



# The Hamilton Beacon

June 8, 2020

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## THE SESSION/TRUSTEES Hold A STRATEGY MEETING

So you ask, “What is a strategy meeting?” It’s when we focus on *big issues*, on possibilities and directions ahead. Like it or not, the coronavirus has laid bare issues that bring both danger and opportunity. “Strategy” implies that we carefully assess the dangers and move ahead to choose opportunity.

On Sunday afternoon, June 7<sup>th</sup>, your Session and Trustees met in Westminster Hall. Yes, we were together, but in chairs ten feet apart. Our officers prayed, thought, discussed, responded, and came to some decisions. We are looking for nothing less than the life, growth, and health of Hamilton.

### OUR FINANCIAL GIVING

Frankly, our Tithes and Offerings over the first four months of 2020 averages about \$1,100 a month. That is simply not enough to sustain us.

The Session/Trustees wish for each member to look and pray about their current level of giving. They have no specific advice to provide except the words of Jesus:

"Give, and it will be given to you;  
a good measure,  
pressed down, shaken together, running over,  
will be put into your lap.

For the measure you give  
will be the measure you get back in return.

- Luke 6:38

### EXPENSES AND OBLIGATIONS

We have expenses and obligations which will require using our small resources. This includes a \$60,135 outstanding loan for the Westminster Hall roof. The group voted to explore insurance help. We’ll keep you posted.

In the meantime, the Hall needs trash removal, painting, and deep cleaning left by the Community Play School. The group will ask folks from the Presbyterian Church of Ghana to help and work with us in consideration of some rent relief. We cannot begin until the end of June when our contract with the school is finished. Then, it’s dumpster time! We’ll need “all hands on deck.” We’ll tell you when the celebration of “dumpster days” will be held.

### THE MANSE

The decision was unanimous to sell the manse. We need the funds. First, a survey will separate the manse from church property. The terms of sale are “as is.” The church will not carry any contract. Sale funds will greatly help.

### WESTMINSTER HALL

The building is a wonderful asset. Many ideas were thrown around regarding its creative use. One that gained traction: What if Westminster Hall became the location of a Community Center for the Hamilton neighborhood?

Of course, there are many steps before Community Center is realized, but the Session/Trustees are in conversation.

The excitement is that Hamilton Presbyterian Church would be open to new forms of ministry. We would make an indelible contribution to the community that would also mean life and new mission for our congregation.

## THE FLAGS ARE FLYING!

Our Goal: that Hamilton Church will be seen as a presence in the neighborhood. Green Flags are now out, the color of the Season after Pentecost. If your neighbors should ask, use this as an opportunity to talk about Hamilton.

## CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!



Our congregation has a new website to “show off Hamilton.” There always adjustments and corrections in a website. If you see some needed adjustments, please call the Church Office, you may get the recording, but we’ll receive the message,

Each week, we add new material including The Beacon and the Resources and Reflection page.

Check us out at: [www.hamilton-pres.org](http://www.hamilton-pres.org)



Some  
Thoughts  
from Jack

If I were preaching, I might be saying something like this.

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I’ve had some “defining experiences” in my life. Perhaps this is true for you as well. These are times when the accepted, familiar, comfortable, thought processes and assumptions, are shaken to the core.

These defining experiences present us with a critical decision: do we listen to them, learn from them, let them impact who we are ... or do we decide to go on as usual?

Check out Luke 17. Jesus heals 10 lepers – surely a defining experience for them. It’s curious, nine of the cured decide to return to the life leprosy had forced them to abandon. Eager they were to be back to what they knew. Only one turned to Jesus with “Thank You.” Yep, only one. And worse yet, the guy was a hated Samaritan (you can’t expect much from *them*.)

One of my defining experiences came during college. I worked in Watts, that charged area of Los Angeles that erupted in riots in 1965. By that year, I was in seminary, but on the TV, I saw people I am sure I knew.

During my Watts time, I was a college intern at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on Compton Blvd. On a Sunday morning, standing with the pastor, the Rev. Bill Malbon, I was the only person not African American in the congregation. During the week, I was recreation director at the Watts Neighborhood House, a Presbyterian ministry within the same racial mix.

I learned a lot. At first, I was full of wisdom (college students are that way), but as I got to know people, I listened more and more. Tough as it was, at times I even stopped talking altogether. Watts helped me discover I was full of assumptions that bore no relationship to the lives lived in that area. And by extension, it probably true for people in Baltimore as well. I am still thankful for this experience.

For years, just before The Benediction, I have used this Charge to close a worship service:

“Go forth into the world in peace;  
be of good cheer; hold fast to that which is  
good; render no person evil for evil; strengthen  
the fainthearted; support the weak; help the  
afflicted; honor all persons; love and serve the  
Lord,  
Rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Even though it is easy to get knee-deep in theological discussions, for me this has become the heart of Gospel, living as Jesus directs. At the end of worship, I think to myself, “Sure, we might miss a lot of things, but if we can apply these yardsticks to our Christian living, arrogance can turn to listening, support, help – ingredients helping good to emerge.”

I find myself thinking and praying for these yardsticks to become active in our national life. Too clearly, the opposite is present. The pain of racism is a major issue ... and I fear more pervasive than we would like to believe. Maybe, just maybe, we who are Christian can work for the good to emerge. It can happen.

Nothing changes if we don't change anything. Christianity is an earthy religion. We focus on creating, upholding, honoring persons. We work for inclusion. We build an enduring listening community. We are all children of God.

Howard Thurman wrote:

Our little lives, our big problems -  
these we place upon Your altar!  
Pour out upon us whatever our spirits need  
of shock, of life, of release,  
That we may find strength for these days -  
Courage and hope for tomorrow.  
In confidence we rest in Your sustaining grace  
Which makes possible  
triumph in defeat, gain in loss, and love in hate.  
We rejoice this day to say:  
Our little lives, our big problems -  
these we place upon Your altar!