

## **FROM PASTOR MARC's DESK**

Last month, Candace Crist and I had the distinct pleasure of joining three youth delegates from our church (Jens Bartel, Zeke Groom, and Eli Walter) at the 2019 Presbyterian Youth Triennium at Purdue University.



For those of you who have never experienced Triennium before, we joined over 4,000 Presbyterian Youth and another 1,000 adult advisors from churches all over the country for a week of dynamic worship, engaging speakers, great recreational activities, and small group discussions with youth and adult leaders from across the country!

This year's theme is "Here's My Heart," which comes from the lyrics of the beloved hymn, "Come Thou Fount." *Here's my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above.* Over the past week, I learned a few things about this wonderful hymn. Robert Robinson did not have an easy life. Robinson's life was filled with seasons of devout faith, spiritual highs, and impassioned religious ecstasy. He was even ordained as a Christian minister during which time he wrote this beloved hymn. However, his life was also filled with just as many seasons of suffering and sorrow, doubts and disillusionment. He abandoned his faith altogether before finally

finding his way back to it again. Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever experienced similar seasons in your own life? I know I have. As I re-read the lyrics to Robinson's hymn, I noticed several hints and references throughout the lyrics: "Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God...prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love..."

It is in that moment that Robinson wrote the words that would become the theme to this year's 2019 Youth Triennium: "Here's my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above." Robinson believed in a God who was big enough to receive the fullness of who he was: all his joy, and all his pain, all of his faith, and all of his doubts. When Robinson offered himself to the presence of his Lord, he let go of the more polished, idealized version of himself and simply said, "Here's my heart, Lord. Take, and seal it" with the faith that God would receive his life in love.



This is what I hope the Church can be: a place where we can offer our own hearts and bring all of who we are into the presence of God. Whether we are at big youth conferences like Triennium or right here in our day-to-day lives at home in Oxford, I dream that the Church can be a community where we are received in love just as we are because it is God who has

received us first. It was the dream that Robinson imagined when he wrote that beloved hymn and the dream that finally brought him home. Maybe that can be our dream, too.

Thank you all for the gift of your support of our youth and family ministries here at Oxford Presbyterian Church, and thanks be to God!