this....

***Prayer & Lord's Prayer:***

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen

***Hymn:***

*"Because He Lives"*

***Apostles' Creed:***

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. On the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen

***Birthdays and Anniversaries:*** We wish a happy birthday to Tammy DeWitt and Heather Browning on the 18th and Belvia Tate on the 22<sup>nd</sup>.

***Prayer and Requests:*** Please remember to call or email the office with prayer requests and announcements.

***Closing Prayer:***

Gracious God, we give our best, lest in gaining the world we lose life itself. As a covenant people, we seek to witness to Your will and way. Help us to know more clearly what You would have us do with all that You have entrusted to our care. We present ourselves to You as living sacrifices, take and use us for Your glory and honor. This we pray through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

***Benediction:***

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with Your spirit. Each one should use whatever gift they have received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, they should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, they should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

***Postlude:***

*"O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"*

## Concerns- May 17<sup>th</sup>

**Barefoot:** Jim- home

**Barnes:** Troy- (friend) stage 4 lung cancer

**Blair:** James Thorne- (scout) rare skin infection, doing better

Katy Neal- (LHS student) scleroderma

Glen Murgacz- (friend) biopsy for bladder cancer

**Boone:** Jim Hedrick - (friend) recovering from gall bladder surgery, waiting for more surgery

Michael -(son) out of work during pandemic

**Chryssikos:** Linda Arendt- (neighbor) disabled

**Clarke:** Ben Daniel - (Pat's grandson) deployed to Syria late summer

**Cram:** Winslow's-(friends of Sally) family & medical problems

Janice Campbell-(friend) under hospice care

Military away from home

**Diddams:** Lois- problems with medications

Paul (brother)- loss of wife, not doing well

**Dills:** Father passed away

**Dwyer:** Karen Huddle- (friend) health problems

**Fleming:** family dealing with addiction and self- esteem

Steve Trombecky- (friend) home recovering

**Foster:** Thomasine Davis- (aunt) hospice care

Joyce Abbott- (former member) cancer

Andre Nemenek- (Shepherds table cook) prostate cancer

Brother-in-law has Covid-19, sister in self- quarantine

**Gaston:** Joseph (former pastor) prostate cancer surgery

**Goodman:** Barry Owen-(friend) cancer

Randall Sales-(SRHS coach) cancer

Katherine Saunders- (Hugh's daughter) hospice

**Heinrich:** Steven - (grandson) autoimmune disorder

Barbara Lore- (Helen's sister) heart problems

**Koch:** Doris- fell, broken hip, at home

**Kuhn- Kibbey:** Nancy Milton- (friend) cancer, Alzheimer's

Rachel Rutledge-(granddaughter) experimental treatment

Dot- health issues, macular degeneration

Grandson- alcoholism

Eric Bryant- diagnosed with MS

**Ledden:** John- heart problems

**Mauser:** Joyce Reese- (friend) health problems

Steven-(son's boss) going blind

Tom & Betty Clark- downsizing, and Betty has new pacemaker

Norma Jean- (Gayle's sister) broken collar bone

Pat- (Al's sister) diabetes

**Morris:** all law enforcement, firefighters and all other first responders

Forensic scientists who deal with crime

Rev. Pam Ledbetter-(friend) autoimmune disease

Doris Jean Coble- (cousin) in nursing home

**Palmer:** Lynne- broken hip from fall, at home

**Salley:** David Etheridge- (fellow pastor) terminal cancer

Emily Salley- (sister-in-law) invasive breast cancer

**Saunders:** (Ronnie) Colin Bridges- (grandson)

Scott- (son-in-law) chemo and radiation

**Scheurer:** Jim Hedrick-(friend) cancer

Bob Lindell-(friend) prostate cancer

**Smith:** Sonya's parents, have moved to nursing home

**Stetson:** James & family-(son) in Colorado

**Stevens:** Jackie Landis- heart problems

Zeph Cunningham- travel mercies

**Toney:** Judy- may start radiation soon

Karen Hyde-(friend) bladder cancer

Mike Gillespie- (friend) hospice care

Cal Rice- (former pastor) bone cancer, refused treatment

Nancy Jordan-(neighbor) recovering from surgery

**Van Dyke:** Thomas Blythe- (friend) home recovering

**Weeks:** Mary Lohmeyer- (friend) doing well

**Wilkerson:** Ricky Wilkerson-(Dan's cousin) cancer

**Yodis:** Linda Goshorn- (former member) fractured ribs and punctured lung from fall, recovering at home

**Prayers for those dealing with loneliness**

**Prayers that anti-Semitism be erased**

**Prayers for healing the divisive spirit among our leaders/nation**

**Prayers for an end of the coronavirus and healing for those infected**

**We extend our sympathy to the Dills family on the passing of Kathy's father.**

**Clerk's Corner**  
**May 11<sup>th</sup> Called Session Meeting**

- In-person church services will resume with limited seating and other restrictions in accordance with our Phase One opening on Sunday, June 7. Monthly Communion will also resume. Mid-week Bible Study may follow.
- John Salley is authorized to spend up to \$1,000 on camera and streaming equipment. This will meet immediate needs of continuing to broadcast the worship service until long-term solutions are considered.
- After the Church reopens, the Sexton's hours may be increased up to 20 from 10 to enable thorough weekly cleaning, especially if a mid-week Bible study resumes.
- John Salley will send out a congregational survey to gauge sentiment towards re-opening.
- At the discretion of their leaders, the Youth are approved to begin meeting any time after June 7. An outdoor venue is encouraged.
- Pre-cautions for In-person Worship Services will include:
- People will be cautioned to only attend services if they are healthy and feel safe in doing so.
- All hymnals, visitors' cards and Bibles will be removed from the backs of pews.
- All seat cushions will be removed.
- Services will be shortened to run approximately 45 minutes.
- The Lord's Prayer will be alternated with the Apostles' Creed during services.
- Offering baskets will be set up in the back of the church.
- Pre-packaged, disposable communion elements will also be placed at the back of the church for congregants to pick up on their way to sit down.
- Only upstairs restrooms will be open. Signage will remind people to wash their hands after use. People will also be urged to use their bathrooms at home before coming.
- Masks will be available for anyone who wants one.
- No handshakes or hugs.
- One doorkeeper will open the sanctuary door for those entering. All inside doors will be propped open.
- There will be No Sunday School. No Children's Church. No Nursery.
- While a Children's sermon will still be given, they will be asked to stay with their family instead of coming together at the front
- Safe alternatives to a choir will be used.
- And in place of singing out loud, the congregation will be urged to listen to the music or sing along quietly to themselves.

**Note: If the state extends or reverts to more stringent measures, the in-person services will be delayed.**

Dear Church family and friends,

When we finally get back together on June 7th it will have been three months since we last saw each other and for some, out of necessity, it may be even longer. So I thought I would include a picture because we all may look a bit different, older and heavier? (Yes, you see a beard in an attempt to keep up with Bill Rutledge.)



As you will learn from the Clerk's Corner in this issue, reopening the church will not be easy and for a long while many things will have to be different from the way they were done in the past. It may be a full year or more before the country is largely free from the fear of further spreading Covid 19 and we can return doing things the way we used to. But hopefully through all this enforced time of solitude and reflection we have learned a few better ways to both do and be "the church."

For instance even after we resume a gathered worship experience, we still plan to continue live streaming videos of the event and possibly even our mid-week Bible study both for members who are forced to stay at home and for those who may be traveling. So from now on no matter where you are or where you are going, you can keep your Bedford Presbyterian family connection with you.

The Clerks Corner also lists out some of the rather strict guidelines that will need to be followed during our Phase One reopening, such as the removal of all books, hymnals, cards, cushions, and any other items not easily cleaned after each service. Where you can sit will also be designated according to social distancing guidelines. You will be asked not to shake hands or hug and children must stay with their family group. There will be no Children's Church, Sunday School, or nursery and members will be urged to only use the restrooms in case of an emergency. You will be asked to hold all your greetings and conversations for after the worship service when you can do so outside. The service itself will be shortened to around 45 minutes. For me, the saddest restriction of all is that there can be no choir and you will also be asked not to sing out loud, which is the quickest way to spread germs through a crowd.

You may fear that all these restrictions will take the joy out of gathering for worship, but I am not worried. Having been kept apart for over three months, just the ability to once again gather as a church family will make all the restrictions worthwhile.

So until June 7th and afterwards, let us keep praying for safety among our family and friends, for the comfort of those who have lost loved ones to this disease or other diseases, and for a permanent cure. But most of all let's pray that this time apart will have sweetened our disposition towards others, especially those with whom we disagree.

See you soon, John.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Thank you for continuing to send in your contributions and pledges.  
You can mail your pledge or contribution or you can drop by the office,  
Mon-Thurs between 8 am -12 pm.**

Even though we aren't meeting as normal, **5 ¢ a meal offerings and Heifer** are still welcomed and encouraged. Just mail them in as you do your pledges and contributions, with a note in the memo line.

**Do you enjoy yardwork?** If you do, we are looking for volunteers to work in the church yard mowing grass, weed eating and doing general yard work. If you are interested, please let the office know.

**Happy Birthday!!**

Tammy DeWitt- 18<sup>th</sup>

Heather Browning- 18<sup>th</sup>

Belvia Tate- 22<sup>nd</sup>

*For in the day of trouble  
he will keep me safe  
in his dwelling  
Psalm 27:5*

