

August 2022



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 10am Worship Sanctuary FB Live Janet Onnie preaching	8	9 5-8pm PW Meeting	10	11	12	13 12pm SMF free concert (S)
14 10am Worship Sanctuary FB Live Jim Young preaching SMFWorship	15	16	17	18 12pm SMF free concert (S) Newsletter deadline for Sept.	19 12pm SMF free concert (S)	20 12pm SMF free concert (S)
24 10am Worship Sanctuary FB Live Janet Onnie preaching	22	23	24	25	26	27
28 10am Worship Sanctuary FB Live Bronwen Boswell preaching 7pm MBU Convocation rain location	29	30	31			

First Impressions

Newsletter of First Presbyterian Church
Staunton, Virginia
August 2022



From the Bench

**As I Make My Departure, I Leave You with This
to Read, Ponder, and Digest.
One Thing Necessary**



**St. Paul's Episcopal Church - July 17, 2022
Pentecost VI - Proper 10
Sirach 26:10 on Facebook
The Rev. (Dr.) Elizabeth Kaeton**

The story of Mary and Martha of Bethany is one that is probably familiar to even the more casual of church attenders. Sibling squabbles are infamous in scripture, beginning with Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam and Eve.

If you remember that story in Genesis, Abel, a shepherd, offered the Lord the firstborn of his flock. The Lord respected Abel's sacrifice but did not respect that offered by Cain. In a jealous rage, Cain murdered Abel.

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Rev. Karen H. Allamon, Pastor

From the Bench

(cont. fr. p. 1)

Then there's Jacob and Esau – twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah – who were estranged for over 20 years because Jacob stole Esau's birthright. We all know about Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers who were jealous of his coat of many colors. And, of course, we all know the parable of the Prodigal Son – one squandered his inheritance and the other did not.

There was also rivalry among the "band of brothers" known as the Apostles. James and John were brothers who were known as "The Sons of Thunder" and argued for a seat of honor at the right or left hand of Jesus when he entered into his Kingdom.

The rivalry among Peter and Paul is well known, and while Paul had his issues with Barnabas, John had issues with Peter also. It is John who very carefully mentions in HIS version of the story that it was he who beat Peter to the tomb in their foot race to see the Risen Lord. And then, there's the whole matter of the exact identity of "the disciple Jesus loved" in John's gospel – which John would like us to believe was li'l ole him, but some scholars say was Judas.

So, actually, the squabble between Mary and Martha seem to pale in comparison to these boys who have serious, heated, violent, jealous arguments about who has status and power and influence – some of the consequences of which range from abandonment and alienation to being sold into slavery and murder.

For goodness' sake! Who among us hasn't had an argument with their sibling over who is or is not doing the assigned chores? That's probably why the Smother's Brothers routine was so popular. Remember them? Remember Tommy's outrage: "Mom always liked you best!"

My father used to sing a lot of songs as he worked around the house. One of them was this: "You always hurt the one you love, the one you shouldn't hurt at all. You always take the sweetest rose and crush it till the petals fall." And then came the lame excuse: "So if I broke your heart last night it's because I love you most of all."

So, here's my question: what is it about love that can lead us to hurt others? How is it that we get so easily distracted that we can fall into a meaningless squabble that has nothing to do with what is

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Staunton Music Festival at First Presbyterian in August!



We are thrilled to welcome **Staunton Music Festival** in August, who will perform free concerts in our sanctuary on the following dates:

Saturday, August 13, 12:00 pm—Water Music

Thursday, August 18, 12:00 pm—Summer Sounds

Friday, August 19, 12:00 pm—Schubertiade

Saturday, August 20, 12:00 pm—Serenades at Noon

SMF will also be playing during worship on **Sunday, August 14.**

We hope you can join us for these memorable and inspiring concerts!

COVID-19 News

COVID-19 cases are up throughout the country. In our area, the risk level is **High**. Based on this, the CDC recommends the following:

- ◆ Wear a mask indoors and on public transportation.
- ◆ Stay up to date with vaccines.
- ◆ Get tested if you have symptoms.
- ◆ If you are at high risk for severe illness, consider taking

additional precautions, outlined by the CDC at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

Please note that masks are **required** on church property while the risk level is high. Stay safe. Thank you!

August Birthdays

- 3 Alice Herbst
- 4 Nancy Engle
- 9 Ron Lowman
Lissa Dod
- 13 Lyla Tigert
- 14 Robin Knott
- 19 Kathleen Garrison
- 21 Raymond Hoaster
- 26 Lisa Caywood
Mona Tate
- 28 Robert Richardson



From the Bench

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remember this story of two sisters, Martha and Mary of the ancient town of Bethany, who lived thousands of years ago but struggled with the very same issues you and I do today.

I ask you to ask yourself the same question Jesus asked of them: What **is the one thing necessary** for you to remain faithful to the promises you made to God and to keep your head up and your back straight as you walk this life with Jesus?

And, because I'm still just a self-avowed, unrepentant hippie, I'll leave you with these words from that Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young song:

And maybe it's the time of year
Yes and maybe its the time of man
And I don't know who I am
But life is for learning.

And I dreamed I saw the bomber jet planes
Riding shotgun in the sky
Turning into butterflies
Above our nation.

We are stardust, we are golden
We are billion-year-old carbon
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the garden.

Amen.

- Otto Pebworth

From the Bench

(cont. fr. p. 2)

important? Or, to use the words of Jesus, what is the **"one thing necessary"** on which we need to stay focused and not get distracted?

I have been in church communities which have been torn apart by the most senseless things. Like? Like, the color of the carpet in the sanctuary. No way! Yes, way! Like? Like the specific color red of the outside door of the church. Oh, I remember that one – several people left the church and never came back. Yes, way.

I was helping out in one church that was having a very heated discussion about the times of the service. They had two services: 7:30 AM and 10 AM. There were a small handful of faithful people who attended at 7:30 AM. They were having a hard time getting supply clergy to come that early in the morning and they were also having financial difficulty paying for two services.

One person said to the bishop, "If you take away my service, I will leave the church." The bishop said, "If you are coming to church because of the time of the service, maybe you should consider why it is you are coming to church."

What is the one necessary thing? It's a great question. It's a question I often ask myself when I find myself in conflict with someone or I'm anxious about a project and having internal conflict. What is **the one thing necessary** here?

Let me give you a very recent example. On Thursday night, six of us gathered together to talk about developing a plan for Church Safety. It was a good group and a great discussion. After less than the 90 minutes we had scheduled, we left with a draft procedure, a preliminary plan to secure the building while still looking toward hospitality and welcoming the stranger, a task list with assignments and a date for our next meeting.

Still, my wheels were spinning about safety needs of our church members and still welcome the stranger.

You may have noticed that about me. My wheels are pretty much always in spin mode. One staff person told me once that he could usually hear my wheels spinning across the room. He said I would get "a look on my face" and then ask, "What if ...?" And then, he said, it was time to run very fast in the opposite direction.

From the Bench

(cont. fr. p. 3)

I was helping Deacon Pete unload his car of equipment for today. We were at the back kitchen door entrance. He was taking the last load downstairs and I was standing on the step, looking out at the small grove of trees near the cemetery when suddenly I saw them: Fireflies!

FIREFLIES!

I haven't seen fireflies in years...decades, maybe. I live on the water and, apparently, because there aren't many trees around me, there aren't any fireflies. Suddenly, I felt all my wheels stop. I felt my heart get lighter. I started to get that excited feeling I used to get when I was a kid and we'd run to get the Mason jar to catch fireflies and keep them with us on the porch until it was time for bed, and then we'd set them free.

The palms of my hands actually got sweaty with excitement as I remembered my first sense of the magic of our world and my small place in it – and yet I am precious in the sight of God.

As I watched the fireflies, I began thinking of the images we've been seeing from NASA's brand new James Webb telescope. Because of the speed of light, the images we are now seeing actually happened 13.8 billion years ago.

Let me say that again: That's 13.8 **billion** years ago, or just about the time that the sun and planet Earth were being formed.

I was instantly flooded with a memory of, less than a year ago, standing in front of one of the Pyramids in Egypt and realizing that Moses stood before them in his time. I mean, I was astounded by the passage of a couple hundred centuries. The images we're seeing from outer space are millions and millions – **13.8 billion** – years old.

As I was driving home, I remember that line in the Eucharistic Prayer we'll say in a short while, "***the vast expanse of interstellar space, galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses, and this fragile Earth, our island home***". And I remembered that the composition of 97 percent of our bodies are made up of the same kinds of atoms and molecules as those baby pictures we're seeing of those far away distant places.

Just take that in for a second.

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From the Bench

(cont. fr. p. 4)

I could hear the refrain from Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young's song, "By the time I got to Woodstock":

We are stardust, we are golden
We are billion-year-old carbon
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the Garden.

When you think about it, we are really no different than any other small, insignificant specks of dust in the cosmos. Which is why I think we, in our own way and from time to time, light up and sparkle and twinkle. It's in our DNA. We have magic in our bodies. You know, it just may be part of the Creator's design to send fireflies here one season every year to remind us of that.

If we don't remember that, we might remember that Jesus told his disciples that their names were written in the heavens. I suspect he had that fact on good authority.

So, the next time you are tempted to get into a squabble with "the one you love, the one you shouldn't hurt at all," try to remember "**the one thing necessary**" that keeps you balanced.

The next time you get into a squabble with a neighbour or a co-worker or a friend, remember that "you are dust and to dust you shall return" and focus in on "**the one thing necessary**" to live out the promises made for you at baptism which you took for yourself at confirmation.

Remember that while you are made of the same stuff as Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and The Prodigal Sons, as well as James and John, Peter and Paul, and Martha and Mary, and even though your mom loved you best, we are – all of us, each and every one of us – are made of the same magical stuff of fireflies and stars.

And, when you get angry enough to cross someone off your list, remember that their names and yours are written in the heavens. Maybe even side by side.

In these days of political unrest and national turmoil, when courtesy and politeness seem to have taken a back seat to what someone thinks is their entitlement, and kindness and safety seem secondary to what someone thinks is their right, I ask you to

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