



First Press

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Taizé Prayer Service

Dear Friends,

Here's a little biblical riddle: can you think of an instance of looking in two different directions at the same time? How about this: *You shall not wrong or oppress a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

This instruction seems to assume an ability to look ahead while looking back. Of course, we do actually see that way much of the time, or try to – in fact, the voice of wisdom reminds us that “those who don’t learn from the mistakes of the past are destined to re-live them in the future.” But in this particular biblical case, it’s not a historical mistake we’re urged to hang on to; it’s a communal experience. The reference to Egypt reveals the context: it comes from the book of Exodus (22:21). It’s one of the precepts given at Mt. Sinai, in the flurry of guidance that God delivers to people who are no longer enslaved but not quite yet fully free. It’s also one of the moral instructions most deeply engrained in the Hebrew scriptures: it appears, in one form or another, several dozen times.

You shall not wrong a stranger, for *you were strangers...* At first it reads like a reiteration of the (rather utilitarian) Golden Rule: if you want people to treat you well, treat them well. (I like an environmental adaptation of the rule that I read recently: do to those downstream what you hope those upstream will do.) But it makes a big difference that the Exodus ethic of the stranger is framed, not as calculation, but as learning. It says, when you see a stranger, recognize yourself: remember what you’ve learned.

These days, it seems, we’re surrounded by strangers. Circumstances estrange us from each other, make our different life experiences opaque or unimaginable to each other – whether because of the arbitrary but immutable color of our skin, the personal story of our roots or identity, the economic circumstances in which we happen to live. And sometimes these differences seem to be functioning, not as ways of deepening understanding, but as fuel for our current national traumas. It’s hard to feel commonality while circumstances and experiences hold us apart; with half of our faces now swathed in protective covering, we hardly even recognize each other!

The instructions at Sinai are milestones on a journey to a place of

promise – a destination held out as a place of freedom and flourishing. According to the book of Exodus (as you may remember from Sunday School!), it’s a long way to that place, not just in terms of duration (40 years) and hardship (desert) but in terms of transformation: the way is punctuated by crises that hone the soul and character of the people. By the time they get there, they’ve changed – and the journey has shaped the people they will be and the living that they’ll do when they finally get where they hope they’ve been going. Or at least, God hopes it does.

This fall at First Pres, we’ll be passing some important milestones on the way to a much-longed-for place of promise. The Self-Study Group will finish its report; you’ll elect a committee to conduct a pastoral search; the Strategic Plan will be unveiled; our nation will gird itself for one of the most volatile and important elections in its history; and we’ll take stock of what we’ve learned about being a church from our civic “bondage” to systemic injustice and vulnerable public health. We’re *Getting There* (our fall worship theme), for sure. But along the way, like the people Israel, the hardships and trials we’ve experienced are changing us – preparing us for life as a renewed community in a new time.

“We’ve come this far by faith,” as the wonderful gospel song we heard in worship several weeks ago reminds us. But we’re making our way onward, in the strong company of Jesus, looking in two directions: back, to what we’ve learned by being strangers ourselves, and forward to a place of promise where estrangement is over. Maybe for us, as for the people Israel, it will turn out that we began to become who we wanted to be – who God wanted us to be – while we were *getting there*.

Faithfully,

Rick Spalding
Rick Spalding, Interim Pastor





Sanctus Ringers Begin a New Ringing Season

Rehearsal on Mondays, 7:00 - 8:30 p.m., Social Hall

Experienced ringers (college-age and adults) are welcome to join the Sanctus Ringers. In-person rehearsals begin Monday, September 14, in the Social Hall. Face masks and socially distanced tables for each ringer will be provided. Join us as we begin a new ringing season with our new set of handbells! For more information, contact Dave VanderMeer at dvandermeer@firstpresbyterian.org.

Engage your Body, Mind, and Spirit!

September 15, October 20, November 17 at 7:00 p.m.

Join Rob Meyer-Kukan, a Licensed Sound Therapist who will offer three sessions for a dedicated time to center, relax, and restore. Our time together may include guided meditation, breath work, mindful movement, and sound therapy. Come and explore a new way of connecting your spirituality to your everyday life. Themes for each experience will support the themes being explored in worship, from the book of Exodus, as well as themes appropriate for the season. Consider this experience a mini-retreat to center yourself through gentle activities, focused meditation on poetry and scripture, and the soothing tones of singing bowls, gongs, and other therapeutic instruments.



These sessions will take place on the third Tuesday of each month set in Monteith Hall at 7:00 p.m. and may be accessed on the First Presbyterian Church Facebook Page and YouTube channel. These events are co-sponsored by First Pres' Adult Education and Worship Committees. All are welcome! For more information, contact Dave VanderMeer, Minister of Music & Fine Arts at dvandermeer@firstpresbyterian.org

Taizé Prayer Service

Tuesday, September 1, 7:00 p.m.

Join us for this service of songs, scripture, prayer, meditation, silence, and candles on YouTube or Facebook. All are welcome!

Children's Choir Resumes September 13 Virtually

Welcome Back! My name is Kellie McInchak and I am the director of the Children's Choir. The Children's Choir is open to any child in kindergarten through sixth grade. We will meet virtually on Sundays, 10:30 - 10:55 a.m. to sing, move, create, play instruments, and act. Similar to last year, we will sing one hymn per month to help young singers have a greater knowledge and understanding of our rich hymnody. Additionally, we will explore ways that we may safely contribute music to our church services. I look forward to "seeing" you on September 13 when we kick off Children's Choir virtually for the 2020-2021 school year. Link to follow.



Getting There – Together

A new season of our life together begins in a time that is still transitional and uncertain. In our church we're on our way to meet a new leader; to begin a new chapter of ministry, to discover new ways of rising to the challenges of a protracted pandemic. In our society we're on our way through a season of polarization in politics and policy, vulnerability in public health, soul-searching about our values of justice, equality, liberty.

Along the way of this journey, during most of the coming weeks, we'll be looking for biblical companionship to the book of Exodus, which happens to be one of the primary texts appointed by the Revised Common Lectionary for this fall. We'll begin the journey with the people Israel as God responds to their cries and struggles and leads them out of bondage. We'll follow them on a long journey which challenges them with crises of identity and faith, offers them guidance and providential care, and refines their sense of relationship to God and to each other. We'll lean on the company of Jesus all along the way, particularly as it comes to us through the latter chapters of the gospel of Matthew.

Like us, the exodus people are on their way toward life in a promising future; but the process of getting there will help them, and us, to learn how to live when they get where they hope they're going.

Congregational Art Installation – Origami Peace Cranes

Fold origami peace cranes and be a part of an upcoming art installation displayed when we return to in-person worship. Kits will include folding instructions and a list of names of First Pres members. Write a name on each piece of origami paper, offer a prayer for that person, then fold the paper into an origami peace crane. Kits are available in the Church Office on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Call ahead of time (662-4466) if you would like to come by to pick one up. If you would prefer to have a kit delivered, please contact Dave VanderMeer at dvandermeer@firstpresbyterian.org.



Fall Start Up Special Events

SIX SUNDAYS OF FUN!

We miss seeing you! Fall Kickoff will be different this year, but it will still be fun, exciting, and informative. Please join us for these socially distanced Sunday Celebrations. For more information, check www.firstpresbyterian.org, the weekly bulletin, or call the Church Office at 662-4466.

September 6 Drive-through Ice Cream Social 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Stay safely in your car as you drive through the First Pres campus, stopping at various stations where you will be greeted by staff, Deacons and members of the Congregational Life Committee. We will have detailed information to give you on future events as well as your choice of an individually wrapped ice cream treat. First Pres Black Lives Matter yard signs and origami Peace Crane kits will be available.

September 13 Drive-through Kick-off Celebration 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Stay safely in your car as you drive through the First Pres parking lots, stopping at various stations where you will be warmly greeted by staff and members of the Congregational Life and Christian Formation Committees. There will be free First Pres t-shirts for the first 200 people and informational brochures about Christian Formation classes for all ages. You won't want to miss the "Peeps Live" station where you will have the opportunity to get out of your car briefly for a special photograph. You'll do a slow drive to enjoy special live music before receiving a blessing from the pastoral staff. Final stop? "Coffee Hour", of course! You'll be offered an individually wrapped Washtenaw Dairy donut to enjoy on your ride home.

September 20 Outdoor Worship 4:00 p.m.

Finally! A brief service of worship will be offered on our front lawn - socially distanced, and following all governmental and health protocols. Attendance will be limited to a small number of people; sign up via the church's home page, or call the Church Office. (Note that the 9:30 morning service will also be offered as usual, via virtual platforms.) Please note that there will be only limited access to the building. Rain date will be September 27.

September 27 Drive-through Stewardship & Mission Kick-off 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

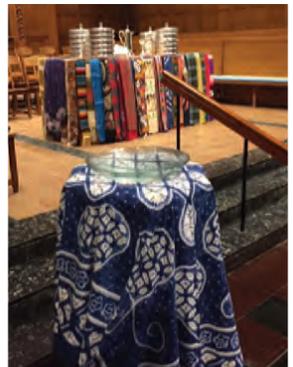
Stay safely in your car as you drive through the First Pres campus, stopping at various stations where you will be greeted by staff and members of the Stewardship and Mission Committees. There will be hand-outs including the 2021 stewardship tabloid and information about on-going local mission projects. Take home kits and Pinwheels for Peace will be offered for some hands-on activities. Donations of food and personal care items for Food Gatherers will be accepted.

October 4 Drive-through Family Sunday Kick-off 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Celebrate World Communion Sunday with us. Families with children ages birth through high school are invited to stay safely in your car as you drive through the First Pres campus, stopping at various stations where you will be warmly greeted by members of the Christian Formation team. Families will pick up curriculum packets. There will be snacks and a creative photo opportunity.

October 11 Drive-in Worship: Blessing of the Animals Service 4:00 p.m.

Welcome to the First Pres Drive-in! Stay safely in your car in a First Pres parking lot for a short Blessing of the Animals service. Bring a pet with you, if you would like, or perhaps a photo of a pet. There will be treats for our animal AND our human friends, as well as another fun photo opportunity. There will be three services with limited participation. Watch for sign-up information.





Business of the Church



A MESSAGE FROM THE SELF STUDY GROUP

Dear Members and Friends of First Presbyterian,

The Self Study Group (SSG) would like to offer an update on our activities. Several church members have inquired as to why we need a self study report, what it includes, how we acquire information and how SSG work fits into the new Lead Pastor search timeline.

Why a report?

The self study report is a requirement of the Detroit Presbytery prior to the formation of a Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC). The Presbytery's Committee on Ministry (COM) approved the formation of our committee early this year and we have been meeting weekly on Zoom for the last four to five months. The final report must first be received and approved by Session and then approved by the Presbytery. The Presbytery then grants permission for Session to form a PNC.

What is in the report?

According to the COM the purpose of the Self Study is to develop information necessary to (1) enable the congregation to identify their vision for ministry as well as leadership competencies (specific skills) desired for its next Lead Pastor and (2) present to potential pastors the congregation's understanding of its call, resources and needs. In addition to seeking congregational input, we are directing our efforts to include a review of church history, various demographics, financial resources, community composition and relations, mission, vision and more.

How is the report being generated?

With the help of our staff liaison Rev. Rick Spalding and the Presbytery liaison Rev. Judy Shipman, our 10-person committee has assigned various responsibilities to members of the committee with particular skills and experience to address the aforementioned topics. The solicitation of various stakeholders within First Pres including staff and church leaders both past and present are an important part of our research. We are also seeking the candid opinion of various community leaders for their impressions of First Pres and how we might better serve our own community. The congregational survey, which you were emailed or mailed on August 30th, is a key element of our report, reflecting the valuable opinion of our church family.

Timeline of the report

We will continue to keep you informed of our progress with regular reports in various electronic media publications, the church bulletin and a page on the church website dedicated to the transition process. Our hope is to complete the survey process, including the presentation of the analysis and interpretation by mid October. Our goal is to submit a final self study report to Session in early November.

We need your help!

Please plan to be a part of this important report by completing the congregational survey by **September 28**.
Questions? Reach out to us at SelfStudyGroup@firstpresbyterian.org

*Yours in Christ,
Hailey Brown & Kelsey Kearcher
Self Study Committee Chairs*



Congregational Life

Join First Pres! It's even easier!

We encourage you to make a commitment and become a formal member of First Pres. And we have a new way you can do it! On particular Sundays, you can click a zoom link at noon and gather briefly with a pastor and two ruling elders of Session to join. Tell us who you are and what you would like to know about us, as well as giving us a glimpse into your own faith journey. Those opportunities are September 20, October



4, and October 18., at noon, for about a 1/2 hour. You will be officially received at the October 21 Session meeting. Then, complete your membership with a required online class at 11:00 a.m. on October 25 as a follow-up to your joining (back up date in November TBD). The class will be led by staff and members, and will be informative and fun! Want to know more about what joining means, why do it, or how it will change you, and us? Contact Rev. Rogers for a conversation at 734-355-2351 or mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org.

An Opportunity to Serve – Welcoming our New Members

Interested in helping make First Pres a more warm and welcoming church home to new members? The Congregational Life Committee is looking for some friendly “Shepherds” to help new members find their niche and feel more at home and welcome after joining. The time commitment involved isn’t huge, six or seven hours over the course of a year with some well documented instructions and recommendations on how you can connect. Rev. Rogers will try and match Shepherds with new members who she thinks share some commonalities and interests. Interested? Please let Rev. Rogers know and she will be happy to discuss things in more depth and put you on our list of potential Shepherds. Expressing interest isn’t a commitment, just the potential to serve at some point in the future.

The Three Day Effect Backpacking Retreat **Depart Thursday, September 17 – Return Late Sunday, September 20**



During this season of COVID -19 and Racial injustice where anxiety is running high and we are uncertain about the future, we can become paralyzed by fear and anxiety. Spending three days outside in the natural world, away from the hustle and bustle of the societies in which we dwell can help us to reframe and diminish our anxieties and our anxious responses. On this short backpacking trip, we will reconnect with God and God’s creation in the Manistee National Forest.

Participants will travel 30+ miles in the Manistee National Forest in Western Michigan. We will be tent/hammock camping in the back country on all days except our travel days. We’ll leave Thursday, September 17 and return late on Sunday, September 20 with an option to stay in a hotel on September 20 and return on Monday, September 21. The total cost of the trip will be approximately \$250 with additional costs for gear, food and trip insurance. Sign up at www.firstpresbyterian.org. Questions? Contact Rev. Amy Ruhf at aruhf@firstpresbyterian.org.

MATURE MINISTRIES LUNCH & LEARN SERIES

Author Kathryn Cospers discusses *The Defense Rests* **Thursday, September 10, Noon – 1:00 p.m.**

Author Kathryn Cospers talks about grief and her book *The Defense Rests*, a poignant memoir by a loving widow. It is a practical guide to the complexities of the medical system, the challenges of chronic illness and disability, the joy and frustration of trying to help suffering people, and the depths of grief. Above all, it is a beautifully written love story that will draw you in until the final page and bring you to laughter and tears many times. Woven within the story, readers will find helpful information about strokes, heart disease, rehabilitation, medical providers, care facilities, and insurance; suggestions for patients, caregivers, and friends who want to help; words to comfort sick and grieving people, and words not to say; ideas for moving through grief at our own pace; inspiring quotes from other sources and from scripture; and suggested reading. Join us at Noon on September 10 at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/5502657984>.



Unfamiliar with Zoom?

If you haven’t used Zoom on your computer or iPad or phone to join one of our online meetings, watch this short tutorial with Rev. Amy Ruhf. <https://youtube/UztJNXa7k6c>. Things to note for most zoom meetings — you will be muted by the host. You will need to unmute yourself, use the hand-raising function, or use the chat bar to raise questions.

Grief Conversations

First Tuesday of the month, 11:00 a.m. via Zoom

We are all in grief over something — the loss of a loved one, the loss of expectations, the loss of life as we knew it to be, the loss of our relationships and close connections, the loss of our physical strength and “invincibility” that we once seemingly enjoyed. Once a month, for an hour, we gather to share a bit more about our individual losses, and ponder what we can learn of loss, life, love, and the language of letting go and moving forward in life. There is no closure, but there is companionship. Contact Rev. Rogers (mrogers@firstpresbyterian.org) for the link (and more information) to join our conversation as we compassionately care for one another, and walk together a landscape inevitably known to us all.



Katie & Eldon Beery Celebrate 70th Anniversary

The Glacier Hills Deacons (Elsa Stuber, John Yodhes, Jim Dickinson, Dan Christensen, and Lisa Danielson) ask you to join them in congratulating and celebrating Eldon and Katie Beery, who celebrate 70 years of marriage on September 1. They are deeply loved and admired by all of us, and we only wish that we could all be together to share in this joy. We encourage all of you to send them cards of celebration and love to their address: Glacier Hills Meadows, 4001 Glacier Hills Drive, Ann Arbor, MI 48105.



Black Lives Matter Signs

If you would like a new First Pres - Black Lives Matter sign, we have 100 to distribute. They were provided to us by a generous member. Please pick them up at Rev. Rogers' home, 1865 Greenview Drive, Ann Arbor, 48103, off the porch — or at the September 6 Drive-in Sunday Fun Event. One per family, please, until we run out. We encourage you to join our Session and staff as we show our support for racial justice and equality, and admit to our own efforts to learn and work together.

Outdoor Labyrinth Walk

Sundays, September 27 & November 1, 1:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Participate in the spiritual practice of walking an outdoor labyrinth. Kurt and Kathy Hillig have a beautiful labyrinth in the field behind their house off Ellsworth Road. It can be easily walked in 30 minutes or less. The center provides a nice place to stop and ponder and pray. Enjoy the presence of God and one another, and stay socially distanced and safe. Sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/4090f45a4ac283-walk>. Ten people can sign up per hour from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Arrive by ten minutes after the hour and leave by five minutes before the next hour for traffic purposes.

A drone's view of the Hillig's labyrinth.



Presbyterian Women in September



New Meeting Day & Format – Second Thursday of the Month

September Gathering - September 10

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 10:30 -11:30 a.m. | Bible Study |
| 11:30 -11:50 a.m. | PW Business Meeting |
| 11:50 –Noon | Break |
| Noon | PW will join Mature Ministries' "Lunch & Learn" program via Zoom |

Bible Study - *Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament*

Robin Agnew and Meg Brown will lead Lesson 1: "The Heart of Lament". Contact Meg Brown at lmegbrown@gmail.com to order a Horizons Bible Study (\$10).

Donations Needed for House By the Side of the Road

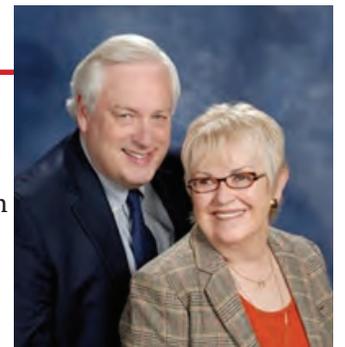
House By the Side of the Road needs these gently used items – washcloths, hand and bath towels, bedsheets, blankets, jackets (all sizes), dinner plates, small appliances, and pots and pans. Clothes in women's plus sizes, men's tall and boy's size 7 and up are also needed. If you would like to donate, contact Joyce Himebaugh, Mission Co-chair, at joycehimebaugh@gmail.com.



Financial Stewardship

Legacy Partners Spotlight: Harris & Margaret McClamroch

We joined First Presbyterian Church in 1996. We are thankful for the opportunities that the church has provided us to grow our religious faith and to be a part of an active and engaged community. Our lives have been greatly enriched through participation in worship, governance, congregational life and mission programs of the church. We treasure many worship experiences, stimulating adult education programs, and wonderful music programs. Margaret served on the Board of Deacons, including one year as moderator under Rev. David Krehbiel. Harris served a term on Session. We served together on the Evangelism Committee (now a part of the Congregational Life Committee) and we provided leadership to the Israel Palestine Mission Team for ten years. These were meaningful experiences and we made many good friends. In recognition of our commitment to First Pres, we have supported the church financially through the annual giving program and through our responses to special requests, including the Resident Ministry Endowment. We are happy that we are able to express our continuing commitment by being a Legacy Partner, including the church in our estate plan.





CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES



Fall Christian Formation, Family Sundays & Sunday School Registration

Welcome families! The Christian Formation team of staff and elders is so excited to have you join us this year. As many of you have spent the last several months living into the changes, we have been reimagining things in the program as well. Your family’s faith during these times is important to us, and we hope to support you in a variety of ways. As we begin preparing for the upcoming school year, we have a few exciting ways to help your family connect with First Pres. The Children & Family Ministry Work Group and Christian Formation Team felt the best and safest way to begin our Fall would be in a hybrid presence.

Sunday School Classes

Preschool through confirmation classes will be held via Zoom at 11:00 a.m. on Sundays (Zoom Link to be provided). Curriculum packs with additional materials will be provided monthly during Family Sunday drive-throughs.

- **Pre-School (ages 2-4):** *God Loves Me* curriculum (short age-appropriate story, song and prayer)
- **Young 5’s- Second Grade:** *Growing in God’s Love* PC(USA) curriculum (families will be loaned a *Growing in God’s Love* Bible for children to have at home)
- **Third - Fifth Grade:** *Feasting on the Word* PC(USA) curriculum
- **Sixth, Seventh, & Eighth Grade:** Illustrated Ministry Intergenerational Curriculum - *The Beatitudes*
- **Confirmation:** *Big God, Big Questions*



Family Sunday Drive-Throughs

Family Sundays, scheduled for October 4, November 1, and November 29, are an opportunity for your family to connect safely in person, have a little fun “at church” and receive curriculum packs for the upcoming month’s classes. Note: Sign-up times will be used to ensure timing is safe and efficient.



Kick-Off Sunday: Sunday, September 13

9:30 a.m Virtual Worship, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. All-Church Christian Formation Kick Off Drive Through Receive Faith @ Home bags, Curriculum packs, t-shirts, treats and more!

First Family Sunday Drive Through: Sunday, October 4 - World Communion

9:30 a.m Virtual Worship, 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. Drive Through Family Sunday Receive October Curriculum packs, Communion in the Spirit kit, Sidewalk messages of hope

Sunday School Registration

Registration letters have been sent to all families who have children, infant through fifth grade. Included in the mailing is a Fall 2020 Welcome Letter, Fall 2020 Children & Family Ministry calendar and a paper copy of the Fall 2020 Sunday School Registration Form. Some families will also receive specific Fall 2020 Milestone Ministry information for upcoming Milestones. If you prefer to fill out the paper registration form, please return it to the church office as soon as possible. We also offer an easy, on-line registration for Sunday School at www.firstpresbyterian.org (search Sunday School Registration Form.) This enables us to provide your family all the support needed throughout the year, and ensure you receive any important mailings and information for your child’s classroom. (FYI: All children are always welcome whether a registration form is filled out ahead of time or not!) We look forward to seeing all of you in September as we start our new Christian Formation School year!

Canoeing Trip Rescheduled! Saturday, September 12, 10:00 a.m.

The Christian Formation team invites you to join us for a physically-distanced, safe trip down the Huron River on September 12! Rev. McGowen & Rev. Mares will lead us as we gather together, enjoy God’s beautiful creation, and paddle our way on the waters in this beautiful Fall Ann Arbor weather! All youth & families are welcome, sign up at <https://firstpresbyterian.wufoo.com/forms/canoe-trip/>





Stay Connected for Up-to-Date Youth Opportunities!

- Check out our FPA Youth Instagram account at [fpa2youth](#)
- Have you heard of Discord? Or GroupMe? Questions about signing up? Contact Rev. Mares (mmares@firstpresbyterian.org)
- Visit our Youth Page!

ADULT EDUCATION

Looking Ahead to Fall Adult Ministry Offerings

Since early 2020, we have experienced two pandemics that have significantly impacted our lives and uncovered many inequities that exist in our communities. The COVID pandemic has kept us separated from one another and stressed each of us in varying ways. In response to the Governor's orders on this crisis, the First Pres staff and Session reacted quickly to close the church building and relocate worship services and all committee meetings and programs for all ages to the Zoom online platform and other platforms. As we were adjusting to the limitations and concerns imposed by this virus, the mass gatherings taking place across the nation protesting the deaths of black men and women raised our consciousness about the systemic injustice in our society. The Session prayerfully and with guidance from the Holy Spirit has made a commitment for the congregation to address systemic racism and related injustices, individually and as a community.

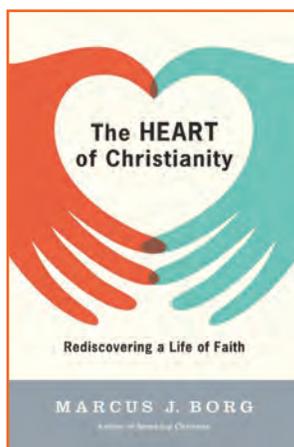
As a predominately white congregation, a first step we can take is to increase our understanding of the impact of these inequities on people of color and the nature of racism and white privilege in our society. The adult ministry offerings for the next several months are planned to offer opportunities for us to increase our knowledge and to discuss these issues with one another. There will continue to be a Sunday morning facilitated learning time. In addition, since this topic can be best discussed in smaller group conversations, multiple small group conversations will be offered along with Book Read suggestions and group discussions. Adult Ed offerings will continue to be virtual throughout the fall. Some small in-person gatherings in accordance with physical distancing may be added, depending on the state of the virus in Washtenaw County.



21-Day Racial Equity Challenge

In recent weeks we have witnessed and been confronted anew with the deep sickness of racism that infects our nation and even our very selves. As Christians, we have a responsibility to address our own implicit biases to understand our privilege, power, and the ways in which we have benefited from the systemic racism that is thriving in America. Many have expressed a desire to do something in this moment, to take a stand and make a difference. One of the best ways that we can do that is to first educate ourselves and come to understand our own relationships with racism in America.

We invite you to participate in a 21-day equity challenge: <https://www.eddiemoorejr.com/21daychallenge>. The idea of this challenge is to build a habit of listening to the voices of the marginalized by engaging in a variety of activities, becoming lifelong learners, and learning to be true anti-racist allies as we seek justice that has been denied for so many for so long. This challenge will confront you with things that you may never have seen or known about yourselves and about our brothers and sisters of color. For that reason, we recommend that you have at least one conversation partner with whom you can have the hard conversations. It's important that this person be someone whom you can trust, and someone who will push you to be your better self. Thank you for joining us in taking these steps towards doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly.



Marcus Borg's *The Heart of Christianity*

Tuesdays, September 1, 8 & 15, at 11:00 a.m.

Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83848544695>

Marcus Borg's book opens with the questions, "What is the heart of Christianity? What does it mean to be Christian today?" He goes on to describe two quite different answers. The first is an earlier vision of Christianity; the second, an emerging vision. Both are present in the churches of North America today, deeply dividing Christians. We live in a time of conflict and change in the church.

During this study we have been reading roughly two chapters each week. While Mr. Borg's analysis of the division in the Church will appeal to most, not all will agree with his conclusions and proposed resolutions. We will read the book together, likely approving some of what he writes and sometimes debating the merits of others. Copies of the book are available via the usual online sources. Bookbound in Ann Arbor will also provide contact-free ordering and pickup services. For more information, contact Rev. Ed Koster, ehkoster@aol.com.

VIRTUAL NOON CONVERSATIONS:



Strengthening Ourselves & Strengthening Others

Wednesday, September 16, Noon - 1:00 p.m.

Do you hunger for conversation and fellowship to help build your resilience during these challenging times? Jane Dutton and Beth Steward lead the Virtual Noon Conversations for an hour (via Zoom) on the third Wednesday of the month to explore, discuss, and practice different ways in which we can strengthen ourselves and strengthen others now, and in the days ahead. We draw on classic and enduring practices that unlock our resourcefulness from within and help us imagine new possibilities for ourselves and for others around us. Sign up for each session separately so we can provide you with a Zoom invite and password before we meet virtually. Please sign up on www.firstpresbyterian.org or use the links provided below.

- **September 16: Strengthening Through Belonging**
<https://thriveglobal.com/stories/the-transformational-power-of-belonging/>
- **October 21: Strengthening Through Connection**
https://www.ted.com/talks/worklife_with_adam_grant_we_don_t_have_to_fight_loneliness_alone
- **November 18: Strengthening Through Crafting a Positive Identity**
https://myclass.dau.edu/bbcswebdav/institution/Courses/Deployed/ACQ/ACQ453/Student_Materials/Being%20A%20Contribution.pdf

Exploring Faith

Sundays at 12:15 p.m. via Zoom

Here is a preliminary schedule of educational opportunities beginning in the fall. More information and Zoom links will be added soon and will be available at www.firstpresbyterian.org, in the bulletin and various upcoming email news announcements.

September 20 & 27

- **Racism & White Privilege** - A Theological Introduction to Racism

October & November

Antiracism and White Privilege

- Theological Introduction to Antiracism – Theologian and First Pres Staff
- Deconstructing White Privilege – Author Robin DiAngelo
- White Privilege – Bias and Implicit Bias
- Inequities and Racism in Washtenaw County and what we can do

Living in the COVID Pandemic

- Inequities revealed by the pandemic, especially in Washtenaw County
- Building Resilience in a time of COVID – Facilitated discussion
- Lifestyle during pandemic – Anxiety and fear over virus

CROSSROADS Conversations on Race & Racism

Fridays, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m., September 25 - November 13

Suggested Book Reads

- *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla Saad
- *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown
- Excerpts from *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James Cone

Our Adult Formation Group is sponsoring a weekly conversation about race and racism this fall. We will read and discuss two important books, Layla Saad's *Me and White Supremacy* and *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown. We'll also pull in some readings from James Cone's powerful, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* and then immerse ourselves in the current digital resources and enjoy conversations together. Hopefully, we can then imagine how we can institute positive change. Various First Pres staff, members and community members will join Rev. Jay Sanderford in dialogue.

Other Adult Education Opportunities

Journeys Bible Study

Begins Thursday, September 10, at 11:30 a.m.

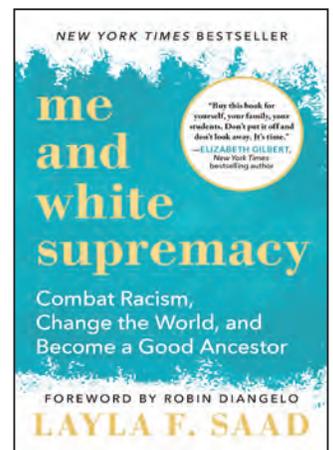
Journeys meets monthly on the second and fourth Thursday and will study the Holy Spirit throughout the fall. Contact Rev. Frazier (afrazier@firstpresbyterian.org) for the Zoom link or for more information.

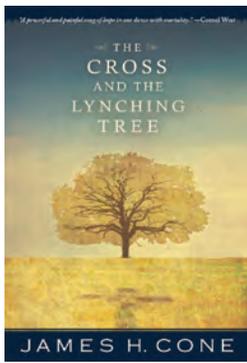
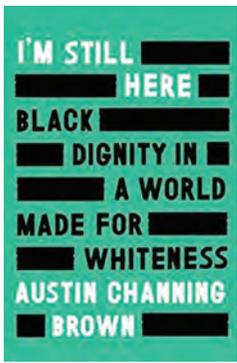
Pilgrimages in Ann Arbor Parks

Take a mini-pilgrimage at Gallup Park and explore your faith. We have prepared three Walking Guides with different themes that foster reflection as you walk the 1.35 (or 1.65) mile trail at Gallup Park. Visit <https://firstpresbyterian.org/event/pilgrimage-park> and download the guides and a map to Gallup Park.

Join The Spiritual Writing Group

Have you ever wanted to be creative with words? Have you found it difficult to sit down and write a memory to share? This fall during "social distancing," we are sharing our creative work and our discussion of these shared writings, all by email. Want to join? Contact Meg Brown at lmegbrown@gmail.com to receive the email addresses of all our members.





Me and White Supremacy by Layla Saad teaches readers how to dismantle the privilege within themselves so that they can stop (often unconsciously) inflicting damage on people of color, and in turn, help other white people do better, too. When Layla Saad began an Instagram challenge called #MeAndWhiteSupremacy, she never predicted it would spread as widely as it did. Her work encourages people to own up and share their racist behaviors, big and small. We will read and answer the reflection prompts in *Me and White Supremacy* to begin and then turn to *I'm Still Here* by Brown for the second half of the series.

Austin Channing Brown's first encounter with a racialized America came at age seven, when she discovered her parents named her Austin to deceive future employers into thinking she was a white man. Growing up in majority-white schools, organizations, and churches, Austin writes, "I had to learn what it means to love blackness," a journey that led to a lifetime spent navigating America's racial divide as a writer, speaker and expert who helps organizations practice genuine inclusion. *I'm Still Here* is a powerful account of how and why our actions so often fall short of our words. Awareness leads to action, and action leads to change. The books are available in the Church Office (\$20 each) and the usual online and local booksellers. The numbers show that readers are ready to do this work.

Good Reads: A Fall Book Discussion Group

Friday, September 18, 1:00 p.m. Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86944767762>

Suggested Book Reads

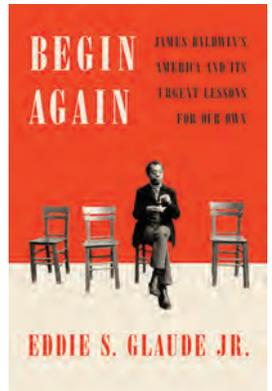
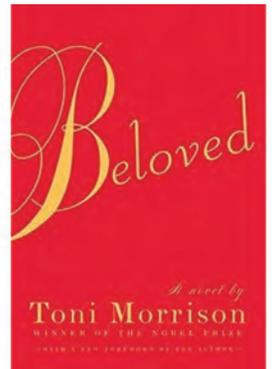
- *Beloved* by Toni Morrison
- *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own* by Eddie Glaude, Jr.

Join Rev. Jay Sanderford and other readers as we delve into new and interesting fiction, memoir, short stories and more. Immerse yourself in good writing, explore important current issues and enjoy free-flowing discussion. Our next books for Friday, September 18, are Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Beloved* and Eddie Glaude's *New York Times* current best-selling, *Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Today*.

Staring unflinchingly into the abyss of slavery, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Beloved* transforms history into a story as powerful as Exodus and as intimate as a lullaby. This spellbinding novel tells the story of Sethe, a former slave who escapes to Ohio, but eighteen years later is still not free.

In *Begin Again*, historian Eddie Glaude examines how James Baldwin grew disillusioned by the failure of the civil rights movement to force America to confront its lies about race. In our own moment, when that confrontation feels more urgently needed than ever, what can we learn from his struggle? Read Eddie Glaude's tour through Baldwin and let's join together in conversation about good writing.

Books are available online at the usual sources and in local bookstores, or contact Rev. Jay Sanderford at jsanderford@firstpresbyterian.org.



A Different Kind of Summer





Welcome Back to Campus!

We welcome students back to campus for a mix of virtual and in-person offerings. College Lunch returns Sunday, September 6 at noon for a socially distant, prepackaged meal. Our weekly small group begins Wednesday, September 2. If you know of any returning or incoming UM, EMU or WCC students, please contact Rev. Evans McGowan (campus@firstpresbyterian.org) to ensure they are getting connected. If you are interested in creating care packages or reaching out to students in other ways, also please let Rev. McGowan know! While there are no Big Ten sports this fall, we look forward to engaging students in safe and creative ways!



Faith In Action

Local Mission Grants

Grants provide \$75,000 of support to local human service agencies.

This summer ten members of the congregation assisted by Rev. Khayla Johnson evaluated 22 Local Mission Grant applications. Our top priorities for 2020 were improving access to 1) Housing and 2) Mental Health Services. Additional priorities included improving access to 3) Healthy Food, 4) Academic Support and 5) Supportive Assistance to avoid crisis. After detailed review and discussion, 11 grants were awarded from \$3,000 to \$10,000 to the following organizations:

Ozone House - Supportive housing for at risk youth.

Habitat for Humanity - House of Faith home renovation

Community Action Network - Social emotional learning program

Cass Community Social Services - Street outreach van

IHN at Alpha House - Family homeless shelter

Hope Medical Clinic - Psychiatry services for uninsured people

Corner Health Center – Telehealth services for at-risk youth

Friends In Deed – Support services to address poverty and prevent financial crisis

Peace Neighborhood Center – College & career prep program

Riverside Gathering – Weekly community meal at First Presbyterian, Ypsilanti

Food Gatherers – Community Kitchen at Delonis Center

Watch for more news about these organizations and the impact that the generosity of our congregation is having for our neighbors in need. For more information visit the Local Mission website - <https://firstpresbyterian.org/mission/local-missions>, or contact Grant Program coordinator Martha Kershaw mdkershaw@sbcglobal.net

Sunday Food Collection

Sunday, September 6

Food Gatherers, the main supplier of food to local food banks, will be the recipient of our Communion Food Collection on Sept. 6 and throughout the month of September. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a “perfect storm” of increased demand for food and declines in donated food, and as we are fed at the Lord’s Table, we also come to feed others and lend support to our neighbors in need. Non-perishable food may be placed in the collection bins provided at the Memorial Garden entrance to the church Monday - Thursday, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Financial gifts may be made by check or online. Personal Care items are of particular need since they cannot be purchased with Bridge Cards. Most needed personal care items: diapers, toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap & shampoo, and disposable razors.



Special Mission Event, Sunday September 27

A special drive through event will also be held on Sunday, September 27 to receive items. Most needed food items are low sodium hearty soups, canned meats & vegetables, pasta, rice, cereal & oatmeal, granola bars, nut butters & jelly, baby food & formula, and Ensure or other nutritional supplements drinks. Most needed personal care items: Diapers, toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap & shampoo, and disposable razors.



Transitions

Births

Cora Lindsay LeVasseur was born July 9 to Hillary & Craig LeVasseur
Lilly Elizabeth Eddins was born July 15 to Jazminn Eddins
Evelia Anna Torres-Davenport was born August 14 to Beca & Daniel Torres-Davenport

Deaths

June 25 Gail Morawa
July 22 Barbara Lauzon

Weddings

July 10 Amanda Taylor Blackson & Henry Barrett Pakela
August 1 William Alan Jermyn & Macy Elizabeth Holmberg
August 15 Christina Fosheim-Hoag and Jacob Keefer

Members Moving:

Pilhwa Lee and Kim Juhyoung Kim, and their children Christian and Joshua, are moving to Maryland.
Hal Pray has moved to Holland, MI. Hal says he will stay digitally connected and promises to return to see us.



Welcome, Evelia Anna Torres-Davenport!



Farewell, Pilhwa Lee, Kim Juhyoung Kim, Christian and Joshua.



First Pres & Anti-Racism

Embracing Our Christian Calling

Several weeks ago, at the end of our June meeting of the Session, and following weeks of watching protests originating with the untimely and horrific deaths of several Black men and women at the hands of police and others, the staff of First Pres shared with us a powerful document, calling for members of First Presbyterian Church, and especially those who are White, to confront systemic racism and racial injustice in open and active ways – individually and as a Christian community.

In prayerful response to their powerful letter, and through discernment and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, six Elders were charged with crafting a statement and a call to action on behalf of the Session. After lengthy and careful consideration, the Session approved a Resolution on Racism.

This was a challenging task, the issue is complex. The Resolution is both a call to individuals and a call to our congregation as a body. We pray you will join with us in love and transparency as we explore our personal and collective concerns, prejudices and experiences with years of racial injustice, prejudice and White privilege, so that as members of First Pres, we can, through our faith, witness and actions show that Black Lives Matter*... because, however long this journey may take as individuals, all of us are still on this journey for racial justice together!

Respectfully,

Elders Diane Hockett, Jeanette Kibler, Bill McPherson, Katie Parker, Helena Prince and Marti Wendler

* *Black Lives Matter is an expression and should not be construed to imply our acceptance of or allegiance to the #Black Lives Matter Movement.*



Session Resolution on Racism

The Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor, in consideration of 'A Statement from the Special Committee on Racism, Truth and Reconciliation' by our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (USA), establishes the following goals for the work that is ours to do as a congregation:

Note: The words in italics are direct quotations from the PC(USA) statement.

As followers of Jesus Christ, who loves all and calls us to challenge the unjust structures of church and society, we are called to work for justice and peace for all God's people.

We the Session of First Presbyterian Church of Ann Arbor affirm that:

- God's abiding truth is this: every human being is created in the image of God and therefore has intrinsic, and equal, value and worth.
- As Christians we must be guided by the unconditional love that Christ has for each of us, no matter our race.
- Racism is an utter rejection of what God intends for humanity; insinuating that some of God's children are less worthy than others.
- Now is the time for First Presbyterian Church to renew our commitment to abolish systemic racism and white privilege, and to work for lasting justice and equality.
- Relying on the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, we vow to continue to reflect and repent, to study and to advocate, to change and to grow and to work to achieve complete racial equality in our world. Black Lives Matter*

* *Black Lives Matter is an expression and should not be construed to imply our acceptance of or allegiance to the #Black Lives Matter Movement.*

The Session is committed to addressing the inequities of Racism and Injustice through the work of each committee and all the ministries of our church.

We call for our congregation to commit to engaging in the work and practice of eliminating racism.

- To ensure that racial justice remains a part of our confessions and worship
- To include racial justice in the Christian formation program for all ages
- To continue to share the work of social transformation with our neighbors in our mission field

We call each member of our congregation to a season of repentance for its complicity in the horrific history and unjust treatment of people of color, which continues to this day.

- To further their individual journey by reading, learning, dialogue and action
- To take the 21-Day Equity Challenge to further our self-awareness, education, and action

We call for white people to recognize their privilege in society and engage in the work of eliminating racism and racist acts against people of color.

- To engage in study and reflection on the injustice of white privilege individually, communally and as a congregation, through discernment and prayer
- To engage thoughtfully and with sensitivity in dialogue with people of color
- To examine the ways in which white privilege has permeated First Presbyterian and begin the work of dismantling these inequities



Building the Beloved Community at First Pres Reflections from Members on "Doing the Work" of Combating Racism

Martha Kershaw, Mission Committee & Stephen Minister

I live a very segregated life. I really have to step out of my every-day routine to interact in any meaningful way with people of color. That was one motivator for participating in Circles* since several of the participants are black, and the issues of race and poverty intersect so heavily.

I participated in the 21 day equity challenge through United Way of Washtenaw County last January. I like how it started with looking at ourselves, then moved to interpersonal relationships and broadened to communities and social systems. I learned so much about the history of racism, and so many aspects of how that effects our current systems. I gained both knowledge and skills about talking about these issues. I feel much more comfortable having conversations with people who don't understand why we are still talking about this anyway

(even now after George Floyd – we do have so much work to do!) Some of my neighbors, and most of David’s family, are rather conservative, so I frequently have the opportunity to engage in conversation around all sorts of social justice issues. I can only hope that every conversation results in a tiny nudge in the arc of the moral universe toward justice.

** Circles is a unique program that is based on the premise that developing meaningful relationships across socio-economic lines can have a dramatic impact on the effort to move families out of poverty. Knowing that relationships and connections matter, the Circles program matches a person in poverty with at least three middle or upper income partners for at least 18 months to build relationships. The goal of these relationships is to break the cycle of generational poverty by creating circles of support and connections with people who are committed to making real change in our community.*

Linda Lampman, Stephen Minister

The way I began the equity challenge was by listening to an interview in which three black mothers described some of the measures they had to take as they attempted to keep their sons safe and alive. One described that black sons are strongly advised not to wear sweatshirts with hoods when out after dark so there will be less risk they will be perceived as “up to no good.” Another described the way she taught her son to act if he were stopped by a police officer for a traffic stop. “Don’t move quickly to reach for your license or the registration lest the officer make the assumption you are going to grab for a gun.”

I have been reading *So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo and was reminded of the above examples when the author recounted her one of her own experiences. “I was pulled over at 16; I quickly reached for the glove compartment when asked for license and registration and the officer’s hand immediately went to his gun as he yelled, ‘STOP!’ As I sat there frozen in fear, he proceeded to lecture me to never reach for anything in front of a cop without saying what I was doing first. ‘That’s a good way to get yourself killed young lady,’ he said to me. Then he nodded and took his hand off of his gun, satisfied with the favor he had done me by not shooting a sixteen-year-old girl reaching for her identification.”

This initial introduction to some of the issues faced by people of color has required that I think deeply about the privilege I have had as a white mom raising children. Never did I talk to my sons about the dangers of hoodies. When my two sons and daughter took driver’s ed, never did I lecture them about the possible dangers of being stopped by a police officer. It makes one think, doesn’t it?

Heidi Hess-Willis, Stephen Minister and Choir Section Leader

This 21-day challenge opened my eyes to realize that I’m not the person I thought I was or the person who I want to be. Having black family members and friends, I truly felt that caring and loving someone so deeply proved my worth as a good person, non-racist. But I heard a question during this 21-day Challenge from Jane Elliott, “If you as a white person would be happy with the same treatment that our black citizen’s do in this society, please stand.” That stopped me in my tracks. She explained that not standing means that you know what’s happening, know you don’t want it for you, and why is it OK to happen to others. I couldn’t stand, could you? How uncomfortable, right? Time and time again, over these last few days, I’m hearing that we (white people) need to feel this discomfort. That this discomfort is the only way we can start the conversation and action that needs to happen. Twenty-one days have passed and it just keeps getting more and more uncomfortable. But in this discomfort, I pray that someday we can find comfort in all standing together in a just and fair society.

Sharon Sheldon, Stephen Minister

I participated in the equity challenge (five years ago) while working for Public Health. The big takeaways for me were how each and every day was a struggle for how to try to meet the basic needs of my family ...having to spend a lot of time contacting agencies to apply for benefits and resources...it was exhausting! I did not have enough time or energy to do the kinds of things to live a healthy lifestyle (healthy meals, enough sleep or exercise). Always being one emergency expense from the whole “deck of cards” falling down! It was an eye and heart opening experience!

Reflections from a Group of Past Elders

Just two days after George Floyd’s murder Andrew Frazier suggested we consider the 21-day Racial Equity Challenge. All three of our Resident Ministers had recommended this as a good way to identify systemic racism. Three of us accepted the challenge and sought out conversation partners. The Challenge offered many resources to choose from. We shared with each other articles, webcasts, funerals, books, and people new to us who have struck a chord. We didn’t understand what we didn’t know. Through the 21-day Challenge we learned the naivety of our own views. This made us aware of racial and health disparities. We identified the impact of social stresses in everyday life. We are keenly aware of our white, female, Christian perspectives.

Because of this journey:

- We've discovered new tools to talk to our grandchildren about race.
- We are eager to seek new black authors
- Support black businesses, and make contributions in support of black and brown causes.
- We vow to speak out when we encounter and recognize racial injustice.
- We are grateful to our Resident Ministers for bringing this transformative learning experience to us.



Rev. Mel Rogers, Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care & Congregational Life

Our staff is participating in small group discussions to work on anti-racism. Each staff group meets online for an hour each week and shares open and real discussion. We read an article or watch a video before our meeting as the starting point for that week's discussion. Our facilitators are agile guides and have provided us a safe place to "do our work." This way of learning and growing is enabling me to look more deeply at my own prejudices, own and respond to my own ignorance, and see the pain I have inflicted on people of color, and too often still do. Learning about micro-aggressions has been particularly eye-opening. As a woman who grew up in the South, and went to the University of Alabama, seeing so much racism up close — still, I have so much to understand. This is hard work, and sometimes I am depressed by how far we have to go. I'm saddened to learn more about the ways Christianity is connected to so much of the systemic racism in our world. But it's what I need to be doing, and so I will keep at it. It's what God is calling me to do. I hope everyone can find a safe group to learn and share with — it's a healthy and hopeful way to tackle a horrific problem that has for too long been tolerated.

Elders Katie Parker & Bill McPherson (Two of the six elders who helped author the Session statement)

Living in turbulent times - Months of pandemic, death and suffering, have left us seeking direction and comfort for what we should to deal with our brokenness, our isolation, and our uncertainty. In the midst of the battle with a deadly virus — we were shocked by video of a black man being brutally killed by some violent police officers out of control. The ensuing peaceful protests, anger, and rage over the killing of blacks by reckless police actions unfortunately devolved into violent actions and looting in some places.

A time for introspection - We are all imperfect humans searching for answers to our questions and to our prayers, reassurance for our fears, and guidance for our actions. To our prayers, questions, and fears, each one of us looks for solutions based upon our faith, ways that deal compassionately with our multitude of troubling problems. But amidst our feelings of anger, fear, and sadness, we often feel impotent to realize change. Amid COVID-19 the sad reality of racial injustice demands bold, engaged action and clear, articulate response.

First Pres as thought leader - as individuals and as groups, as pastors and church staff, and as ruling Elders, we are called to learn, to act, to lead, and to witness for what Jesus leads us to do in His name. When the collective "we" act out of passion, in righteous and at times, self-righteous anger and yes, in feelings of fear, frustration and impotence, we can also act in haste, and forget to "take everyone along with us" in statements from the Session, the governing body of First Presbyterian Church, Ann Arbor. We ask forgiveness when we have failed to do all that we can do to speak as one body. Our church staff and pastors recently shared with the Session their concerns, feelings, and hopes in the midst of the global outpouring over George Floyd's death. We, the Session, support our staff's concerns and share their call to action — that we all need to witness, learn, and breakdown prejudices — but first we must work on our own! As brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to "walk this walk" together.

A time for action - We pray you will join with us in a spirit of love and contemplation as we explore our personal and collective concerns, prejudices and our experiences with years of racial injustice, prejudice and White privilege, so that as members of First Pres, we can, through our faith, witness and actions show that Black Lives Matter ... because, however long this journey may take as individuals, all of us are still on this journey for racial justice together!