



Our Valley Voice
June, 2021



electronic copies are available on our website:
www.valleypresbyterian.net

OUR MISSION

To make Christ known through reconciliation while communicating respect and love to all people.

The principles we will follow to accomplish this are:

- Worship that glorifies God.
- Growing our faith in love, hope and the peace of Christ.
 - Caring for the children of God.
- Reaching out to the community and the world.
 - Seeking an attitude of servant-hood.

Valley Presbyterian Church

2800 S Camino Del Sol

Green Valley, AZ 85622

(520) 625-5023

vpc-office@valleypres.net

www.valleypresbyterian.net

Member of Presbytery de Cristo in The
Synod of the Southwest,
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Pastors

Rev. Dr. Craig Lindsey,

Pastor/Head of Staff

Rev. Diane Christopher,

Pastor of Discipleship

Rev. Joe Hawkins,

Pastor Emeritus

Sunday Worship
Traditional Service of Worship
9:30 a.m.
Online and In person.

Taize Online
Wednesday, June 2
5pm

In This Issue

Table of Contents

Our Valley Presbyterian Staff	1
A Word from Rev. Dr. Craig Lindsey, Pastor/Head of Staff.....	2-4
A Word from Rev. Diane Christopher, Minister of Discipleship.....	5-6
Being Presbyterian.....	7
Birthdays for June, 2021	19-20
Bob & Kristi Rice	11-3
Casa Vida Nueva	15
The Color of Compromise Course	21-23
Crossroads Mission.....	14
Dave & Pam	13
July 4th Hint	10
Library News	24
The Little Library	4
Medical Minute	9
Parish Nurse	8-9
Patio Sale News.....	10
Regarding Ruling Elders	18
St. Andrews Clinic	17
Stephen Ministry	25-26
Valley Readers	27
Worship Schedule	1
Youth on Their Own.....	16



Staff

Pastor Craig Lindsey.....Pastor/Head of Staff.....pastorcraig@@valleypres.net
Pastor Diane Christopher..... Pastor of Discipleship.....dianechristopher@valleypres.net
Jamie Reed..... Director of Music jamie@valleypres.net
Wes Moulton Organist/Accompanist wmoulton@valleypres.net
Chris Erickson..... Parish Nurse parishnurse@valleypres.net
Suzanne Mandeville..... Bookkeeper suzanne@valleypres.net
Cindy Johnson Administrative Specialist Cjohnson@valleypres.net
Linda Hester..... Administrative Specialist Lhester@valleypres.net
Ray Esparza Custodian custodians@valleypres.net
Bob Lopes..... Custodian custodians@valleypres.net
Dick Horn Web Designer rrhorn@mac.com
Alice Sanchez Nursery Attendant vpc-office@valleypres.net
Gee-Gee Smith Valley Voice Editor tubacgee@gmail.com

Sermon Titles & Scriptures

May 30	Trinity Sunday	Memorial Day Weekend
Isaiah 6: 1-8 & Romans 8:12-17		The Kingdom of God
June 6	Communion	
I Samuel 8: 4-15 & Mark 3:20-35		Dealing With Rejection
June 13		
Ezekiel 17: 22-24 & Mark 4:26-34		Visions and Parables
June 20	Fathers Day	
Job 38:1-11 & Mark 4: 35-41		Telling Waves to Stop
June 27		
2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27 & Mark 5:21-43		Knowing Who We Are
July 4	Communion	
2 Samuel 5:1-10 & Mark 6: 1-13		Honor and Dishonor



Rev. Dr. Craig Lindsey, Pastor **Head of Staff**

GIVING A MULLIGAN

One congregation I served had written into the Terms of Call: Free Golf Membership in the Country Club. This was a very nice perk, except I am a terrible Duffer! I did, however, learn a good deal of golfing lingo. The phrase I liked best is a Mulligan, which, as I understand, means allowing a do-over for a mistake. While Valley Presbyterian Church has worked hard to make corrections and have a new trajectory before the world attempts to “return to normal,” my recollection is that our world was stressed-out, politically polarized, and plunged into racial hostility and fears. Then

the economies of the world shut down. After 20 years of war in Afghanistan and Iraq, there are hopes and fears of our troops returning to America. My best guess is that in opening up all the cages, some human animals are going to have difficulty adjusting. We have made mistakes and are going to continue to make mistakes. So can we all give one another a Mulligan? For past sins, for misquotes and mistakes we are going to make, may we prepare ourselves, that people are trying the best they can in a different reality, so we live prepared to forgive. When our kids were little, some parents wanted the sports teams to completely do away with score keeping. I think competition has its purpose, and keeping score during the game needs to be encouraged, but we also need to not take ourselves so seriously; these are only games we play at. In a recent Committee meeting, someone described that after the year of COVID, this is going to be “The Year of Change.” I envision “Growth” but not what I perceive as change; yet as we do begin Live broadcast of our Worship of God to the world, as new staff members find their stability, as Session reorganizes the administration of what we do, I hope we each can be so thankful to be alive and healthy that we agree to be thankful for one another.

LIVE STREAMING

On May 23rd, the Day of Pentecost, we began something new and different. The hope of any technological change, is that those watching have

Con’t

Craig con't

no difficulties and only perceive circumstances are better. Years ago, our Deacons dedicated \$5,000 to be able to have live broadcasting of our Worship especially to our residential facilities. A year ago in March we began video recording on Pastor Diane's cell phone and posting recordings days later when volunteers had tweaked every element. Over the months we learned a great deal. In November we replaced the sound system for the Sanctuary. In January we replaced the Chancel lighting. Through a number of donations and a good deal of learning, our team are now hoping to work without the safety net of pre-recording. Instead, all broadcasts will be live! If there are those of you who are interested in becoming one of our "Video Tech Ushers," we would be happy to bring you onto the team. In the meantime, please patient, there may be a few weeks of only broadcasting video and audio, as we learn the new system, before adding more elements. The great news is that already, all of our current recordings and all future recordings are available through "Boxcast" on your AppleTV, ROKU, Firestick, or at the Church website: Valleypres.net.

THANK YOU JOE SNOW

Joe Snow joined our Church Staff as Lead Custodian late in 2019. Recently, the apartment complex where Joe and his wife and grandson live offered him a full-time position working at the apartment complex, with benefits that were too good to ignore. As Joe leaves us, we are extremely thankful for all the hard work he has done. Many have commented that our Church has never had such a wonderful, helpful staff who have kept the building so well maintained. We will miss you.



SHEPHERDING

Working with those persons learning the Church's new Video system, I described, as your pastor I am not a CEO dictating "Here is what I want," instead, like a Shepherd, I observe where you are going and what are your strengths and weaknesses, to make additions over time, so the whole flock arrive together and happy.

Over the last five years there were a number of developments from Presbytery and the Interim which were reactionary to circumstances that had happened, like Hans Christian Anderson's Little Dutch Boy plugging holes in

Con't

Craig con't

the dyke with his fingers. Over the last two years, we have watched and listened. Earlier this year, Pastor Craig stated that one of his goals for 2021 was re-organizing the Manual for the Congregational Care Committees, which were co-mingled with the Deacons and had their own administration through QAPI (Quality Assurance Program Improvements). By simply naming that, the leaders involved took a look at what they were doing. The persons responsible for monitoring the finances of the Congregational Care Committees = QAPI, were simply co-opted to become a member of the Finance Committee. This does not change the balances or accounts or procedures, it simply brings monitoring of spending and balances into communication with the Finance Committee of the Session. On the 1st Tuesday of the Month the NOC Leaders gathered. That next Thursday, the Congregational Care Committee met, and recognized how many of the same people were in the room, and that their agenda was the same! So the leadership of these are recommending to our Session that we work toward merging the NOC leadership with that of the Congregational Care Committees. Again, this is not something these persons were told they had to do, and it does not change their responsibilities; this simply reduces duplication and allows us the leaders on the ground to better administer our existing programs and activities naturally.

A LITTLE FREE LIBRARY HAS COME TO THE CHURCH!

Valley Presbyterian Church has added a little free library to the church grounds. It is a white structure with a turquoise roof, located in the church parking lot island adjacent to Camino Mercado. The books are free and are available for church members, friends, and neighbors. There will be a variety of books available, including a few children's titles for the grandchildren. Please come and help yourself to good reading. It is operated on the honor system---take one and read it, donate one later if you wish.





Pastor Diane Christopher **Minister of Discipleship**

Every week, the pastors and elders of our Presbytery get an “email blast” from our head pastor, Brad Munroe. Just as Craig and I write an article for our own email blasts, Brad writes an article for his.

This summer, Brad is going on sabbatical and has asked various people in our Presbytery to write an article in his stead. We were to answer the question “What I Learned About the Church During COVID-19.” I share my answer based on an email blast I wrote a while back....

“Please,” the Elder begged at the Session meeting, “can we sing one hymn on Easter?”

When we (Valley Pres, Green Valley) shut down in March 2020 and started recording worship services for people to watch at home, our staff was worried that people would get so used to it, they would never return to church.

When we finally did open for worship mid- October, we did so with severe restrictions: temperature taken at the door, hand sanitizer, names taken for contact tracing, masks required, bulletins in the seats with proper distancing, no Communion, no offering, and no hymn singing, no hymnals, no Bibles. With all these restrictions, why would anyone come? They did.

Our organist decided to do an organ recital on Good Friday. I thought: Who wants to attend an organ recital? So many people wanted to attend that we had to add another recital on the same day.

What have I learned about being the church during Covid -19? The Body of Christ desires to be together. The Church longs to worship together. Never have we appreciated each other more, begging to sing just one hymn together.

Con’t

Diane con't

On May 2, we lessened the restrictions. We allowed our people to sing, and we gave them the hymns they could not sing on Easter. "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" they belted out (with masks, of course). For the first time in over a year, we had Communion together. Several creative women in our congregation developed a Gluten Free wine bread, which was cut up in cubes, and placed in small plastic bags. The congregation found them on the bulletins in the pews.

Recently, I came across a phrase that encompasses all the above: borrow grace. It is similar to the phrase "borrow trouble." To borrow troubles means the action you are about to take may be harmful. Think of a mother, knowing what her child is about to do, says "You are going to borrow trouble."

Borrowing grace is the opposite. Instead of looking for and expecting trouble, borrowing grace means that whatever happens to us we assume that redemption, beauty, and goodness will be present in whatever lies ahead.

I fully believe that in everything that happens to us, we can find meaning and hope. Every joy, every heartache, every love, every tear, every gift, every difficulty has meaning and contains hope. The Church has found new purpose, a new appreciation for how special She is in the midst of this tragic year. Our church has learned to borrow grace in an organ recital, wine bread, and singing "Jesus Christ is Risen Today" weeks after Easter.

In what ways, has your church borrowed grace?

Gracious God, teach us how to borrow grace. No matter what life gives us, whether it is joys or whether it is heartbreak, may we seek, expect and experience redemption, beauty and goodness.

Pastor Diane



Being Presbyterian – ***General Assembly***

Linda Freeman

This month's article covers the largest assembly of people within the Presbyterian Church (USA) – the General Assembly (abbreviated to GA). Next June, each

Presbytery across the United States will send commissioners (half of whom are Pastors and half Elders) to Louisville to 1) review recommendations from our National Missions Agency and administrative bodies and to 2)

review, discuss and recommend responses to overtures (which are requested changes to our Constitution or particular response to current situations) submitted from individual Presbyteries. This will be the 225th Assembly – which I think is an impressive bit of history.

The assembly seeks to protect our church from errors in faith and practice, is responsible for assuring that the expression of our theology remains true to the biblical standards in our historic confessions. The General Assembly presents a witness for truth and justice in our community and in the world community. It sets priorities for the church and establishes relationships with other churches or ecumenical bodies.

Almost everyone who goes to GA hasn't gone before – so the first day is spent wandering around, being awed by the number and diversity of people from across the nation. It so happens that the year I went Pastor Craig also attended. Haven't a clue if our paths crossed but neither of us remember the other. I only got to know the people on my assigned committee. Yes – just to repeat it yet again – the work is done in committees made up of an equal number of Pastors and Elders.

Just as important as the work we accomplished in committees the votes we took as a body, was the opportunity to worship together each day. You come back from GA with a greater appreciation of just how much we are part of the greater church. Most of us are so tightly focused on answering the specific needs of our own congregations that we need to look up and look outward occasionally to be reminded that our faith is shared with thousands of others also striving to be a better follower of Christ.

Next month's article will look at the work of the *PC(USA) logo*.



Parish Nurse

To Live Is an Adventure, Celebrate Life

We all, in some way, are going or have gone through something difficult or a sudden change, whether that be that an illness, COVID, moving, a loss of loved one or friend, change in our health, change in financial status, or even change in our daily routine. Studies are now showing COVID has affected one's mental health with anxiety, stress and depression.



There are many stories that come to mind that have been difficult. One was very difficult, but became uplifting. How is that so? How are we uplifted by difficulties in our life? In October 2016, my father passed away. He was a business owner, pharmacist and one who loved music. He put in his own advanced directives what he wanted- there was no argument as to what we needed to do. It was a Polka Mass. I grew up dancing and singing with my father as he played his accordion. He had his own band with his brothers by age 18. I guess I inherited that love of music as I have been a church organist since age 10. (I won't give away my age) His funeral Mass wasn't somber –it was totally uplifting. I turned around to look at my aunts and cousins; they were wiggling in their seats. As I turned to look at my dad's younger brother, he said, "This is incredible, this is him." We had this incredible opportunity to remember him just the way he wanted.

My point being, how often in sad times or times that are difficult or stressful are we grateful for just celebrating life? How many times during this past year can you say this? God gives us the strength and carries us through all sorts of difficult moments, moments that can be worrisome and fearful, others that are stressful and cause us anxiety. We need to celebrate our life, our gift from God. We look forward to working through these times and for that, we are a stronger person, and closer to God.

As we go forward out of the COVID Pandemic, let us celebrate what we do have, and what we can do now. Enjoy the positive things all around us. Decrease the anxiety, worry and fear by listening to others, visiting with friends and family, exercising, journaling, listening to music, laughing, and sometimes just deep breathing.

As Peter Pan says, *To Live is an Adventure*. Celebrate your adventure. Celebrate each day.
May God's uplifting blessings shine on you,
Chris, Parish Nurse

Parish Nurse con't



Caring for those in our congregation

Faith & Health/Parish Nurse News June 2021

Blood pressure screening will be by individual appointment. Blood pressure screening clinic may resume in the fall.

Connections, during this time, are also essential for those to receive socialization and to know others care. Keep communications with friends, neighbors, and family during this time. Please let us know any concerns or needs that we may be able to help with.

Keeping active helps to stay positive and healthy. We are hopeful for exercise programs to resume and/or start here at VPC. Cardio-drumming will hopefully begin in the fall as a once a week exercise program for health, stress, and balance.

By My Side, a support and uplifting chorus, uses the irrepressible power of singing to move people with Alzheimer's (or other dementia diagnosis) and their care partners to rediscover themselves, make new friends, laugh together, learn together, empower and support, and create something unique together.



The priority is to engage and embrace people with Alzheimer's/dementia and their care partners who live at home and who have fewer opportunities to socialize and contribute. We are hopeful that this chorus can begin again in the fall.

Also in the fall, we are planning a fall prevention workshop. We will continue to update you with more information.

Medical Minute:

Excessive sweating can cause dehydration, rehydrate before and during activities.

Remember when your mouth is dry and tongue feels sticky, you are already Dehydrated.



Patio Sale News

It's always sad this time of year when so many of our friends leave us to travel somewhere else for the summer. It affects so many aspects of our church, but it has a deep impact on the functioning of the Patio Sale. Particularly affected are the areas that require roles usually filled by men, like driving the truck and moving and lifting furniture. However, men are not the only ones who can do those tasks, so any women reading this who have the desire to help us this way out are certainly welcome. Call the church and leave you contact information.



Another area often thought of as a man's field is electronics. Our Patio Sale uses a broad definition for electronics, meaning anything that runs on a battery or plugs into an outlet. Each item we receive that falls under that definition has to be checked out to see that it works as it is supposed to work. In today's world, that makes up a lot of our inventory. We desperately need people - men or women - to help with inspecting the toasters, TVs, lamps, irons, electric tools and toys, flashlights, soldering irons, etc. to make sure they are fit for sale. Once they are inspected, they are boxed up and sent to storage. If you could help us with this activity, please let us know.

The Amigos have decided that we need a pickup to help with picking up and moving our merchandise. Sometimes we have a volunteer who has a pickup and drives it to the spots where the truck is loading donations or to sites where the donations don't need a big truck but could fit in a pickup. It is always helps out so much so we are in the market for one. If you know of one that is for sale, or better yet, one that a benefactor would donate to us, please let us know.



Will there be a July 4th Picnic at VPC this year?

What would July 4th be without our annual picnic at VPC?

We did not have one last year due to Covid. Will we have a picnic this year?



Stay in touch! Read the eBlast. Look for updates in our Sunday bulletins.

Be prepared to wear your red, white and blue outfits on Sunday,



More Bloggers wanted (16 and counting)

A blogger is anyone with access to a computer who can type in bobandkristi.blogspot.com. Have you ever wanted to read a missionary's diary?

Consider blogging the real life story of Bob and Kristi Rice who share on a weekly basis the story of God working in their life.

"Why accept Covid vaccine?"

Two and a half weeks ago I received my second vaccination from Pfizer. I am now fully vaccinated. One of the reasons we decided to stay in the U.S. longer before our return to South Sudan was for this reason. Kristi is also fully vaccinated.

As a church leader, Rev. Philip feels motivated to help South Sudanese understand the vaccine and to know what to do. He attended a vaccination workshop for health and social workers, introducing him and others to the vaccination process for Covid-19. The idea for the workshop was to bring helpful information which would help facilitate the vaccination effort in South Sudan. Around the time of this workshop, 132,000 doses of Astra-Zeneca arrived in Juba. After posting about his experience of receiving his first dose, Rev Philip posted again that same day, responding to the feelings of uncertainty and unease expressed by many in Juba concerning the vaccine.



Second Vaccination, Pfizer

Con't

More Bloggers wanted (16 and counting)

con't

He began his second vaccine. He began his second post with the question, "Why accept Covid vaccine?"

Rev. Philip described how some South Sudanese prophets, Biblical teachers and preachers devise different theological and spiritual ideas which will he believes will confuse Christian congregations. In response to the expressed concerns and misinformation, Rev. Philip shared some of the information he learned at the workshop, substantiating the vaccination effort. He shared several interesting and helpful tidbits, such as:

The COVID-19 vaccine will weaken coronavirus which currently threatens the church from gathering for worship

The COVID-19 vaccine is scientifically studied, and even made from physical elements which God has created, citing the goodness of God's creation (Gen1:31), noting how "the devil did not create anything"

The COVID-19 vaccine is free, and that no one will be forced to take it

The COVID-19 vaccine is similar to other vaccines we already take

For those still concerned, he encouraged his Facebook followers to "purify the vaccine [in their hearts] and bless it to be good for your health through prayers." He thus encouraged faith coupled with tangible action. Rev. Philip's efforts met some resistance on Facebook. One person commented how they (e.g., Bill Gates, China) are bringing harmful things to Africa to destroy the people and take their resources. Sadly, due to the tragic legacy of colonialism and current economic and political neo-colonial realities, Africans are justified in feeling this way, exhibiting mistrust to foreign entities. Yet, Rev. Philip maintains his well established argument for choosing to get vaccinated. Tragically, 60,000 doses of Astra-Zeneca went to waste in South Sudan because of negative messaging and uncertainty.

Whether in South Sudan, the United States, Brazil, or elsewhere in the world, it feels like getting vaccinated when one has the opportunity to do so is the better half of wisdom. As many have said already, the potential side effects of the vaccination are acceptable in comparison to the havoc Covid-19 can potentially wreak on the body. Being vaccinated will not only bring a level of protection to our own bodies, it will help slow the spread of this virus which has brought so much destruction to lives and livelihoods across the globe.

Con't

Bloggers can't

I found this website helpful for addressing concerns about the vaccine: <https://getvaccineanswers.org/>. If you have reasons to be concerned regarding any specific health issues you face (e.g. potential allergic reaction), please see your primary care physician before getting vaccinated. Alternative therapies exist, but I do not believe they substitute the robust effects and proven efficacy of major vaccines being administered in the U.S., Europe, and parts of Africa. We need one another to get through this pandemic, saving both lives and livelihoods, and helping us all to achieve a level of normalcy. May the Lord guide us collectively, and guide us individually in our attitudes, actions, and decisions.

The past blogs read like a real life novel, chronicling God in action through the writings of Bob and Kristi Rice. Please join me in following and praying for our missionaries and let me know if you have joined the blog brigade by emailing me douglasclark68@me.com.

Greetings to Valley Presbyterian Church

Good news in that Pam and I have received Covid-19 vaccination. The bad news is that I've been totally swallowed up the last few weeks with the crisis in India and working with our teams there. We are organizing huge efforts for prayer and to support our brothers and sisters unfortunately many of them have actually died in the last weeks from Covid. We're trying to come alongside their families and others who have a lack of medicine and resources as well as reach out to the least-reached Muslims with love and compassion and the gospel.

I'm applying for a Pakistan visa right now but not sure if I can go still because of restrictions over there and ongoing lockdowns.

It feels like we continue to go 24/7. We appreciate your prayers, support, friendship and partnership.

Yours as ever running the race,
Dave and Pam



CROSSROADS MISSION, NOGALES, ARIZONA

Submitted by Joan Bolin



I received the following information via text message from Bert Wenke, Co-Director of Crossroads Mission, on May 6, 2021, with another text with updates on May 14, 2021:

-Bert is very busy at Crossroads Mission and taking Ben Wenke, Co-Director of Crossroads Mission, to the doctors and hospital. As of May 14, 2021, Ben is in Tucson Medical Center for more evaluation on his medical problems (headaches and his unsteady gait). Bert said he was a very unhappy man. May 23-26, 2021, Ben will be in Phoenix at the Barrows Brain Institute for rehab and tests.

-Crossroads Mission held a Mother's Day luncheon at the Mission on May 8, 2021, attended by about 100. The lunch was served in the dining area, inside the building. The lunch was served on paper

plates, with each lunch consisting of ham, corn, beans, bread and pie. Each mother attending the luncheon received a purse filled with hygiene items, shampoo, brushes/combs, lotion and other similar items. Also, each mother received a red rose (see pictures).

-Crossroads Mission – the month of April 2021 statistics:

- 88 nights men lodged at their shelter
- 44 nights women lodged at their shelter
- 17 nights children lodged at their shelter
- 1331 meals served to the needy
- 757 bags of produce given out to the needy
- 1331 people attended chapel

All Crossroads Mission facilities are open and functioning. Monetary donations are always needed to keep this Mission running. Please keep praying for Crossroads Mission, which is a vital part of Nogales, Arizona.

Also, prayers are requested for Ben.





The Home now has 54 children. COVID hit the home recently sending 8 children



into quarantine and Elias - the Director - was sent to the hospital.

All are now healthy. April 30, the Mayor of Nogales, Sonora, coordinated a special kids day at the Home. The Nogales Sonora Police, Fire and Health departments participated in a whole day of

games, food, in a party atmosphere outside of the home. The fire department even brought one of their fire trucks for the kids to climb on.

Submitted by Reed Olson





INSPIRATIONAL CARD MAKING



Five ladies met at church on Wednesday, April 28 to make Inspirational Cards. We made 56 cards. Ladies working from home added 117 cards. Our next scheduled meeting of Inspirational Card Making will be on Wednesday, August 25 in Classroom 5 from 1-3:30.

PLEASE JOIN US!!!

All our completed cards were delivered to Youth on Their Own on Monday, May 3.

Submitted by Mary Horn, Mission Committee Liaison to YOTO



St. Andrews' Children's Clinic – Valley Voice, June 2021

The Executive Director, Laura Romero announced that there will be 2 or 3 Clinics opened this year. The first will be Thursday in October to serve 7



children to be selected by doctors and volunteer staff. She's calling them the "Lucky 7." Laura and the St. Andrew's team have lots of work to do as they plan this first Clinic. The children will all be from Nogales, Sonora because traveling by bus is too risky. Also, the issuing of Covid vaccines has stopped in Mexico. The "Lucky 7" must meet the protocols set up by the Central Border Protection, the state of Arizona and our National Government. Dr. Quiroz is the pediatrician in Nogales, Sonora

who has been working with St. Andrew's Children in that area. He has good advice as to who should come to the Clinic first.

Laura hopes that two more clinics will be held before the end of 2021. One of her goals is to have a December Clinic which will also be the Christmas party for 15 children and families. This December goal is uppermost in Laura's mind as the clinic begins to serve the Children of Mexico who desperately need medical attention.

Sincere thanks to Valley Presbyterian Church for continued support and prayers for St. Andrew's Children's Clinic.



Regarding Ruling Elders: **A Monthly Series for Serving Faithfully**

By Rodger Nishioka

Good leaders pray.

For years I could not understand what the Apostle Paul meant when he told the believers in Thessalonica to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). How do you do that? As a pastor’s kid, I thought Dad’s pastoral prayers dragged on for an eternity. As teenagers, my brothers and I began to time each of Dad’s prayers. One Sunday dinner, my older brother told Dad he had set an all-time record by praying for more than six minutes. “How do you even know God is listening that long? And besides, if God knows everything, why do you have to tell God what God already knows?!” he asked. I thought it was a good question. Then Dad said, “Boys, I don’t pray for God to know about us. I pray for us to know about God.” Years later, I thought of Dad’s response when I read American Trappist monk Thomas Merton say that he does not pray to change God. He prays so that he might be changed. This resonates with the Jewish theology that to pray is related to “judging oneself.” For Jewish friends, to pray is to be changed or transformed for the better.

Understanding prayer not as a way to change God but as a way for me to become more and more in the likeness of Jesus helped me to view prayer in a different way. But I was still stuck with Paul’s call to pray without ceasing. Then I was introduced to breath prayers—the idea that because God brought humankind to life by breathing into us (Genesis 2:7), when we breathe in, we take in God’s very breath. And when we breathe out, we breathe God’s breath to the creation. Breathing is a form of prayer because the goal is that we might be more attuned to God, and breathing takes God’s very breath into our bodies.

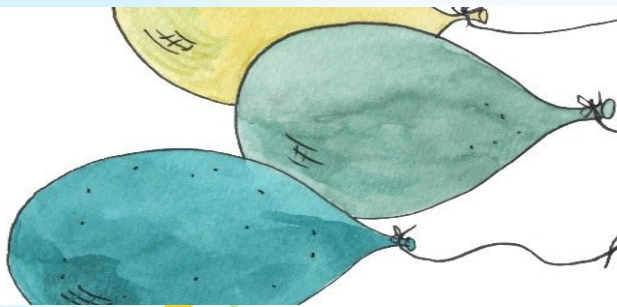
Good leaders pray. It helps to develop a pattern for praying. Many of my friends and family know I start every prayer time by “breathing in God’s mercies” and “breathing out God’s mercies to the whole world.” Then, when I am settled, I light a candle to remind me of the presence of the Holy Spirit, and I pray through lists I keep in my journal. I find it helpful to write down the name of someone or a situation the Spirit brings to me throughout my day. It helps me to pray out loud by speaking the name or the situation. Sometimes I ask for something specific; other times, I just say the name. There is no magic here. It is not that by my speaking I think suddenly God is more attentive. Rather, it is as Merton says, that when I say a name or situation, I am more attuned to the person or situation. In my praying, God helps me to abide, to rest, to remain with them. I always end my prayers with gratitude. What I have come to realize is the more attuned I am to God, the more faithful I am as a follower of Jesus.

Rev. Dr. Rodger Nishioka serves as the senior associate pastor and director of adult faith formation at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas. Prior to joining the staff at Village Church, he served as a professor of Christian education at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia.

This article is the second in a 12-part series focusing on PC(USA) leader formation as a part of the “Year of Leader Formation: Investing in Ruling Elders and Deacons.” Additional resources are available at www.pcusa.org/leader-formation/.



	Janice Stracke	06/02	
	Margaret Preston *	06/03	
	Georgia Puttock	06/03	
	Diane Garnett	06/04	
	K. Annie Stitt	06/04	
	Jean Heap *	06/06	
	Beverly Carey *	06/06	
	Donna Reimer	06/06	
	Richard Hill	06/06	
	John Bentley	06/06	
	Lee Ann Calhoun	06/06	
	Raymond Setterlund	06/08	
	Michael Wigent	06/09	
	Patricia Pearson	06/10	
	William Sauder *	06/11	
	Edwin Kroon *	06/11	
	Dave Tompkins	06/12	
	Phil Green	06/13	
	Karen Holthofer	06/13	
	Wayne Brumm *	06/14	
	Joe Hawkins	06/14	
	Leona Aardema	06/15	
	Sara Pedersen	06/16	
	Janet Landis *	06/16	
	Gee-Gee Smith	06/17	



June 2021

Happy birthday

♦ indicates age in their 90's

Gretchen Pyburn	06/18
Steven Ball	06/18
Yvonne Frash *	06/19
Robert Kern	06/19
Bob Zauel	06/19
Jim FitzGerald	06/20
Jeanne Cochran	06/20
Edwin Smith	06/21
Judith Richards	06/21
Alan Lee *	06/22
David Stepp	06/22
Elsie Ophorst	06/22
Richard Luce	06/23
Margaret Babcock	06/24
Lana Adrian	06/25
Patricia Nau	06/26
James Rusk	06/27
Michael Cochran	06/27
Richard Barney	06/28
Melvin Mount	06/28
George Gibson	06/29
Bernard Tameling	06/29
Tommy Calhoun	06/29
Laurel Erickson	06/30



A Study on Racism in the Church

An eleven-week study on the book The Color of Compromise by Jemar Tisby was completed in mid-May. Seven of us completed the entire course and several others took part periodically. No matter our past experience in working in racial justice, we all learned a lot. We were humbled and saddened by the degree to which the American church contributed to racial injustice, promoting slavery, Jim Crow laws, and keeping the church segregated for hundreds of years.

“The Black Church is an institution that was forged in crises. Through slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow segregation and the civil rights era, the network of places of worship serving traditionally Black congregations has seen its fair share of traumatic events.”

<https://theconversation.com/how-philadelphias-black-churches-overcame-disease-depression-and-civil-strife-153374>



Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was America's first Black church.
[Kean Collection/Getty Images](#)

Those of us in the class have been convicted that as faithful Christians we need to do all that we can to heal the pain of racism and work toward reconciliation. We need to speak up when we hear racist conversations; we need to become educated in laws that perpetuated inequality and work to change those laws; and, we need to listen to people of color describe what they need in order to feel safe and respected.

Comments from participants:

I learned a great deal about racism in church history from the Revolutionary War to the Civil Rights movement. The role of churches in the Presbyterian and other mainline denominations with black church history broadened my perspective.

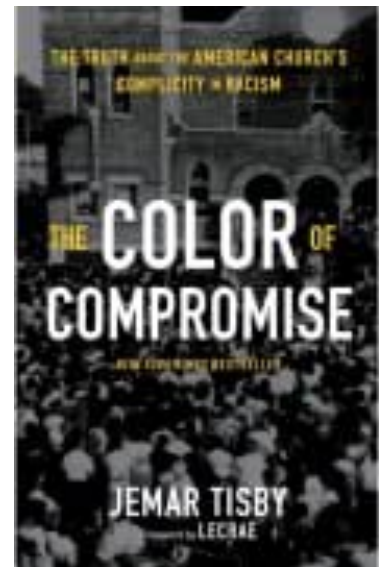
Several key leaders both white and black were profiled in our video and book study. Overall the book study challenged my understanding of racism and brought up key issues for churches to consider. — *Judy Lindsey*

The Color of Compromise class was both educational and intense. To discover the way Christian institutions and religious leaders, as well as civic
Con't

Con't

and government leaders, have historically been complicit in establishing racial inequality in our country is very disturbing. To find solutions for justice, peace, and equality in our country is an enormous challenge. Hopefully, we will find some possible solutions/answers as we continue with the next study. As a result of the past 10 weeks, I now realize that I am a privileged white woman, a phrase I would never have previously thought to describe my life. — *Anne Morrison*

The Color of Compromise video, book and Zoom class offered recently affirmed what we are ever more aware of: our educational systems have not accurately conveyed whole chapters from the text of the real history narrative. The prevalence and impact of racism has not been recorded accurately if at all; it has been ignored or clouded in terminology that covered up essential truths. The role played by churches in America, in thought, word and deed has not reflected what we profess to be the greatest commandment, to love one another. We have treated some people as "less than", not equals. We have controlled educational, employment and housing opportunities as well as church membership. Abuses of some people groups have been horrific and still ignored. I recommend this book, and subsequent studies to open our eyes to the problems and to wrestle with the possible solutions until we become known as congregations of many colors! — *Carol Collins*



Many thanks for leading us on this journey of racial injustice. I thought I knew a lot about Black History but I learned so much more through this class. Thank you! The class was painful at times and I struggle with the injustice that has come down through history to people of color. My heart is hopeful and I look forward to where we head from here. — *Carol Willie*

Prayers of Lament:

Each lesson ended with questions to help us write our own prayers of lament over the injustice in our country. I have included a few of the prayers we wrote.

Creator God, thank you for the Black Christians who remain(ed) faithful to you, even under terrible oppression. I am so sorry that historically the

Con't

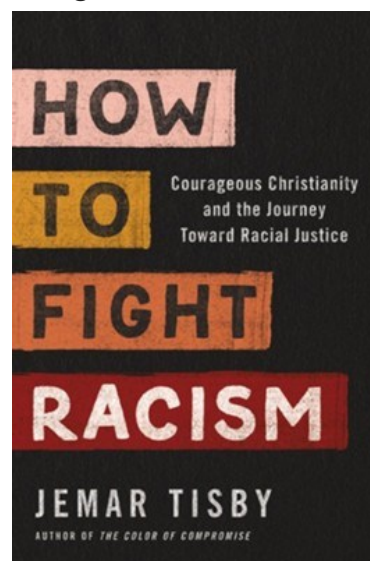
American church sided with actions of white supremacy. Teach me how to truly love my neighbors and to speak up for and work toward justice. Lord, show me ways I can personally contribute to correcting injustice in the world today. Lord, please help us learn to love others as You love us. Amen.

Good and gracious God,

We come before you with a new awareness of the subtleties of historic Christian complicity in racial issues. We offer thanks for believers who are thinking and acting on policies which will strengthen justice and equality for all races and ethnic groups. We recognize that partisan politics have been nurtured by some religious groups, and we ask for your guidance in raising consciousness in our Christian brothers and sisters. While we lament the harm that has been done in the past and is being done today, we invite you to open eyes and hearts to reconcile the divides that exist in our country. We pray in Jesus' precious name, Amen.

Thank you, Creator God, for providing hope for successful reconciliation through the examples You preserved in the Bible. I am so sorry that I allowed myself to become so involved in work and family that I rarely took action to promote justice and equality. Open my eyes to see the opportunities around me to speak up and work toward justice and equality. Creator God, forgive us in the church, for not taking enough action to improve the lives of people of color. Help us to see and create ways to move forward in reconciliation. Amen.

In order to further our commitment to working toward reconciliation in the church, we will study Jemar Tisby's second book, How to Fight Racism. It is a 10-week class that we will complete in two 5-part classes. We will meet again on Thursdays from 1pm-2:30pm. The plan is to meet in person but also provide a Zoom link so that those who have not yet returned to Green Valley will be able to participate. The two periods of study will be Oct 7- Nov 4, and Jan 6 – Feb 3. All are welcome, whether you took The Color of Compromise course or not. It would be helpful if you read TCofC before starting How to Fight Racism. It is our hope that we will be able to develop a list of concrete actions to recommend that our church can take to actively work toward reconciliation. Pastor Diane Christopher will have books available for sale beginning in Sept. Mark your calendars



BOOKS ABOUT RACISM AND JUSTICE

Valley Presbyterian Church Library

Anxious to talk about it: helping white Christians talk faithfully about racism.

Carolyn B. Helsel. (200.89 HEL)

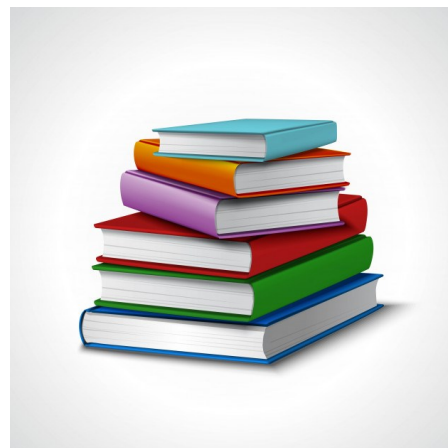
Caste: a brief history. (305.5 CAS)

Caste: the origins of our discontents. Isabel

Wilkerson. (305.5 WIL)

The color of compromise: the truth about the American church's complicity in racism. Jemar

Tisby. (305.8 TIS)



Good white racist?: confronting your role in racial injustice. Kerry Connelly.

(277.308 CON)

How to fight racism: courageous Christianity and the journey toward racial justice. Jemar Tisby. (305.8 TIS)

Just mercy: a story of justice and redemption. Bryan Stevenson. (353.4 STE)

So you want to talk about race. Ijeoma Oluo. (305.8 OLU)

Waking up white: and finding myself in the story of race. Debby Irving.

(323.1 IRV)

White fragility: why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism.

Robin DiAngelo. (305.8 DIA)

Black America since MLK: and still I rise. (DVD 305.8 BLA)

The Black church: This is our story, this is our song. (DVD 277.3 BLA)

Green book. (DVD 791.43 GRE)

Just mercy. (DVD 791.43 JUS)

Loving. (DVD 791.43 LOV)

STEPHEN MINISTRIES

Quality Care through Stephen Ministry

As the COVID-19 pandemic goes on, the needs for care continue to grow in congregations and communities everywhere. People from all walks of life are struggling with a variety of challenges—grief, health concerns, isolation, financial strain, anxiety, and more. In the midst of all this, Stephen Ministry congregations are doing amazing ministry, providing much-needed care.

Even when our Stephen Ministers cannot meet their care receivers in person, they are adapting their ministry by meeting by phone or video chat and continuing to offer quality care. Please pray for our Stephen Ministers and their Care Receivers during this difficult time of change and isolation.



PANDEMIC FATIGUE PRAYERS

PRAYER FOR STEPHEN LEADERS

Lord, as members of our Stephen Leader Team seek to match with our Stephen Ministers those who suffer and are fatigued because of the pandemic, let your presence be with them. Guide them as they work to connect us in a disconnected time so that those in need may know your love. Bless and encourage them as they walk alongside your children in times of uncertainty. Thank you for the gifts of leadership you have given each of them, and for their willingness to use those gifts to shine your light into the world. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER WHEN RECRUITING STEPHEN MINISTERS

Holy Spirit, you enliven our faith to loving action and service. During this pandemic, when so many are in need of care, we look for servants to recruit as Stephen Ministers. Lift up those whom you have blessed with the gifts for caring ministry. Use them to bring your loving presence to people who are lonely, anxious, sick, grieving, and overburdened. Let them shine the light of Jesus amid trouble and fatigue so that people will be cared for and your glory may be revealed. We pray in your name. Amen.

SM Con't

PRAYER FOR STEPHEN MINISTERS DURING SUPERVISION MEETING

O Lord Jesus, you sent out your disciples in your stead to minister to a people who were lost and broken. Bless and empower these men and women as they bring your love and care to people who are hurting and fatigued in the midst of this pandemic. Strengthen them as they minister to your children, and grant them care and encouragement as they face their own struggles during this trying time. Let your light shine in them and through them. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

PRAYER FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM PANDEMIC FATIGUE

Gracious Comforter, you come into the midst of our pain and lovingly dwell with us. During this pandemic, we ask that you strengthen and comfort those who are lonely, grieving, anxious, and overburdened. Provide for them with the caring ministry of your servants who can walk alongside them in their struggles, and grant them recognition and courage to seek help from their brothers and sisters in Christ so they may face the trials of this time together. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

PRAYER FOR ONGOING STEPHEN MINISTRY

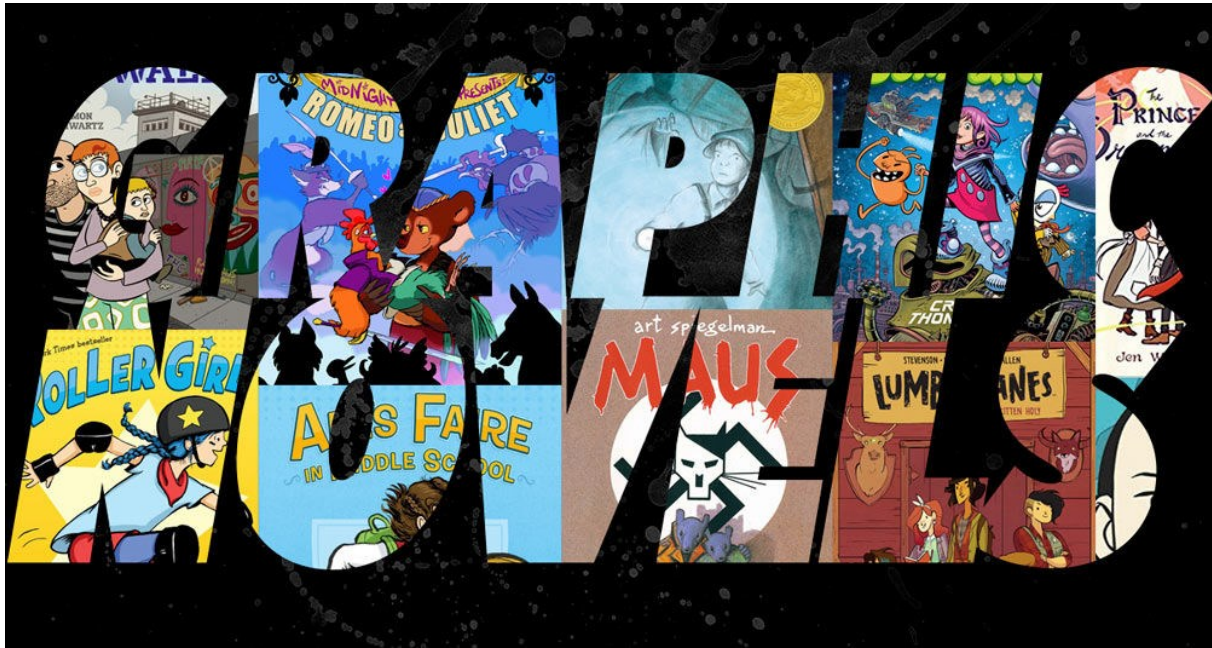
Holy God, may your loving will be done in the midst of our trials brought on by the pandemic. Bless and sustain our Stephen Ministry program so that your people may receive the care of your presence as they struggle with the concerns of these difficult times. Bless the health and wellbeing of our Stephen Ministers giving care to those in need, and guide our Stephen Leaders keeping watchful eyes for your sheep who need tending. Use this ministry to bind us together as one body as we continue walking in faith toward you. In the name of your Son we pray. Amen.

To Learn More about Stephen Ministry . . .

Stephen Ministry is making a big difference in congregations across the US and Canada and around the world amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. If you're interested in learning more about Stephen Ministry and how it enhances our church's caring ministry now and into the future, or if you'd like to receive an informational packet on becoming a Stephen Minister, please call Patti Bright, our recruiting coordinator, at 520-305-3275. If you would like to talk to someone about having a Stephen Minister, please call either John Agner for assigning men, 206-910-6357, or Peggi Briggs for assigning women, 520-965-9203. They will be happy to answer any of your questions. We look forward to the opportunity to talk with you.

Valley Readers

2:00 PM – Monday, June 28, 2021
Classroom 5



What is a graphic novel? It's a book with the story told sequentially through pictures and text. They are about all sorts of topics, can be either fiction or nonfiction, and are available at reading levels for different ages from beginning readers to adults. Graphic novels are the big brothers to comic books, and some are compilations of several issues of a comic book title. They are very popular, especially with young people, but there are many titles of interest to mature adults as well. It's not all superheroes and action so come see what they're all about by joining us for a discussion led by Liz Haynes. A number of titles will be available to browse through. Contact Anne Morrison for additional information at 520-399-0762.



"Tom, this is Kate from the office. Boy, you're a hard person to reach when you're on vacation!"