



THE RACIAL EQUITY

TORCH

Volume 31, Issue 2, Fall 2020



COVID-19

And it's Impact on Communities of Color

GROW | TRANSFORM | EMPOWER | LEAD | DEVELOP



**A message from the director,
Rhashell D. Hunter**

Matthew 25: Ending Racism and White Supremacy

...when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you? ... Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.'

— Matthew 25:44b-45

When the world changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, people started connecting in a new way. The global coronavirus, that has kept us contained in our homes for months, is already reorienting church leaders and communities' relationships to the Church, to what it means to worship and engage in weekly Bible study through the use of technology, to the realization that the Church is the people and not just the buildings, to the Church's mission in the U.S. and around the world, and to ourselves.

One of our most pressing questions in the midst of this ever-changing world is: As many Presbyterians have woken to the fact that communities of color have been even further marginalized during the COVID-19 pandemic, what new ways of doing things will work to provide access to people of color? This pandemic has highlighted a lot of our nation's entrenched and systemic problems from racial inequities to economic injustice, to a lack of basic health care and education for all of God's people.

If ever there was a need for justice, it is now. If ever there was a need for inspiring, accountable governance and leadership, it is now. As churches recreate themselves and figure out how to be the Church in this new era, it is important to recognize that many people are hungry, unemployed, depressed, alone and sequestered. Some people of color, especially women, are not even safe in their own homes. Some are afraid to go out, even to jog or get exercise, and they have to choose pastel-colored face masks carefully for fear of being harmed when they go to the grocery store.

There is an African concept of "Ubuntu," which is roughly translated "I am because we are." It is a connected bond, a way of joining together that links our humanity. Matthew 25:31-46 encourages us to be compassionate, loving and connected people, calling us to actively engage in the world around us. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) directed the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor. You are invited to join in becoming a Matthew 25 Church by working on one or more of three focuses: (1) Building congregational vitality, (2) Dismantling structural racism, and (3) Eradicating systemic poverty.

This edition of the Racial Equity Torch shares stories about the impact of COVID-19 on people on the margins of society and on the Matthew 25 strategic direction. Sign up to become a Matthew 25 Church and take steps to become the hands and feet of Christ in the world, joining with others in creating a better church and a better world.

Save the Date

In response to COVID-19 and the PC(USA) staff travel ban, RE&WIM continues our ministry through our digital platforms.

Here is a listing of virtual events currently being planned. For more information, please contact the staff person listed next to the office.

AFRICAN INTERCULTURAL MINISTRIES OFFICE:
Princeton.Abaraoha@pcusa.org

December 10	APLA Check-in Gathering
December 15	African Coaches Network
December 16	APLA-DFW Gathering
January 14	APLA Check-in Gathering
February 11	APLA Check-in Gathering

KOREAN INTERCULTURAL CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT OFFICE: Moongil.Cho@pcusa.org

December 7-9	Eastern Korean American Presbytery
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Did You Know?

COVID-19 IN THE CHURCH

- ❖ 97% of PC(USA) congregations report doing church strictly online now.
- ❖ 60% of PC(USA) congregational leaders are struggling with technology.
- ❖ RE&WIM is offering technology training for PC(USA) churches of color impacted by COVID-19.
- ❖ Small existing PC(USA) congregations have reported attendance has dropped 21-31% (for churches with 26-100 average attendance).
- ❖ Many PC(USA) new worshiping community leaders report an increase in attendance in their online worship.
- ❖ Since the pandemic, attendance has increased for churches with over 100 typically in attendance. (This indicates that more visitors are flocking to larger churches for online worship. Also, pastors of small churches report encouraging their worshippers to visit other worship services).

(Source: Research Services of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), COVID-19 in the PC(USA) research project, May 2020)

On the front cover of each *Racial Equity Torch*, you will see our mantra: *Grow, Transform, Empower, Lead, and Develop*. The core ministry and the purpose of our work in the Intercultural Ministries and Support for Congregations of Color office is:

- **Racial Justice and Empowerment**
- **Leadership Development**, with a focus on developing leaders of color, women and young adults
- **Church Growth**, with a focus on new worshiping communities
- **Transformation** of existing congregations

Thus, our mantra is: *Grow, Transform, Empower, Lead and Develop*. Intercultural Ministries and Support for Congregations of Color offices *equip, connect, and inspire* Communities of color and new immigrant worshiping communities and develop and empower leaders of color and new immigrant leaders. The ministry area does this through training, coaching, resource development, leadership development institutes, networking, and providing grants to congregations, schools and colleges equipping communities of color, and leaders of color and new immigrant leaders. In Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries, we engage the church in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups, and we equip women for leadership in all ministries of the church.

‘When America gets a cold, the African American community gets pneumonia’

COVID-19’s impact on Black Presbyterian churches

by Gail Strange



Through the leadership of the Rev. Wayne Steele, Peace Presbyterian Church is very active in the Newburg community in Louisville and Mid-Kentucky Presbytery. (Contributed photo)

LOUISVILLE — It is said, “When America gets a cold, the African American community gets pneumonia.”

The COVID-19 pandemic is proving that to be true. As the virus spreads across the country, it appears that it is impacting African Americans at a disproportionately high rate. In hot spots like New York, Detroit, New Orleans, and Chicago, blacks are dying at alarmingly high rates.

According to American Public Media (APM) Research Lab, as of October 7, 2020 more than

210,000 Americans had died of COVID-19. Data about the racial background of those who died was available for only 35% of all deaths.

While Black Americans represent 13% of those living in places releasing data by race, they have suffered 32% of all known COVID-19 deaths in those places.

Key Findings from APM’s research from data through Sept. 15 showed that:

- Actual death rates from COVID-19 data (aggregated from all U.S. states and the District of Columbia) have reached new highs for all race groups:

- 1 in 1,020 Black Americans has died (or 97.9 deaths per 100,000)
- 1 in 1,220 Indigenous Americans has died (or 81.9 deaths per 100,000)
- 1 in 1,400 Pacific Islander Americans has died (or 71.5 deaths per 100,000)
- 1 in 1,540 Latino Americans has died (or 64.7 deaths per 100,000)
- 1 in 2,150 White Americans has died (or 46.6 deaths per 100,000)
- 1 in 2,470 Asian Americans has died (or 40.4 deaths per 100,000)

- Black Americans continue to experience the highest actual COVID-19 mortality rates nationwide—more than twice as high as the rate for Whites and Asians, who have the lowest actual rates.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to expose disparities and inequities in the nation’s health care system and socioeconomic status, but it also shines a spotlight on systemic racism and poverty, two issues that have plagued this country for centuries.

The coronavirus crisis is impacting every aspect of the black community including the church. For African Americans the church has been an integral part of life for centuries. The church has been key for American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS) through the inhumane treatment of slavery to Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the civil rights movement. ADOS have relied on their faith and their church to sustain them in perilous times.

Now in the age of the COVID-19 pandemic and social isolation, how is the black Presbyterian church faring?

The Rev. Wayne Steele, Jr. is the pastor of Peace Presbyterian Church, a church with nearly 100 members in Louisville, Kentucky. Steele has been the pastor for 20 of the 60 years of the church’s existence. “For our African American churches, we don’t have money that’s stored up,” Steele said. “We don’t have nice endowments set aside for rainy days.”

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The Rev. Dr. Cecil Corbett dies at 89

The Native American pastor and pioneer formerly headed the Cook College and Theological School

by Gail Strange



The Rev. Dr. Cecil Corbett (Contributed photo)

LOUISVILLE — The Rev. Dr. Cecil Corbett, a retired pastor and former president and chancellor at Cook College and Theological School in Tempe, Arizona, died on Sept. 7 of COVID-19. He was 89.

Corbett, a member of the Nez Perce Tribe, was a founding member of the Native American Theological Education Consortium, which later became the Native American Consulting Committee (NACC). The NACC is made up of 16 Native Americans who represent the synods of Alaska Northwest, Lakes and Prairies, Northeast, Pacific, Rocky Mountains, Southern California and Hawaii, Southwest and Sun. The committee provides representation for Native American members, churches and communities within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Even in retirement, Corbett most recently served as a member of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and as an itinerant preacher. He was a member of the Presbytery of the Inland

Northwest's Committee on Ministry and vice-chair of the Native Missions Consortium and Program Committee of the Vancouver School of Theology in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He previously served as vice-chair of the General Assembly Mission Council (now the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly) and chair of Racial Ethnic Ministries.

He belonged to First Indian Presbyterian Church in Kamiah, Idaho; Presbytery of Inland Northwest; and the Synod of Alaska-Northwest.

Corbett earned his bachelor's degree from Huron Community Campus in Huron, South Dakota, and his Master of Divinity from the University of Dubuque Theological Seminary.

The Rev. Irvin Porter, Associate for Native American Intercultural Congregational Support for the Presbyterian Mission Agency, said of Corbett, "Cecil has always been a mentor to me in ministry, committee work and certainly

since I became Associate for Native American Intercultural Congregational Support. Most recently, at a meeting of Native Presbyterian elders who have worked for the denomination, he shared stories and information which will help Native leaders who come after us."

"I was honored that he spoke at my ordination in 2003 about the importance of Native American ministers in the church," Porter said. "Cecil was my third cousin. His father, Frank, was my grandfather, Richard Moffett's first cousin. Cecil leaves not only an empty chair at the tables of family, friends and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), but in the many lives he has touched through his ministry and thoughtfulness."

Ruling Elder Elona Street-Stewart, Co-Moderator the 224th General Assembly (2020) and the first Native American to lead a synod, said that first as a committee member and then as the chair of a General Assembly committee, the Council on Church and Race, Corbett was very engaged and instrumental in resourcing and writing policy.

"Cecil invited me to join in some early work on environmental justice issues," said Street-Stewart. "Together we traveled into the Rocky Mountains area and down into the Southwest to look at the issues of uranium mine tailings and toxic waste sites on the reservations. From that we produced a report for the General Assembly.

"I traveled with him. I remember when we met with the Council of

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Navajo Nation suffers from one of the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the U.S.

Lack of social distancing capability and limited access to running water are contributors in the sprawling Four Corners reservation

by Gail Strange



Kathy Mitchell, a ruling elder at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Chinle, Arizona

LOUISVILLE — As scientists work at a furious pace to find answers and a vaccine for the COVID-19 virus, the death rate from the pandemic continues to take its toll on this country, having taken the lives of more than 200,000 people. Statistics tell us that in the U.S. this pandemic is killing black and brown people at a disproportionate rate in communities across the nation.

And, because this novel virus does not have a preference for where or whom it strikes, it appears to be taking a sizable toll on the rural Navajo Nation and its people. The Navajo Nation includes 27,425 square miles of land that extends into New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah, and borders Colorado, which makes Navajo the largest American Indian reservation in the United States.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census there are 332,129 Navajos identified as “Navajo tribal

grouping alone or in any combination” (Navajo in combination) in the U.S., with 173,677 people living on the Navajo Nation.

Of the more than \$2 trillion coronavirus federal stimulus package earlier this year, \$8 billion in relief — less than 4/10ths of 1 percent — went to the 574 federally recognized tribes. Tribal advocates say far more is needed to adequately protect indigenous people from the spread of the virus.

The Navajo Nation suffers from one of the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the nation. In the Navajo Nation and New Mexico taken together, 11% of the population is Native American, but almost one-third of the coronavirus cases are among Native Americans.

Jean Stowell, head of the Doctors Without Borders’ U.S. COVID-19 Response Team, told CBS News that the group has dispatched a team of nine to the hard-hit Navajo Nation because of the crisis unfolding there. The team consists of two physicians, three nurse/midwives, a water sanitation specialist, two logisticians and a health promoter who specializes in community health education.

“There are many situations in which we do not intervene in the United States, but this has a particular risk profile,” Stowell told CBS News. “Situational, the Native American communities are at a much higher risk for complications from COVID-19 and also from community spread

because they don’t have access to the variety of things that make it possible to self-isolate ... You can’t expect people to isolate if they have to drive 100 miles to get food and water.”

Like African Americans, many Native Americans suffer from a number of health issues like obesity, diabetes and cancer. These co-morbidity factors coupled with other issues like the lack of accessibility to proper health care, poor diets due to food deserts, adverse socio-economic policies and status, and centuries of systemic racism directly impact the death rate of Native Americans suffering from the coronavirus.

A key element of fighting the virus is hand washing and social distancing. Kathy Mitchell, a ruling elder at the Trinity Presbyterian Church in Chinle, Arizona, on the Navajo reservation and a third generation Presbyterian, says this is not possible for many Native Americans for a number of reasons. “It’s a lifestyle,” said Mitchell.

“Because we’re so rural we have a lot of intergenerational family living, maybe even in the same household. Three generations may be in one household. Access to water is another problem. It’s always been a struggle because it’s a very rural area. I’m fortunate. I live in town, but I can go 30 miles from here and people don’t have access to running water. People there [in the reservation] must haul water. So, they have their big barrels or something that they would use to go and get water.”

“There are families out there that can’t go to the kitchen, turn on the faucet and have water. They don’t have that luxury,” she said. “It was like that for my grandma ... She would wash and rinse dishes in one pan. That’s reality for a lot of people.”



First Indian Presbyterian Church where Rev. Irv Porter is one of the 95 PC(U.S.A.) Native American Churches

There are 10 Presbyterian churches and chapels on the Navajo reservation. The Presbytery of Grand Canyon and the Synod of the Southwest has raised nearly \$500,000 to assist families and has provided food for nearly 2,000 families over the past six months.

“This has been an amazing coming together of community with 18 different churches participating in the relief efforts,” said Brad Munroe, presbytery executive. “It was also an amazing bit of logistics by the Valley Presbyterian Church” in Paradise Valley, Arizona.

Munroe said that congregation’s recently-ordained pastor of Mission and Engagement, the Rev. Chris Woodard, handled all of the logistics for the relief effort. The church’s senior pastor, the Rev. David Joynt, worked the larger scene of connecting community help from Shamrock

Farms and St. Mary’s Food Bank. “This was your classic Presbyterian connectionalism at its best,” Munroe said.

Munroe says there are issues of systemic poverty on the reservation that must be addressed. And according to Mitchell, the

pandemic is shedding light on any number of issues concerning the Navajo Nation. “What I don’t see, I don’t have to worry about,” she said. “But this crisis has shined a light on this problem.”

In addition to the lack of running water, there are only seven full-sized grocery stores in the more than 27,000 square miles of the Navajo Nation. That makes it necessary for many Native American families to drive to a larger town to purchase food and other staples.

“Many of us grew up having to go to border towns to buy our food,” said Mitchell. “The nearest town is about an hour and a half drive.” Unfortunately, with the reservation’s sheltering-in-place restrictions, some are running out of food and household supplies.

In an article in Democracy Now!, Dr. Sriram Shamasunder,

an associate professor of medicine at the University of California, San Francisco and the co-founder of the HEAL initiative, says the coronavirus hit the Navajo Nation hard due to a “trajectory of an underfunded health system.” Shamasunder notes the Indian Health Service is funded at one-third the rate per capita as Medicare and that the level of health care inequity is part of the pattern.

When asked about the availability of medical professionals and hospitals on the Navajo Nation and the virus, Mitchell said, “That depends on the type of care you need. We do have a hospital here. But if you need more intensive care, then they would fly you out to another town. So, people would either be flown to Phoenix or Albuquerque and that’s 400 miles away.”

On Sunday, October 11, a Facebook post from the office of the Navajo Nation President Jonathan Nez reported that the Navajo Department of Health, in coordination with the Navajo Epidemiology Center and the Navajo Area Indian Health Service, reported 20 new COVID-19 positive cases for the Navajo Nation and no recent deaths.

The total number of deaths remains 565 as previously reported on Saturday. Reports indicate that 7,339 individuals have recovered from COVID-19, and 112,529 COVID-19 tests have been administered. The total number of positive COVID-19 cases is now 10,696, including one additional case that was previously unreported due to delayed reporting.

“We have gone through so much and we will continue to do what we can,” said Mitchell. “I am staying hopeful. My faith is unwavering in knowing that God will see us through this.”



The Conference For Seminarians of Color

Developing Leaders of Color in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Conference for Seminarians of Color is celebrating 40 years of developing and equipping leaders of color in the Presbyterian Church. Your support of this ministry helps to ensure that all of God's children are empowered to serve fully in the life of the church.

Gifts to the Conference for Seminarians of Color can be made online or by mail. Those wishing to donate can contribute online at presbyterianmission.org/donate/E051484-leadership-development-for-leaders-of-color. To send a check please make it payable to "The Presbyterian Mission Agency" and write "Conference for Seminarians of Color" on the memo line.

Please Mail Your Gift To:

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) | PO Box 643700 | Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

Menaul School is fully functional during COVID-19

The 2020 school year is off to a great start

by Gail Strange



Lindsey Gilbert, the president and head of school at Menaul School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, checks arriving students' temperature to ensure the safety of students and faculty on the first day of school. (Contributed photo)

LOUISVILLE — The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the entire world to rethink the way we conduct some of our most routine practices. Each year at this time schools across the nation would be welcoming their students and staff for another year of learning.

While many schools are starting with non-traditional instructions such as online or hybrid classes, Menaul School, one of the Presbyterian Schools and Colleges Equipping Communities of Color supported by the Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, has opted for in-person learning for most of their students.

From its campus in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Menaul School is home to a diverse body of 200 students who attend school from as far away as China and Taiwan. Lindsey Gilbert, president and head of the school, said Menaul officially

opened school on Aug. 19. "We held orientation outdoors, following strict (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) regulations," he said. "We're operating under three pillars: social distancing, wearing masks and extreme hygiene." Temperature checks are also a part of the school's routine to ensure a safe learning environment.

Currently 160 students are on campus and 40 students are learning remotely. There are some international students who can't return to campus due to travel bans resulting from the pandemic. "We have classes set up outside in large tents and we're using all the large spaces available," said Gilbert. To beat the New Mexico heat, the school has added outdoor fans to improve ventilation and cooling in tents. The school is adding water mist systems to improve the temperatures outside during late mornings and early afternoons.

Classes are at 25% capacity, with 20% of the school's families live streaming from home. That means a class that would normally have 22 students now has six in the classroom. Gilbert describes the Menaul School as a "high tech" school.

"We've been using iPads and other forms of technology in the classroom for more than eight years now," Gilbert said. "This means while some students may be outside, others may be in a classroom or at home. But all of the students are getting the same instruction in real time."

When asked what prompted his decision to hold in-person classes, Gilbert said, "This virus is not going away. We believe that we need to be ready to live with this virus." Gilbert says a task force of parents, some of them doctors, individuals who served on Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham's task force, teachers and others helped to make the decision to open the school. "The task force believed we could do it right," he said. "So, we decided to bite the bullet and go ahead with our plan. This is not going to change."

In a message to students, staff and parents, Gilbert wrote, "We thrived in our first days of Menaul School Reopened. I want to start with high praise for our students. Thank you for following our guidelines so faithfully. You have done an excellent job of social distancing, wearing masks, and learning all the new routines. I appreciate that it feels weird, because frankly it is weird, unique, and different. But it is so much more effective and fun to be together learning that I think you will agree it's worth it. If we stay disciplined and careful, we can protect each student, teacher, and family. We are off to a great start – I appreciate your sensitivity and care for the Menaul School Community."

Gilbert said the school is ready to switch to 100% online learning if it becomes necessary. But for now, faculty and students will continue with face-to-face learning.

Next year the Menaul School will be celebrating its 125th year of operation. The Presbyterian school was started on January 4, 1896 and is supported by your gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering.

‘COVID at the Margins’ looks at the impact of the virus on the LGBTQIA+ community

Panelists: With instability can come fear

by Gail Strange



A PC(USA) “COVID At The Margins” episode discussed the impact of the virus on the LGBTQIA+ community. Hosted by Rev. Shanea Leonard, panel members included Alana Fields, Kenyon Farrow and the Revs. Ashley and Emily DeTar Birt.

LOUISVILLE — The third in the series “COVID At The Margins,” a discussion series by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) created to shed light on the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color and what the church and

people of faith can do to respond, highlighted the impact of the virus on the LGBTQIA+ community.

Hosted by the Rev. Shanea D. Leonard, Associate for Gender & Racial Justice in Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries, the series is a joint effort of RE&WIM, the Compassion Peace & Justice Ministry and the Office of the General Assembly.

Members of the panel included Alana Fields, a PhD candidate and instructor in the department of sociology at the University of

Pittsburgh and a member of Judah Fellowship New Worshiping Community; Kenyon Farrow, senior editor of Body.Com, which is a news and information website, primarily focused on HIV news resources; and the Revs. Ashley and Emily DeTar Birt. Ashley is the pastoral fellow for youth and families at Rutgers Presbyterian church in Manhattan and Emily is the Consulting Minister for the Unitarian Church of Staten Island and Community Coordinator at Not So Churchy New Worshiping Community.

Leonard opened the discussion by asking the panelists, who not only are a part of the LGBTQIA+ community but interact with that community in various ways, to discuss how they've seen the LGBTQIA+ community being affected by COVID-19.

"Queer folks and trans folks tend to have more housing instability," said Fields. "With housing instability comes the fear and especially for black queer and trans folks experiencing higher levels of other health disparities and other issues."

It was noted that not only is housing instability an issue for the LGBTQIA+ community, but joblessness and the kind of jobs and industries they work in also puts them at greater risk for exposure to the virus. Failure from the health community to respond to queer and trans folks along with the lack of training for medical professionals on how to engage with queer trans folks was also called out as another issue for the LGBTQIA+ community.

"I've heard of queer folks from across the country where they've been involved with health care workers and have gone to the hospital, the ER, or even their own primary care physician and that person has not been able or quick or educated enough to interact with our community. And I know that's magnified right now, given the circumstances," said Fields.

"I think there's another way it's speaking to medical concerns that I've seen as an editor of a website about HIV," said Farrow. "When we initially recognized this pandemic in the United States, in late February, early March, we started to get a lot of emails and questions on our social media channels. People were saying, 'Hey, I'm a person living with HIV ... am I more at risk

for the coronavirus?' There's a lot of panic around this. And while there's a number of studies at this point, that show that people living with HIV don't have a higher risk of either contracting or dying from coronavirus there's a lot of fear."

"I had an acquaintance of mine here in New York, another black gay man who was 40 years old, to die here in the city of coronavirus in March," Farrow added. "I later found out that he had gone to the hospital three different times to be seen and was turned away. He ended up dying at home. I think there are compounding dynamics of the things we already know. In the health care settings that black and brown folks, and certainly queer and trans folks, are often not believed when they say that they're sick and are turned away."

Farrow says there is fear around the fact that physicians not well versed in HIV may assume that because they are living with HIV, they are more likely to die from coronavirus. As a result, they may be put on a "do not resuscitate" list or are not offered a ventilator because they're already more at risk of dying. "Some people are really concerned about those things," said Farrow. "There's a lot of activists who've been working on these issues around health care."

In addition to the disparities in health care, housing and employment within the LGBTQIA+ community, the panel also discussed the issues and sometimes adverse conditions these individuals endure while trying to shelter in place.

"What does it mean that you're not supposed to leave your house, but other people in your house aren't supportive?" said Ashley DeTar Brit. "What's the one thing that made it possible for you to stay in that house?

Your ability to go to the coffee shop or library or the LGBTQ Center or whatever it was that was a safe space for you. That's gone. If somebody is using your orientation or identity to pressure or abuse, you have to get away from that person now."

Leonard asked the panel to address the issue of younger people, including college students who might be in households that they can't control who are not safe in quarantine because of their sexual orientation.

"I think it's important to talk about mental health," said Emily DeTar Brit. "It's already difficult for black and brown people regardless of sexuality, but then especially black and brown folks that are queer and trans to find therapists and counselors and psychologists and psychiatrists that are trained specifically to deal with these communities. So then how to do that in a quarantine situation? I know we're doing the virtual thing now, but we also have to think about the access people have to things like computers and cell phones and internet connections, to be able to use therapy and get access to mental health services in ways during quarantine is another thing that's really important to talk about and that's something I think we sort of missed."

Videos bring Hispanic Latino-a community together

60 ministers record reflections

by Gail Strange



Mabel Malavé Iglesia, Presbiteriana en Cibao — San Sebastián, Puerto Rico, presented one of the devotionals for the Hispanic Latin-a Intercultural Congregational Support Office's video project.

LOUISVILLE — COVID-19 has us all rethinking the way we do ministry. And now, as churches ponder reopening, what will worship service look like? Will the new model of online worship service become the new normal?

At the invitation of the Hispanic Latino-a Intercultural Congregational Support Office, part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries, a group of tech-savvy Hispanic/Latino-a ministers have used their time and talent to develop a series of 60 devotional videos to comfort, bring hope and reassure viewers that even in a pandemic God still cares.

The four-minute reflection videos will be "shared among our constituency, communities and neighborhoods," said Rosa Miranda, associate for the Hispanic Latino-a Intercultural Congregational Support Office. "This was a way to respond to the Matthew 25 initiative on

congregational vitality by reaching out to those in the margins with a word of hope, comfort and encouragement in their own language and founded in Scripture from our Reformed theology."

Collectively, the congregations have a greater impact and reach more people than each congregation does individually as these faith communities reach out to others whom they know need to hear the Good News.

"It is important to bring the loving presence of God in the midst of injustice, discrimination and hopelessness," Miranda said. "At the beginning of the stay at home time, many faith communities did not have a livestream worship service option. So, these videos are a way to build a bridge by sharing a daily reflection with individuals in their community and members of their congregations."

Utilizing Facebook and WhatsApp, the videos were distributed daily to leaders and members of the PC(USA) Hispanic/Latino-a faith communities so that they could be shared with friends, families and neighbors. "Many of our immigrant siblings have expressed their gratitude as it has brought comfort and joy to their hearts to be able to share with their families in their countries of origin in such a time of uncertainty and challenges," said Miranda. "These daily reflections have crossed our borders to Spanish-speaking faith communities and friends in Latin America and Spain."

Miranda says that in times when there are so many social media messages built on fear, misinformation and uncertainty, the

Hispanic/Latino-a church leaders felt that this was an opportunity to go out in mission as the PC(USA) with a message of hope in God's faithfulness in fulfilling his promises and sharing the good news of life in Jesus Christ.

The daily devotional series was made possible thanks to the leadership and gifts of the Rev. Rafael Viana, who led digital webinars to record the videos and to help congregations start streaming their worship services. More than 75 leaders participated in his four webinars — three in Spanish and one in Portuguese. Two of the videos were recorded for children and four of the 60 videos were recorded in Portuguese. Among the participants were teaching elders, CREs, lay leaders, chaplains, and moderators of Mujeres Hispanas Latinas Presbiterianas and Hombres Presbiterianos Hispanos Latinos. Each video included the phrase: "The Presbyterian Church cares for you."

"I am so grateful to God for leaders like Rev. Viana, who out of his commitment to serve God has voluntarily given time, energy and dedication to edit each video," Miranda said. "God's Spirit brought leaders from diverse backgrounds together with one purpose in mind and heart, to serve and embrace their community in this time of crisis, and made out of it an opportunity to provide God's loving care and presence by sharing words of comfort and hope, not knowing what God was about to do and how far it would go. This is who we are as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a connectional church in mission."



Shelia O'Bannon, Minister of Music for Peace Presbyterian Church, leads the music ministry at Peace and would often share her music ministry with guests and employees at the Presbyterian Center prior to the pandemic

Cont'd. from Page 2

"It's nice that the government, the church, the presbyteries and the synods are giving loans, but the truth of the matter is with the bottom line that many churches have right now, it's going to be difficult to pay back a loan to help us survive right now," he said.

"I'm very concerned that for a lot of our African American pastors, this calling that we have, is our only source of income," he said. "This is our full-time job."

Peace Church live streams on Sunday morning. "Thanks be to God," Steele said, that the church had started online giving before the pandemic. "For the African American community, online giving is a new way of giving to the

church and we don't often gravitate to change as quickly as others, so this becomes a new process," he said. The age of the congregation also impacts online giving, he said. While many African American churches have young adults familiar with technology, it's the senior citizens that carry the church financially.

When the pandemic first caused churches to close their building Steele says the church sent members of the congregation a personal letter talking about the love of Jesus, "Not only did we talk about their spiritual responsibility to the church, but their financial responsibility as well," he said.

Cont'd. from Page 3

Energy Resource Tribes (CERT), I just felt about three inches tall. Everybody knew Cecil and his presence was one where he could just recall policies. I felt very honored to be the person that was accompanying him to go and do these visits with the tribes and hear what their records showed and their experiences."

"Cecil always wore a bolo tie," Street-Stewart recalled. "He was Mr. Cook School, Mr. Indian Presbyterian. He always had knowledge of not only what was going to be happening like in the next year or so in the church, but he could relate that information to things that had happened in the past."

Street-Stewart say Corbett was a great teacher and administrator. "He was like a historian for us because he had all of this information in his head," she said. "He also knew how to organize that information in ways that would be most helpful at the time."



Rev. Cecil Corbett at the most recent Presbyterian Native American Men's Conference

"I am grateful to have known Cecil and served alongside him," said the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, president and executive director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. "He made a difference in more lives than we will ever know. He was a servant who loved God and worked to improve the quality of life for Native Americans and people of color. Well done, thou good and faithful servant, well done."



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FEATURED RESOURCES



Matthew 25

Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor. By accepting the Matthew 25 invitation, you can help our denomination become a more relevant presence in the world.



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- Asian Intercultural Congregational Support
- Hispanic/Latino-a Intercultural Congregational Support
- Korean Intercultural Congregational Support
- Middle Eastern Intercultural Ministries
- Native American Intercultural Congregational Support

Leadership Development & Recruitment for Leaders of Color

- Mission Program Grants
- Racial Equity Leadership Development & Recruitment
- Schools and Colleges Equipping communities of Color

Women's Leadership Development and Justice Ministries

- Gender and Racial Justice
- Racial and Intercultural Justice (joint office with CPJ)
- Women's Leadership Development & Young Women's Ministries

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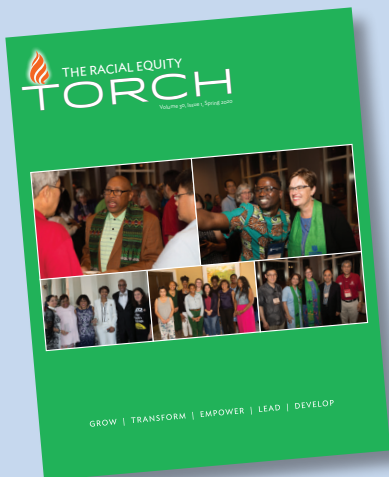
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