

Wee Kirk Gazette

Tappahannock Presbyterian Church

April 2014



Two Sundays ago, I preached a sermon on the most famous passage in the Bible, John 3:16, and explained why it's the most misunderstood passage in the Bible. Jesus is answering a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who came to him at night with the intention, probably, of debating him. Jesus cuts him off by saying, "No one can see the Kingdom of God without being born *anwqen*." Yep, I just slipped a Greek word into your newsletter! In English lettering it would be *ah-noh-thin*. It has two meanings: either *again* – which is what Nicodemus thinks Jesus means – or *from above*, which is what he really means. Nicodemus clearly doesn't understand until Jesus explains to him that he means "born from above." But does all this mean that WE are not "born again?" In a word – NO!

Jesus is saying that we have to be humans first – that's what the "born of water" part of the passage means. It's a reference to the normal "water" of any childbirth, an ancient way of saying "human." But notice, Jesus says, "...no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water AND Spirit." (Emphasis mine.) You have to be born before you can be saved! But oh, how glorious is the new existence we have as children of the Kingdom. It truly is a new life – especially compared to ordinary, earthly life.

As I sit here and reflect, two days after moving into our new church home, I can't help but think in terms of being born, being born from above, and having a new life. I've talked to many, many people here in town about our church. They are amazed when I tell them this congregation has been worshipping in Tappahannock for 18 years! They just didn't seem to know about us until fairly recently; possibly when we took a leading role in Operation InAsMuch, certainly when we began building our awesome new church home. I liken that to those hidden years of Jesus' life. There are actually accounts out there about Jesus doing miraculous things in his childhood and youth. (My favorite one is about Jesus and another child floating sticks in a mud puddle, pretending as children will that they were ships. The other child did something to make Jesus' ship sink. So Jesus said the word, and the child was dead. His parents told him that wasn't nice, so he restored the boy to life. We don't know if he raised his ship, as well.) But it wasn't until he got out there in the public's eye that he was known. It was a sort of "rebirth;" it certainly was about being "born from above," as we see in the accounts of his Baptism. The parallels with us are there. We've done many "miraculous things" in our childhood and youth years. That raising of the steeple last week was our real public beginning. We even made the newspaper! I have had many people tell me they're coming to our first Worship Service this Sunday. That could represent a new life for many of our visitors.

All this means that, in a very real sense, we are looking at a major re-birth. We are a new creation. We won't be the same church after we open our doors this Sunday. We'll be something much more powerful – sort of like Jesus was after his baptism. But will we be born from above? I believe we already are. That's the new reality we'll have to live. The only way to live in this new reality is to do what Nicodemus had trouble doing: to think, not in earthly terms, not in terms we're used to, but in terms of God. That means not thinking about our own comfort first, or foremost, but about what God wants us to do. We're not being called to be uncomfortable! We're being called to be comfortable *with God*. For many of us – if not all of us! – that might feel like something fearfully new, maybe even difficult. But it isn't. This church, from its very beginning, has been headed for this time. We're ready. Let the new life begin.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Don". The signature is stylized and appears to be written in a cursive or semi-cursive hand.

Session Highlights

Stated Meeting March 18, 2014

Communications

1. The Clerk is representing TPC at Judy Thompson's installation as Associate Pastor of St. Andrews at 3:00 PM April 6 .
2. POJ announcements about "Celebrating Older Folks" and "Leadership Institute" sponsored by the Seminary were shared.
3. Announcement was made about a trip to Russia being led by Rev. Donald Mardsen- "Witnessing to Jesus in Russia." Anyone interested can get more information from the Clerk.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report was reviewed and satisfactory.

1. **New Church Development Purpose Group-** Spotsylvania Presbyterian Church has left the Presbytery
2. Arabic Church has requested to leave POJ
3. The request to use Tappahannock Presbyterian Church as the site for the NCD Retreat on Tuesday, July 8 from 9:00-3:00 was approved by the Session. Susan will relay this to the NCD Purpose Group.
4. **Presbytery of the James** March 1 report was included in the packet.
5. **Personnel Report-** Jill Robertson reported from a recent Personnel Committee meeting. Job descriptions have been prepared for Pastor, Treasurer, Administrative Assistant, Director of Music, and Nursery Attendant. The Committee is using as reference a Handbook on Personnel Policies supplied by the Presbytery.



Old Business

1. **Update from Building Committee-** Emerson Hughes announced the Certificate of Occupancy and keys to the building were delivered on Thursday, March 13. Insurance was discussed.
2. **Steeple Raising** planned for March 19 (with hopes for good weather!).
3. **Discussion** about effective ways of greeting visitors (Fusion and Keeping People Over 60 While Attracting People Under 40) after two Sunday's worship services was well attended and people seemed interested.
4. **Report on moving plan-** Susan Spage and John Hardy have prepared a directory indicating what furniture goes where; people have been assigned rooms to receive and place furnishings. Crawford Moving will move the contents of the present building to the new building on March 24.
5. **Dedication Committee** report given by Lucy Sisk. She received clarification about invitations The request to look into pricing of an AED machine as well as getting CPR training will be turned back to Mary Wigmore with request to bring the Session further information regarding cost and who might provide training free and where in the community CPR training could be accessed.

MINISTRY REPORTS

1. **Worship and Music-** written report from Moderator Barbara Cullom.
 - a. Services for Ash Wednesday Service were reviewed (this was cancelled because of bad weather)
 - b. Palm Sunday- Kathy and Don will discuss logistics
 - c. Tenebrae Service- continue to educate congregation about meaning of tenebrae service; plan to have a service on Good Friday
 - d. Pastor Don will lead the Easter Sunrise Service for the community at St. Margaret's at 6:30 AM. Flowering of the Cross planned for TPC service.

2. Congregational Care and Fellowship-

Susan Spage reported there are conversations about having a spaghetti supper after the move is completed.



3. Christian Education-

- a. Lucy Sisk has stepped up several weeks to teach a visiting youngster age 5. She asked permission to use the nursery in the new building if there were no other children in there since there is more room and privacy and access to the bathroom back there.
 - b. The *Study of John* (adults) has been postponed until the summer. The *Study of Revelation* may be in the Fall
 - c. Pastor Don is negotiating with staff from Union Seminary about having Leah Epps serve as intern this summer- her field will be developing a children's ministry.
- ## 4. Mission and Outreach
- written report from Sherry Jones
- a. Pastor Don has followed up with Essex Elementary School regarding 6 volunteers from TPC assisting in the classroom. More information should be forthcoming soon.
 - b. *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering will be received at Easter; several weeks prior there will be information about the offering.
 - c. Banana Bingo continues at Essex House. Participation was encouraged. During this discussion by Session it was approved that Pastor Don could offer communion to residents at Essex House if arrangements were made with the management there.
 - d. The Ministry Group will send \$150 to help with arrangements for the "After Prom" party to be held at Rivah Fitness.
 - e. All are asked to be thinking about opportunities to share Camp Hanover experience with young people.

5. Church Growth

- a. Ministry group still discussing "Ben's Bells" idea- pass along a trinket to remind people to do acts of kindness.
- b. Advertisements on placemats at Bella's restaurant are being prepared
- c. Robbie Tavenner continues to make welcome bags to give to visitors
- d. The Ministry Group is discussing other ideas that might appeal to the community once the move has been made.



- e. Meeting to discuss activities on Community Day, planned to attract visitors, particularly young people. Session commended the Ministry Group on its efforts to be appealing to young children and families. One activity, "Dunk the Pastor", was discussed and discouraged, citing this is not the way TPC would introduce its leadership to the community.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **CONGREGATION RETREAT HAS BEEN CONFIRMED WITH CAMP HANOVER FOR AUGUST 23.** Reservations have been made for Knoxwood Lodge; decision must be made about meals and programming. Fee is \$150 a day. If you are interested in planning things with a new twist speak to Pastor Don about being on the Retreat Planning Committee.
2. **FACEBOOK PAGE** Session decided there should be **one professional manager** for the Facebook page and all entries are to be submitted to him. David Broad will be asked to be the manager.
3. **RADIO TIME** Alice and Pastor Don were given permission to **pursue the possibility of having weekly spots on a local radio station** that will air his sermons weekly.

4. **ORGAN** The Session approved a recommendation by Emerson Hughes to **donate the organ to New Covenant Presbyterian Church**. They will be responsible for moving it.
5. Jill Robertson was elected by the Session to serve as **MODERATOR FOR THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE YEAR 2014-2015** Two members of the congregation will be elected to serve on this committee for one year.
6. Emerson Hughes brought to the Session a **REQUEST FROM KATHY HUGHES TO USE THE TPC BUILDING FOR OPERATION INASMUCH ACTIVITIES ON APRIL 12. THIS WAS APPROVED**. A committee will examine the required furnishings and see that they are available, borrowed if necessary. TPC will be the site of the closing ceremony for *Operation Inasmuch* on April 13.



The organ pipes are admired. And the cross on the wall....?

Steeple Raising Success!

Cold rain caused people to take cover either in their cars or inside the church building until steeple raising time. The landscape was dotted with colorful jackets and umbrellas.

When the Steeple was in place (thanks to the man who sat at the apex of the roof and guided it to the perfect spot!) there was clapping and car horns blowing and lights blinking.

And to top it all off- truly- Emerson Hughes had the privilege of ascending in a yellow cage/bucket hoisted by the crane and placing the cross on the very top of the steeple. Thanks-a-million to Em for the many hours he spent going over all details daily during the 6-8 month construction.

Attempts were made at singing *Life High the Cross* and a rousing rendition of the Doxology served as benediction to the project.



Before it goes aloft.



There he goes, across the roof

Photos by Jill Robertson

APRIL and MAY



* Worship Assistants will read both scripture and prayer of dedication.

April 4 Mary Wigmore
 ** 13 Anne Sydnor
 (Easter) 20 Bill Smith (Easter)
 27 Tyler Sanders

May 4 John Colby
 11 Sherry Jones
 18 John Hardy
 25 Jill Robertson

Greeter Anne Sydnor
Ushers Chuck and Betty Dyer

Greeter Johnny Frischkorn
Ushers Jo Dowdy, Tyler Sanders

** Communion Lucy Sisk, Deb Booze, John Colby, Bill Smith

April Birthdays

Randy Sisk 19
Sherry Jones 20

Dr. Stephen Reger 24
Mary Wigmore 25



Church Family News

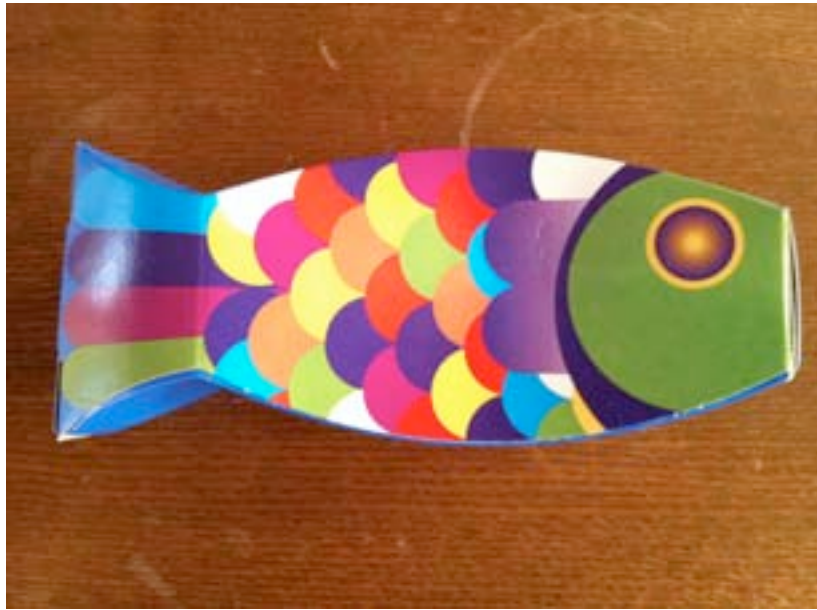
The big news has been moving into the new church building on May 24, the new headquarters where each week we become infused with energy and spirit to go into the community to serve as Christ teaches us. Several opportunities have come already to share our new facility. *Operation Inasmuch* projects will be done there April 12 and the Closing Ceremony for *Operation Inasmuch* will be held there Sunday afternoon, April 13. The congregation will thank the contractors, builders and architects for a job well done by inviting them to a potluck dinner in the near future.

A tenebrae (in the shadows) service will be held at 7:00 PM on Good Friday, April 18. There will be liturgy and special music. This is a good time to invite your friends, or others, in the community.

There is a need for volunteers to be available to keep the nursery (ages 4 and under) during worship service. A permanent person will be employed to do this and the Personnel Committee is working on this and other positions. Please speak to Jill Robertson if you will 1) volunteer until a person has been hired and 2) if you have suggestions about who might be a good candidate.

Many thanks to Susan Stephenson for her time as Administrative Assistant. Family responsibilities will not allow her to increase her days in the office as needed by Pastor Don. Her last day will be March 31.

One Great Hour of Sharing



On Easter Sunday TPC will be receiving monetary donations for *One Great Hour of Sharing*. Since 1949 Presbyterians have joined with millions of other Christians in this opportunity to share God's love with our neighbors-in-need around the world. Gifts to *One Great Hour of Sharing* help provide relief to those affected by natural disasters, furnish food and water to the hungry, and assist in helping to empower the poor and oppressed. Some of these funds are combined with those of other denominations in addressing international disasters.

Examples: The **Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Fund** has helped families devastated by a **historic Texas wildfire to rebuild their homes and restore their lives**. The **Presbyterian Hunger Program** has provided the means to dig wells in 35 rural villages in Niger, a region in Africa, and now families have water for themselves, their crops, and livestock. These wells will help to alleviate famine in that area. The **Self-development of People Program** provides grants to organizations like *A Community Voice* in New Orleans, a neighborhood group which assists low-to-moderate-income families in applying for jobs, housing and food assistance

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