

THE HERALD



BROWN MEMORIAL
WOODBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Congregation of the



Dear Members and Friends,

While I look forward to Christmas and Easter as you do, I also look forward to the opportunity each year that the church puts before me to think about stewardship. As I begin to think about stewardship and my own life, I want to invite you to join me in this time of prayerful consideration of how we can respond more fully to the God who raised Jesus from the dead for all of us.

There are many reasons to support the work of the church. Perhaps the least important reason, but the one most often mentioned, is to give sacrificially because the church budget needs to be “met”. Years of deficit spending does imperil a congregation’s future, and thus our giving has a direct impact on the work of the church. However, in my opinion giving so that a church’s expenditures are covered is the least important reason to consider what we give. Far more compelling for me are the following reasons to give:

1. I give because of gratitude for what God has given to us. Through God’s love and God’s commitment to creation we have a future, we can experience wholeness, we have been freed from the power of sin and have the promise of the resurrection. Since grateful people respond with acts that demonstrate that gratitude, I give as a way of acknowledging God’s care and saying “thank you” for what God has given to me and to us all.

2. I give to show my gratitude because I believe that ultimately gratitude changes everything. Acts of gratitude enable those who are hungry to have food, those who are lonely to find companionship, those who are hurting to feel God’s embrace through acts of caring by us. And, if my gratitude changes the world, perhaps it also changes me – enabling me to see more clearly how God is active in my life and in the world around us.

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3. I give because I promised to do so. One of the questions we answer when we join the church is, “Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts, your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?”. Believing that the promises we make when we join the church to support it are sacred vows, on par with the vows we make when we unite in marriage, I desire to live out that commitment and so support the church with my money, my time, and my energy.
4. I give to the church because of how the worship, relationships, spiritual formation activities and fellowship of the church has made a difference in who I am. Knowing the difference the church has made in my life, I give so that it can continue to be a source of vibrant worship, and so that it can continue to provide opportunities for me and for others to grow in faith.
5. I give as an expression of my trust in God’s care for me and as a recognition that I am more than the sum of my assets. In like manner, I give because it seems clear to me that what I do with my money and my relationship to it may be the most powerful statement of faith I will ever make.

Like you, when I fill out my pledge card in a few weeks to make a commitment to Brown Woodbrook, I will remember that our church is on the verge of major change. But that recognition doesn’t change the promises I made when I joined the church; it doesn’t take away my gratitude for what God has given me; it doesn’t take away the realization of how my life has been impacted by the church of my childhood or the churches of my adulthood; it doesn’t change my desire to let even my checking account bear witness to my trust in God’s care; it doesn’t take away my intention to let my life be a living witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ.

Soon we will all be asked to make a financial commitment for the next 12 months. On behalf of the Session of the church, I am asking you to consider prayerfully your commitment.

In Christ’s service,

Randy

THE PATH FORWARD

On April 2, the Session shared with you the outcome of a significant discernment process regarding the future of our congregation. A very significant portion of our active membership attended that meeting and subsequently a letter was mailed to all members and regular visitors describing the likely path forward for our congregation. As we move toward a possible merger with Govans Presbyterian Church, please hold the leadership of both Brown Woodbrook and Govans in your thoughts and prayers. Many of you have a lot of questions about the specifics of a merger plan and what the united church might look like. While there is no answer yet to some of your questions, be assured that as holy conversations between the leadership of both congregations continue, more answers will emerge.

The Session also shared with you that it is very likely that the Weekday School will be moving to St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Owings Mills in 2018. This new location and new church sponsorship holds exciting possibilities for the Weekday School’s future and enables the Weekday School to be one of the legacies that this congregation leaves in the world.

WEEKDAY SCHOOL

We celebrated Earth Day on Saturday, April 22 at Brown Memorial Weekday School. Many families attended the event despite the damp and rainy weather. This celebration included many fun activities for children. We made seed bombs, sun catchers and the parents association provided tasty snacks for everyone.

The morning also included a few projects to enhance the playground. Parents, teachers, BMWS children and student volunteers from Towson State helped spread mulch in the gardens and on the hill trails. This work required a lot of support from many people and we were so appreciative of all the help we received. The gardens have become such a big focus of our program. BMWS children enjoy picking and eating the vegetables we grow. Lettuce, tomatoes and beans are just a few of the treats that are eaten at morning snack. In addition to the vegetable garden, we have a beautiful flower garden. During the spring, the flowers attract all kinds of insects and butterflies for the children to discover. We are so thankful for all the people who came out to help us celebrate this special day.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS

EASTER EGG HUNT

Easter Sunday morning, our members were pleased to see the front yard, the prayer garden and the columbarium swarming with children carrying baskets in search of eggs. It didn't take the eleven children from two to ten years of age very long to locate fourteen dozen eggs that had been filled with stickers, candy and small toys. It was delightful to look around the Lobby before church started and see family groups as children opened their eggs. This is the first time in many years that we had a hunt on Easter morning. Thanks go to the volunteers who provided the filling for the eggs and showed up early to help the "Easter Bunny" hide all those eggs.

LOOKING FORWARD

We are looking forward to June 11 when we expect to host families from Govans Presbyterian Church joining us in worship and activities that morning. The future holds many changes for our families. But, we are excited to make new friends and are challenged by the task ahead of us.

If you have any suggestions of ways to celebrate our life together as we move to new experiences, you are invited to share your ideas with the members of the Spiritual Growth and Nurture and Outreach Teams. We will be planning events through the balance of this year.

THANK YOU

A special THANK YOU to the team of volunteers who teach each week and lead the Time For All God's Children. They make sure we are ready each week with activities and lessons for children. Soon we will be setting up the schedule for the summer, with activities in the Parlor for children who come during summer Sundays. Thank you to Linda Bluth, Edie Cleaves, Bobbie Cook, Sarah Crawley, Debby Hughey, Tanya Morrel, Helena Saunders, Katherine Stanka, Elena Storey, Jocelyn Taylor, Elsie Wong and Maria Wong.

BOOKENDS

The next gathering is Friday, May 12 at 10 am in the Library. The group will discuss the book *The Rosie Project: A Novel* by Graeme Samson. This is a story of a college professor with Asperger's Syndrome and his scientific plan to find a wife. Join us in our discussion of the book and a discussion of books to read next season.

**BROWN MEMORIAL WOODBROOK
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

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Herald

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BROWN MEMORIAL WOODBROOK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CORE VALUES

We commit to living out God's love through:

- Compassion
- Learning
- Inclusion
- Faith

VISION

In five years God will see us

- 1) welcoming all God's children;
- 2) sharing Christ's love with others;
- 3) intentionally and actively building our faith to understand God's purpose for us;
- 4) using our physical resources sustainably to honor God; and
- 5) celebrating God's love with abandon.

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