February 2021

A Monthly Update in the Life of our Church

CONTACT

How then shall we faithful respond to ...

The Capitol riots, Covid, poverty, perils, hope and a call for civility?

The Lord tests the righteous, but God's soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence." - Psalm 11:5

I cried bitterly Jan. 6 when throngs of violent protestors ran amok at the U.S. Capitol after a speech by President Trump. I rejoiced mightily at our Jan. 3 worship when we marked the arrival of The Magi at the child Jesus' home.

I listened intently when President Joseph R. Biden took the oath of office Jan. 20 and called for unity.

I reflected mournfully when I heard Jan. 19 that the nation's Covid death toll passed 400,000.

I worried deeply about global warming when the thermometer hit 53 F in Harrisburg on Jan. 4.

And I kept reminding myself to pray frequently during the first three weeks of January 2021.

Translate: The new year has brought a tsunami of events, changes, challenges and feelings. When will things calm down?

The world is changing, but our God is constant. Can we hold steady in our faith when it can feel like the earth is shifting beneath our feet?

Realizing that we all must balance our secular lives with our spiritual ones, I keep thinking anew of Jesus' response to the Pharisees asking him a trick question:

"Rabbi, is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor or not?" – Mat 22: 17 And Jesus's response: "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are his and to God the things that are God's." – Mat 22: 21

Translate: Balance your duties to God with your duties to city, state and nation. Easier said than done! How you decide to navigate these two worlds probably depends a lot on your upbringing. How much of a role did religion, church and faith play in your life growing up?

Did you go to church regularly; did your family pray consistently; did your parents, grandparents or relatives talk of religion and faith? How much did they talk about politics, media content, popular entertainment, public behavior and other facets of life?

Did your parents, pastor or perhaps a friend take a strong moral stand on an issue that unfolded in the public arena?

I distinctly recall my mother shunning Frank Sinatra and Eddie Fisher because they had disrespected their wives.

But how much attention have you paid to Jesus' advice about honoring God and honoring government?

If you have heard me preach, you know I avoid partisan stands. But I do ask questions about how others behave and act.

So how do we people of faith respond to political, cultural and other newsworthy events in our With few exceptions, I believe we mostly ignore them in worship. Yes, we pray for those who have died. But we avoid topics we consider controversial or divisive. Most mainline denominations – and that includes UCC - steer a wide berth from talking about social ills, issues and problems in any great detail.

Revisiting the Scripture about rendering onto Ceasar the things that are Caesar's, we interpret that as Jesus' advice to overlook or ignore secular events. Is it really, though? Yes, we do support Meals on Wheels, Love INC, AA groups and other charity or advocacy groups or efforts. But is God calling us to closer work with such folks?

Yes something shifted in me when I saw destructive mobs coursing through Congress Some were intent on capturing and harming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence.

And to hear legislators refer to Congress as "Our Temple of Democracy" made me ask myself: "How then do we respond?"

Other than to pray, I don't have an answer now. I invite Redeemer, leadership and all of you to ponder that question prayerfully. How then do we respond to events unfolding at breakneck speed?

Blessings, Pastor Thomas W. Caruso Interim Minister





Leadership Team Update by Kim Merkert, Chair

The Leadership Team met on January 14 for its regular monthly meeting. After our opening activities, we discussed the Treasurer's Report. We built on last month's conversation of offering support to the Treasurer so that all the financial responsibility of the church does not fall on one person's shoulders. To begin this process, the Leadership Team officers will be meeting with the Treasurer of Penn Central Conference to discuss how Redeemer currently operates and learn some ideas that we can consider implementing going forward. We hope to have a team of people that can share the financial duties of the church.

In tandem with adding support to the Treasurer role, we will also focus attention this year on conducting a financial audit. Leadership Team looked over a list of services that the auditor provides. Kim Merkert and Lorna Davis, as chair and vice-chair, will meet to discuss the list in more detail and begin planning what services will be included in Redeemer's audit. The audit will be scheduled for some time after Easter.

Kim met with Dr. Marisa from the conference to discuss Conflict Resolution and the structure of Redeemer's newly formed Pastoral Relations Committee. Dr. Marisa has offered to meet with the Leadership Team to discuss Conflict Resolution and provided resources about Pastoral Relations Committees in general. More information on these topics will be provided as available.

Pastor Tom continues to coordinate communication with members who are unable to attend church currently, to keep them from feeling isolated. He also expressed thanks for everyone's participation in worship from All Saints' Day through Epiphany.

Even though some of our observances were a bit different than previous years, due to COVID-19, we were able to continue to praise God in community. We are thankful to be able to keep our church doors open to our church community and building use partners. Jorja has been keeping our office humming along smoothly. She is learning how to administer the web site and will soon take over that responsibility as well. We thank George Kapp for taking care of the web site up to this point and look forward to him continuing to provide pictures and other content for the web site.

Looking forward, we will be re-writing our very outdated Mission Statement from 1986, as was recommended last year by Rev. Nora Foust from the conference. I hope this can be a project we take on together as a congregation, in a Covid-friendly, socially distanced way, rather than by a committee of a few people. The small seeds to begin this work were found in the book that our book study group just completed.

As part of this process, we will also think about our profile and who we are as a church, as well as to whom we hope to minister in the future and how we can communicate our message to the community. During these trying times, we hope Redeemer can offer spiritual support and hope to people in the community who desperately seek it.

The search committee had a Zoom interview with our second prospective settled pastor candidate. We have some follow up questions and will continue the interview in an upcoming Zoom meeting.

The meeting was adjourned with the Lord's Prayer. Our next Leadership Team meeting will be held on Thursday, Feb., at 7pm. As always, please reach out to the Leadership Team if you have any questions, comments, or concerns.

Respectfully submitted, Kim Merkert Leadership Team Chair



Commentary: Black History Month: Why it still matters.

by Bentley deBardelaben-Phillips | published on Feb 22, 2018

There is an African proverb that states, "If the lions do not write their own history, then the hunters will get all the credit." Simply stated, it is important for Black people to tell our truths, our stories, our histories. We can never forget.



Black History Month has come around once more. It was officially recognized in 1976 by President Ford during a bicentennial celebration in which he urged all Americans to take the time to learn of the many contributions Black people offered to the strength and progress of this country.

This is a time to remember our collective gifts and to recommit to speaking of our triumphs. Growing up during the racial turbulence of the 1960s, and Black liberation movement of the 1970s, I can remember the joy and esteem



expressed by members of my family as federal and state laws were being challenged and changed for the betterment of Black lives. "Black power!" was shouted with pride as folk began telling our stories.

That theme and phrase permeated music, movies, and magazine covers. It was something felt in Black barber and beauty shops, as well as Black churches. Some

Blacks began traveling to Africa as a way to learn of and connect to our collective heritage. Even more began wearing African tribal inspired clothing. Black women and men began sporting afros, also known as "naturals." Back then, Black pride was electrifying! Frankly, it was so palpable you could feel it in the air walking down the streets in our communities.

At that same time *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* was written by Alex Haley and adapted as a miniseries for television in 1977. This was significant in many ways. It actually broke many television records for viewership, and it reminded us why representation in popular culture matters. No longer were we simply a people whose North American enslavement had defined them. We were more than dark skinned, we were beautiful. This was an amazing period in time. Black people had embraced that we were somebody!

Our tradition of celebrating the accomplishment of the Black community during a single month does not come without criticism. Some question whether it would be more befitting to integrate the successes of Black leaders into our mainstream educational system throughout the year. Others believe that this approach simplifies complex historical realities. Regardless of how the contributions of Black people are uplifted, these stories must be told.

To that end, the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations has declared 2015-2024 to be the International Decade for People of African Descent. In proclaiming this Decade, the international community is recognizing "that people of African descent represent a distinct group whose human rights must be promoted and protected."

Even Disney-Marvel seems to be exploring this concept with their newest release of a superhero blockbuster movie rooted in black culture. "Black Panther" is an amazingly powerful film. Truth be told, I'm still a little surprised that Hollywood supported such a project. But I think its import cannot be overstated in a time when people might question whether Black History Month is still relevant or necessary.

There is an African proverb that states, "If the lions do not write their own history, then the hunters will get all the credit." Simply stated, it is important for Black people to tell our truths, our stories, our histories. We can never forget.

Rev. Dr. Bentley deBardelaben is the Executive Associate for Justice and Local Church Ministries of the United Church of Christ.



UCC well represented at virtual inaugural prayer breakfast

by <u>Connie Larkman</u> | published on Jan 21, 2021

It's a tradition dating back to the first inauguration of President George Washington.

In 2021 at the Presidential Inaugural Prayer Service, the United Church of Christ was represented well.

The Thursday service at Washington National Cathedral had to be held virtually this year because of the pandemic. Yet the 10 a.m. event, a day after Biden's inauguration, was richly spiritual, with faith leaders from many traditions.

"The National Prayer Service is an important tradition for our nation and for President Biden, who has always been a man guided deeply by his faith," said Presidential Inaugural Committee CEO and Delaware State University President Tony Allen.

"The program (today) honors the role of faith in our country, and provides a moment to reflect on the unprecedented challenges we face, as we enter this new American chapter of healing to beat the pandemic, build back our economy better, and unify our country."

The service, which went well over an hour, offered prayers, readings, blessings, and hymns from 34 interfaith leaders. UCC pastors and UCC staff who participated in the breakfast included:

- **Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III**, senior pastor of Trinity UCC, Chicago, was one of four voices offering prayers for those who govern.
- The UCC's **Barbara Satin**, faith work director at the National LGBTQ Task Force in Minneapolis, was one of six offering prayers for those who serve.
- The **Rev. Yvette Flunder**, presiding bishop of the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries, UCC, Oakland, Calif., was one of seven leaders sharing prayers for the people of the nation.

The article in its entirety can be found at UCC well represented at virtual inaugural prayer breakfast - United Church of Christ

UCC National Prayer Vigil calls people together after riots at US Capitol By Connie Larkman

January 7, 2021

Prayers for calm, for democracy, for the soul of the nation were lifted up Wednesday evening across the United Church of Christ after a defiant mob of pro-Trump terrorists stormed the U.S. Capitol. Rioters breached the floor of the Senate and House of Representatives on Jan. 6 and stopped the counting of electoral votes to certify Joe Biden as the next president.

Congregations, conferences, and national ministries held a number of vigils to give people an opportunity to collectively grieve the insurrection aimed at the blocking the transfer of power.

The Rev. Traci Blackmon, associate general minister, welcomed more than 1,000 participants to a Zoom service at 7:30 pm, just hours after Washington D.C. was locked down — "something," she said, "we thought we would never see as the United States of America. ...

People all over the world were exposed what happens when racism and hatred go unchecked." She opened with a song learned from her great grandmother, singing, "In thee, O God, we place our trust ... In thee, O God, we seek our peace ... We pray, O God, to heal your land ... Be with us, O God, we need your love."

The Rev. Gordon Rankin, chair of the Council of Conference Ministers, shared Psalm 91, "a psalm of protection." He prayed for those who work and serve in Washington, D.C., and for those who call it home. "God's faithfulness is a shield and a buckler," he said. "You have made the Lord your refuge."

Noting this violence took place on the feast of the Epiphany, Yvette Wynn, chair of the UCC Board said, "It is in times like these we are called to be the church. We have to come together as God's people to witness and pray." In his pastoral address, General Minister and President John Dorhauer spoke with both a heavy and hopeful heart about what he and the rest of the country witnessed Jan. 6 — heavy with the persistence of evil, and hopeful in the enduring love of Jesus.

"I knew in my bones what I was watching was evil, embodied in white supremacists. White vigilantes breaching security lines ... evil has come to America," he said. "Evil exists, evil persists, we will name it — but it cannot stop the power of love." He called on the group to resist evil and "practice the art of love that leads to justice for all."

The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, associate general minister, then brought the light to the vigil, inviting all present to light candles and add their prayers and intentions to the chat. "This moment gathers us across borders and boundaries," she said, as she lit candles and called for justice. "God is with us tonight as we join our hearts in prayer." She prayed for healing, for the land, for lawmakers and for the people who died in the melee at the Capitol.

Before the benediction by the Rev. Cameron Barr, senior pastor of the United Church of Chapel Hill, Matthew Cleaver sang a hauntingly beautiful rendition of the hymn "Abide With Me," by Henry Francis Lyte.

"Today's violence was possible because the truth has become murky to us," Barr said. "Grant that the light of truth will show us the way. We are called to walk in that light."

As the service concluded with a choral performance of "I Believe" performed remotely by Christ Church Choir of Summit N.J., members of Congress went back to work on the electoral vote count at the Capitol, as police in riot gear stood watch.

Connie Larkman is the Managing Editor & News Director of the United Church of Christ, Cleveland, OH



"You Lord keep my lamp burning, my God turns my darkness into light." Psalm 18:28

Members and friends of PCC:

Barbara Brown Taylor writes in *Time* magazine "darkness is shorthand for anything that scares me - that I want no part of - either because I am sure that I do not have the resources to survive it or because I do not want to find out." As a little girl I remember being very afraid of the dark. I would dread going to bed because I knew that until I finally fell asleep, I was in a state of pure terror. Many nights I would barricade myself in my bed by placing all of my stuffed animals around the perimeter of my bed to protect me from whatever I feared would get me as I slept. Looking back, I wonder what Winnie the Pooh or Snoopy would have done to the dreadful Boogieman.

2020 has been our modern-day Boogieman. It has been a year filled with unrest and burdens. Not regular burdens that we have experienced before. The burdens of 2020 are monumental. The weariness that has entered many of our hearts has become almost unbearable, leaving us hopeless and in the dark.

Although many of us prayed for better things to happen in 2021, the hope of that has not started off well with the atrocity that happened last week at our Capitol. Where is the hope? Where is the light in the darkness?

King David experienced the darkness when he was being hunted by Saul. I can only imagine that he was fearful. But David placed his confidence in God, that God would preserve his life. God turned David's darkness into one of light.

Light symbolizes life and goodness. God can change our fears, our uncertainties, our darkest times into joy, hope and light.

When life seems so out of control, when I am at my darkest point, I remember these words of Psalmist and I can finally take a deep breath because I know that God can turn my situation that has taken my into the darkness of the pit and shine His light so that I can see the hope again. On Sunday as my church's prelude, I played a song by country singer John Rich called <u>Earth to</u> <u>God</u>. The chorus words are:

"We need your light; we need your love, To heal the world you made, And save us now in our darkest hour, with your amazing grace. Earth to God."

When the prelude ended, I looked at the little squares on the screen and I saw that almost all the congregants were glued to their screens. I believe that the reason for their intense attentiveness was because these lyrics were exactly what every single person on the Zoom feed had been thinking, praying or hoping for in the midst of what has happened to our world in the last year.

This verse has been my saving grace lately. I have placed it on a post-it-note to my bathroom mirror to remind me that God is the light that can see me through the darkest times of my life. God keeps my lamp burning when I don't have any flame left in me. My prayer is that this Psalm can give you the peace that it has given me. Place a post-it-note somewhere to remind you that God will keep your flame aglow, too. May it be so.

Many blessings,

Ronnette

Rev. Dr. Ronnette Comfort-Butler Coordinator of Care to Clergy and Clergy Families Penn Central Conference





Pay Attention!

A Black Preacher was Elected as the Newest Senator from Georgia Jan. 6

1/18/211

Dr. David Rowe, interim president Lancaster Theological Seminary



On January 6, the day when the Confederate battle flag was flown in the Capitol by a mob of insurrectionists, media outlets confirmed that the Rev. Raphael Warnock, pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta since 2005, had been elected as the first Black person to represent Georgia in the United States Senate. The special election was held the day before.

This result of a free and fair election diversified the voice of an increasingly diverse state, and expanded the voices participating in the political discourse of a nation that needs to grapple with difference rather than fight over it.

Don't be distracted by the obviously illegal, unpatriotic, hateful expressions of exhibitionists who wanted you to notice them storming the Capitol. They don't want the awesome responsibility that comes with occupying the Capitol. Holding a society together takes more than a riot. It is hard work.

While the congregation and leaders of Ebenezer Baptist Church have a long history of actively participating in public discourse, many churches – congregations and denominations – have retreated into a notion of religion as private.

In the U.S., we have confused

protections against establishing a state religion with discomfort stirred by living out our faith publicly. But Georgia would not be sending Rev. Warnock to Washington were it not for ministers and believers across the state motivated and organized by the daughter of preachers, Stacey Abrams, and other Georgia activists.

Progressive Christians are rightfully reluctant to see faith expressed in governmental policy, and we are right to recoil when we see red, white and blue banners for "Jesus 2020" on the steps of the Capitol. It is not a desire to mold the government into the image of our faith that should motivate us, it is the desire to work alongside government, corporations and schools to consistently remake our society for good.

Our democracy needs more than political parties and a strong economy to succeed. It also needs schools, colleges and universities that promote independent thought and the creation of knowledge, and it needs religious institutions that transcend the differences of the moment in order to differentiate the Transcendent from the moment.

As educators and as the church, we have our roles to play in helping people to think for

themselves and to make meaning with their lives. These are fundamentally communal activities that require us to do the hard work of building bridges and not walls, to engage people we'd rather ignore and to unite instead of resigning ourselves to division and hate.



The difference between marching on Washington and mobbing Washington is organizing around ideals vs. ideologies, suppressing impulses rather than giving in to them, practicing love for those it would be easier to hate, and preaching in public rather than only to pews.

It is easy to get distracted by the spectacle of the mob. But today, pay attention to what it really takes to steadily march toward the Beloved Community.





Beginning this month, CONTACT will feature a recipe submitted by a Redeemer member or friend. Each submission will include a brief history of the recipe whether it be a traditional family recipe, or a special one used for a special event, and a picture too! We all like pictures! This month's recipe is submitted by Annette Mastrangelo!

Cherry Cheesecake

STORY: My mother always made this for special occasions. When I was a little girl, I thought it was amazing and she must have spent hours making it! Turns out, as I began to cook, I also made this cheesecake and realized how incredibly easy it was yet so impressive at the same time! :) I just made this last year before the pandemic began and took a piece to the nursing home for my mom. She was so sweet enjoying each bite just like the scene from "Driving Miss Daisy" and I hoped she remembered how she once made that cheesecake for me.

Recipe

Ingredients:

- 1 package (8 oz) Phila Cream Cheese, softened
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tub (8 oz) Cool Whip Topping, thawed
- 1 ready-to-use graham cracker crumb crust (6 oz)
- 1 & 1/2 cup cherry pie filling

Instructions:

 Beat cream cheese and sugar in large bowl with whisk or mixer until well blended. Stir in Cool Whip.
 Spoon mixture into crust.

3. Refrigerate for 3 hours. Serve topped with cherry pie filling.



Annette's Cherry Cheesecake! Yum!



Soup for the Soul will meet for a **Wired Word discussion** on Monday, Feb. I, 2021 at 7pm in the sanctuary. All are welcome. Please wear a mask.

Our Lenten Book Study will begin on Monday, Feb. 22, 2021 at 7pm in the sanctuary, and will continue every Monday throughout Lent. We will read *Plenty Good Room* by Marilyn Thornton, available on Amazon for \$9.79 + tax.
We began reading this book last year but were interrupted by covid. We will begin again this year with Lesson 1. All are welcome. Please wear a mask.





February 2021

Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
February is Black History Month!	I 12 pm Nooner 7:30 pm OA	2 12 pm Nooner	3 12 pm Nooner 6:30 pm KISS AA	4 12 pm Nooner 12 pm Focused Prayer	5 12 pm Nooner 6:30 pm KISS AA	7:30 Sunrise AA 12 pm KISS AA
7 5 th Sunday after Epiphany 9:15 am Worship Communion B pm KISS	8 12 pm Nooner 7:30 pm OA	9 8:30 am Hershey Ministerium ZOOM 12 pm Nooner	10 12 pm Nooner 6:30 pm KISS AA	II I2 pm Nooner I2 pm Focused Prayer 7 pm LT	12 12 pm Nooner 6:30 pm KISS AA	I 7:30 Sunrise AA 12 pm KISS AA
. 14	15	16	17	18	19	2
Transfiguration Sunday 9: 5 am Worship 3 pm KISS 6:30 pm RA	President's Day 12 pm Nooner 7:30 pm OA	12 pm Nooner	Ash Wednesday (Recorded Service) 12 pm Nooner 6:30 pm KISS AA	 10 am Pastor Tom's Community of Practice 12 pm Nooner 12 pm Focused Prayer 	12 pm Nooner 6:30 pm KISS AA	7:30 Sunrise AA 12 pm KISS AA
21 I st Sunday in Lent 9:15 am Worship 3 pm KISS	22 12 pm Nooner 7:30 pm OA	23 12 pm Nooner	24 12 pm Nooner 6:30 pm KISS AA	25 12 pm Nooner 12 pm Focused Prayer	26 12 pm Nooner 6:30 pm KISS AA	2 7:30 Sunrise AA 12 pm KISS AA
28 Ind Sunday of Lent					******	

2nd Sunday of Lent 9:15 am Worship 3 pm KISS

Happy Anniversary to Wyatt & Melissa Harris Happy Birthday to Ann Bickelman, Charles Shaffer and Amy Mastrangelo



"Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man."



Proverbs 3:3-4 New International Version

Prayers for Healing for:

Randy Rupert, friend of Audrey & Matt Baker's, who is undergoing treatment for throat cancer

Mary Alice, who met Pastor Tom while walking along the Susquehanna River on Jan. 2, and who has relocated here from Virginia only to lose her job and break her leg *Keith Monaco*, friend of Mike Wojdylak, who lost his wife last year and now has Covid *Kemmy Himmelberger*, home after another episode with congestive heart failure *Charlie Goedken*, friend of George Kapp, as he begins stem cell treatment to restore his sight

Briana Cook, Susanne Cook's daughter in Lancaster, who has contracted Covid

Prayers for Comfort and Strength for:

Aaron & Nikki Rhodeen, a couple whose marriage Pastor Tom blessed in Connecticut, as they discern where best to relocate their family from the Houston area
Lois Wood, adjusting to life at Kindred Place Harrisburg and holidays without family
Ralph and Kathy Boyd, neighbors of Jan & Stong, who lost their son Curtis to Covid on Dec 30

Family of Donnie Herbst, family friend of Kim Merkert, who passed away on Jan. 5 *Dennis Umberger,* friend of George & Nancy Kapp, whose wife Cathy passed away on Jan. 9

Lynn Pelesier, former Redeemer Member, whose mother passed away from Covid Family of Robert Morgan, brother-in-law of Dick Conrad, who passed away on Jan. 8 Parents of Mackenzie Patrick Mulroy, friends of Jorja, and the families of two others who passed away on Jan. 9 in an automobile accident in West Hanover Township Family of Erma Phreaner, friend of George and Nancy Kapp, who passed away on Jan. 11

Prayers of Joy for:

Tokiko Kreiser, who celebrated her 90th birthday on Jan. 24

First responders, the medical community, and *our nation* as we continue to battle the Coronavirus, political strife, and social and racial injustice.







Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. **You** can take steps **today** to lower your risk of heart disease.

To help prevent heart disease, you can:

- Eat healthy.
- Get active.
- Stay at a healthy weight.
- Quit smoking and stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Drink alcohol only in moderation.
- Manage stress.

Am I at risk for heart disease?

Everyone is at risk for heart disease. But you are at higher risk for heart disease if you:

- Have high cholesterol or high blood pressure
- Smoke
- Are overweight or obese
- Don't get enough physical activity
- Don't eat a healthy diet

Your age and family history also affect your risk for heart disease. Your risk is higher if:

- You are a woman over age 55
- You are a man over age 45
- Your father or brother had heart disease before age 55
- Your mother or sister had heart disease before age 65

Care for your amazing heart.



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This month's issue is sponsored by JANE GALOZZI in memory of her husband Vincent.