

**First Presbyterian Church**  
**Southampton, New York**  
*“The Wise Guys in the White Church”*

**Proverbs 1: 20 – 33**

**September 11, 2016**

So here we are... September 11<sup>th</sup>, the first Sunday of another new church year! A lot of exciting programs are in place... many great opportunities for spiritual growth are on the horizon... our hopes are high and our trust is strong that God's going to wonderfully bless us in the twelve months ahead! Our choir is back in business. Our Sunday school teachers have been properly blessed and commissioned. Our youth program will get fired up and rolling in a few more weeks. Everything is wrapped, revved-up, and ready for First Presbyterian to make a major meaningful difference for the sake of Jesus Christ in the year which is before us.

All that's left for us to do, is to come up with a catchy little theme or slogan to describe what we hope to accomplish in the coming church year. You know, something creative that will clearly express what we want to *do*, and who we want to *be*, as we forge ahead into 2017. Like, for example, *“The Merry Ministers of Main Street!”* That certainly makes us sound fun, and joyous, and appealing! And, really, who wouldn't want to be part of a church like that? But, no... I think we want to accomplish more this year than just having fun and making everyone feel good about themselves. So that's probably not going to work.

Okay, then how about *“The Straight-Laced Saints of Southampton!”* Now, that really emphasizes our commitment, our dedication, and our single-minded determination that our mission and ministry be fully accomplished. But, I don't know... it may sound just a wee bit severe, don't you think? A little grim and joyless, maybe? And, really, who wants to be known as being “straight-laced” in this day and age... even if it does start with an “S” like Southampton. So, that one's probably not going to work too well either.

Hey, what about trying to be *“The Most Meaningful Messengers on Meeting House Lane!”* Now that sounds pretty relevant, pretty hip, pretty new and improved and thoroughly up to date! Yeah, but, I don't know... it also sounds a little bit like the focus of attention is all on *us*. As if my needs, my concerns, my problems, and my desires were at the top of the list of priorities... and taking care of ourselves was the main order of the day. Which wouldn't be all wrong, of course. I mean, obviously, meeting our own needs and spiritual concerns is always an important part of any church's overall mission and ministry. I just don't know if we want to make that the overall focal point of the new church year. So that idea's not going to work so good either.

Hmmm... maybe we could go with “The Pleasingest Presbys in Town!” Or, “The Kooky Calvinists on the Corner!” Or, “The Home of Potluck Paradise!” All of *those* titles tell a little bit of the story of who we are, and what we stand for as the First Presbyterian church family. But I don't think that any of them capture the whole essence of what we hope to do in the rest of 2016 and beyond.

But, you know, I just might have one that *will* work for us... something that will be the perfect goal for us to try to live up to this year. And that is, as a church family, we should make the effort to be *“The Wise Guys in the White Church!”* Yeah, *“The Wise Guys... in the White Church!”* Or, “wise gals” for all you ladies out there! I submit that, in order to be faithful to Christ, we should spend the next year doing our best to be “wise guys.”

And not “wise guys” in the sense of being smug, smart-aleck, or sarcastic... we don’t want to be the “wiseacres” in the white church. No, I mean “wise” in the sense of being godly, and holy, and earnestly open-hearted to the presence, and power, and love of God which comes to us in our Lord Jesus Christ. I’m talking about being wise as the writer of Proverbs has defined wisdom... in our Scripture lesson for this morning.

According to our text, to be truly *wise* is to listen to the Word of God... and then to go out and live by what we hear. It’s to do our best to make God’s way our own way... to allow the things that matter to Him, to matter to us as well. It’s to seek the meaning and purpose of our life in the standards and values of heaven... rather than the standards and values of the world, which so often lead to shipwreck and despair.

From the point of view of Proverbs, to be in touch with godly wisdom is to know the fullness of life that our Lord intends for us. And it’s to keep our hearts and minds open to the good that God would do us... *personally*, as individual Christians; and *corporately*, as a church family seeking to live out God’s will in our community. Listen again to what our lesson has to say:

*“Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech: ‘How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you.’*

*“For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.”*

In other words, our Heavenly Father desires to share His thoughts with us... it’s His good pleasure to help us understand His word and His will. And as we make our hearts and our minds available to Him... as we grant Him access to the busy, stressful, preoccupied experience that is our daily life... it’s *then* that we find peace, and hope, and joy which nothing in life or death will ever be able to take away from us. It’s then that our own life, becomes a reflection of His life... and we find ourselves being on the same page as our Heavenly Father, more and more each day.

And *that*, according to Proverbs, is what it means to be a true, bona fide, honest-to-goodness, “wise guy.” Wise enough to know the difference between God’s will and my own self-absorbed desires. Wise enough to realize that our Father always wants what’s best for us. Wise enough to take the advice of St. Augustine, and allow “our restless hearts to find their rest in God.” Hey, if we can make progress toward a goal like *that* in the coming church year... then I’d say we’re definitely on the right track. The track that leads to spiritual growth... and mature Christian faith... and a life of faithful discipleship that will really make a difference.

So, what do you say? You ready to be a “wise guy” this year? A “wise gal?” Are you ready to take some positive steps to grow in your faith where you know you need to grow? Are you ready to open the door of your heart just a teensy bit wider... so that Jesus can squeeze His foot in there, and make a bigger impact on your life?

If so, then I’m telling you... this is going to be one exciting year! This is going to be a year that changes your life... and the life of this whole church family. This is going to be a year in which Almighty God becomes more real to you than He ever has before... and you will walk in His love, wherever your life might take you.

“The Wise Guys in the White Church...” that’s who we are! That’s *what* we are! This year... next year... every year! In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen!