NYAPC Gentrification Class Spotlights Loss of African American Community
by Martha Davis

Much of the redevelopment occurring in Washington, DC is shaped by “implicit bias” that harms residents of color, and the wave of displacement may intensify if the city moves forward with plans to sell or demolish 2,600 units of public housing.

These aspects of gentrification in DC were discussed in a lively 3-week Fall Sunday School class, where NYAPC members heard from Dominic Moulden and Deborah Williams of ONE DC, Parisa Norouzi of Empower DC, and Pamela Jones of the New Columbia Community Land Trust.

ONE DC spoke about cultural displacement in Shaw at Kelsey Gardens on 7th Street NW, where redevelopment replaced a 54-unit, mostly African American community with a new high-rise mixed income building in 2014. Of the original 54 tenants, only 18 returned after a 6-year relocation. Today only 11 of the original families remain, the sense of community is lost, and Williams noted that the site management is not even respectful towards everyone. African Americans are now in the minority, teenage children are unwelcome in community rooms, and extended family members are scrutinized when they come to visit.

The Black population share in the Shaw neighborhood declined from 79% in 2000 to just 36% in 2017. Citywide, over 20,000 Black residents were displaced from DC between 2000-2013, writes the National Community Reinvestment Coalition.

Brookland Manor on Rhode Island Ave. NE is another locus of cultural displacement where ONE DC has organized tenants. Future mixed income development plans are to exclude intergenerational families by limiting unit sizes, whereas historically many families raised grandchildren, nieces and nephews in the 3 and 4-bedroom units here, as sometimes is common in the African American community. Instead, grandmothers will be encouraged to return to small apartments in a future senior citizen building.

Empower DC is organizing to limit another threat of displacement as the DC Housing Authority prepares its “transformation plan” for the sale or demolition of 2,600 public housing apartments across the city (see Map). The Authority claims that sale or demolition is the only way to create the improvements needed, but such a plan would destroy the existing neighborly connections that many public housing residents rely upon, Norouzi said, and break up African American communities. “Build First” is one solution to minimize
displacement by building new affordable units on or around each site prior to demolition, an approach that would also have helped at Kelsey Gardens.

Public housing is the most permanent, affordable housing in the city, and sometimes is the only affordable housing in a neighborhood. Norouzi outlined for the class a number of “myths” around public housing tenants which have devalued them and justify eliminating their housing: they don’t keep up their apartments and vandalize the property, they are lazy, and they bring crime to their buildings. In fact, all pay rent, a majority of public housing tenants are elderly or disabled, while most younger residents are employed.

Many housing advocacy groups are working together with Empower DC to influence the future of DC’s public housing, including Bread for the City, Legal Aid, Legal Clinic for the Homeless. WIN (Washington Interfaith Network) is also organizing on this issue.

Another affordable housing solution is the New Columbia Community Land Trust. Jones explained the long term advantage of a land trust in providing some funding for housing co-ops or other low income owners to buy their homes, keep them affordable, while providing management support in the succeeding years. NCCLT owns the land under affordable properties in several areas of Northwest DC, but high acquisition prices these days make it difficult to expand further. NYAPC was one of the founding members of this land trust in the early 1990’s.

NYAPC is putting together a committee to lead a new coalition of returning citizens, faith leaders, criminal justice reform advocates, and local government officials. The tentative name of this coalition is District Interfaith Coalition for Expungement and Record Sealing (DICERS).

The vision of DICERS is that all DC returning citizens eligible for record sealing and expungement under a forthcoming DC omnibus law receive relief in an expeditious manner and obtain referrals to community-based resources for support. Our mission is to implement the law by hosting a series of record sealing and expungement clinics at congregations throughout DC in the two years following enactment of the law.

Our work takes its inspiration from a presentation Reverend Dr. Raphael Warnock, Senior Pastor, Ebenezer Baptist Church, gave when he was a McClendon Scholar. Rev. Warnock is a leader in the campaign for restorative justice, and the Multifaith Initiative to End Mass Incarceration.

If you are interested in learning more or getting involved in this life-changing effort, please contact Silke Douglass at slikedouglass@gmail.com with a cc to Theo Brown at dialogdays@aol.com, or call (202) 550-9971. We would like to have an organizing meeting by the end of the year.

Solar Energy at Dupont Commons

Dupont Commons, a first-time homebuyer project in Ward 7 that resulted from WIN’s first affordable housing campaign, recently gained a solar farm on previously vacant land on-site thanks to collaboration between WIN leaders, the CPA Co-op, and the Dupont Commons Homeowners Association.

The CPA Co-op (Community Purchasing Alliance) was founded 5 years ago by leaders from WIN and other Metro IAF (Industrial Areas Foundation) affiliates to provide the cost benefits of mass purchasing to mission-driven community institutions, including churches and schools. Building on their experience with bringing solar energy to other institutions, the CPA Co-op negotiated alongside the Dupont Commons Homeowners Association with New Columbia Solar to bring about a deal that will reduce electric energy bills for income-eligible residents of Dupont Commons by 50% during a 25-year lease. The solar farm is expected to begin operating next month.
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Christmas Pageant Participants Group Picture, December 15
Advent and Beyond Calendar 2019

Sunday, December 1
First Sunday of Advent - Candle of Hope
Worship Services at 8:45 and 11:00 a.m
Rev. Alice Rose Tewell preaching
Education at 10:00 a.m.
Adult Ed: “A Short Story Sojourn,” Part 2
An Advent series on short stories that share the theme of hope, waiting, and epiphany bound to the Advent season.
Led by Jonathan Lauer and Paul Dornan
Children and Youth Advent reflections and Christmas Pageant
Advent Devotionals are available in the sanctuary and by email; published by Miriam Dewhurst
Kenya Christmas tree up in the narthex

Saturday, December 7
Silent Retreat at NYAPC - 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 8
Second Sunday of Advent - Candle of Peace
Worship Services at 8:45 and 11:00 a.m.
Rev. Dr. Heather G. Shortlidge preaching
Special Music Sunday
Daniel Pinkham's Christmas Cantata
Anthem by Giovanni Gabrieli, for choir with brass from the US Army Band and organ; Bryan Stenson, guest conductor, member of the US Army Chorus
Education at 10:00 a.m.
Adult Ed: “A Short Story Sojourn,” Part 2
Children and Youth: Advent reflections and Christmas Pageant
Youth Group Pageant Rehearsal and Tree Decorating, 12:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 14
Family Advent Themed Train Day
9:30-11:30 a.m. in Peter Marshall Hall
especially for those up to 5th grade
Saturday Christmas Pageant Rehearsal
for Grades 3-12, 9 - 12 in the sanctuary
Radcliffe Room Gift Packing, 9 a.m., Radcliffe Room

Sunday, December 15
Third Sunday of Advent - Candle of Joy
Radcliffe Room Christmas Gifts for guest at 8:30 a.m.
Single worship service at 10:00 a.m.
Christmas pageant led by the children and youth of the church

Friday, December 20
Longest Night Memorial Service and Lunch
for those who died while experiencing homelessness
11 a.m. - 1 p.m.
Sanctuary and Radcliffe Room

Saturday, December 21
Family Zoo Lights Meet Up
at the National Smithsonian Zoo,
Meet at the Elephant House at 5 p.m.
This is a free event, but parking is not free.

Sunday, December 22
Fourth Sunday of Advent - Candle of Love
Family Special Christmas Outreach Project to be distributed on Epiphany, 9:00 a.m.
Single worship service at 10:00 a.m
Rev. Dr. Heather G. Shortlidge preaching
Called Congregational Meeting, 11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, December 24
Christmas Eve Worship
5:30 p.m. Christ Candle Service With Children's Message and Childcare led by Rev. Alice Tewell
8:00 p.m. Service With Communion led by Rev. Heather G. Shortlidge

Sunday, December 29
First Sunday After Christmas
Single worship service at 10:00 a.m
Rev. Dr. Heather G. Shortlidge preaching
No education classes.

Sunday, January 5
Epiphany Sunday
Single worship service at 10:00 a.m.
No education classes.

Sunday, January 12
Ordination and Officer Installation Sunday
Single worship service at 10:00 a.m.
No education classes.

We will return to two worship services on January 19, 2020.
HISTORY HAPPENS… AT NYAPC

Warren and Mary Krug
by Edith Snyder

As part of the NYAPC History Committee’s “Bicentennial Interviews Project,” Marilyn Seiber and Edith Snyder interview long-time NYAPC members for the Archives files. Edie interviewed Mary and Warren Krug on December 1, 2019, for this project and the article below.

The distance from their home in Calvert County, Maryland, to The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church is 32 miles. Nevertheless, Warren J. and Mary Maddox Krug have regularly made the trip to worship at NYAPC on Sundays—and during the week for stretches when volunteering at the church—for the last 43 years. Despite the trek, “we still come,” says Warren, “because the church has continued, is continuing in its mission.”

In many ways, NYAPC’s mission is reflected in the individual and collective work of Mary and Warren whose efforts—paid and volunteer—have included local elected office as a county commissioner and a circuit court judge and service on numerous boards at the church as well as a hospital, a college, and several associations. Like the church, the Krugs have sought and continue to seek to live their faith through service to others and to their communities.

DC Born and Bred

Mary and Warren each grew up in Washington, DC and so can claim that rare distinction of being true DC natives. Warren spent the first 20 years of his life at 7th and Florida, NE on the campus of Gallaudet University where his father, Walter J. Krug, was a faculty member in biology, a coach, and dean of men until his death in 1962. Because Walter became deaf from a car accident as a teenager, Warren, his twin brother Walter, and two sisters learned sign language as they learned to speak. As a youngster, Warren attended Lutheran Church of the Reformation on Capitol Hill with his mother and siblings.

Mary was raised in Anacostia where she lived with her parents and older sister, Jane. Frequently after services at Garden Memorial Presbyterian Church in Southeast Washington, her father took the family to the Smithson-
ian. “I grew up with and believed in the institution,” says Mary. She explained that her father’s passion for learning stemmed from having a 3rd grade education and a job as a machinist in the Navy Yard.

Warren and Mary met as undergraduates at George Washington University. She majored in journalism and by her senior year was editor of the school’s independent student newspaper, The GW Hatchet. Warren’s brother Walter, who was also enrolled at GW, was a photographer for the Hatchet and introduced Warren to Mary. Mary was engaged, but her fiancé asked Warren to accompany her on the senior Colonial Cruise, and a new bond was formed.

At New York Avenue

By then, Mary was attending Sunday service at NYAPC, having initially been drawn to the church by the book and film about the life of Rev. Peter Marshall, both titled A Man Called Peter. Warren says he “came to New York Avenue with Mary.” The couple were married by NYAPC Pastor Philip R. Newell, Jr. at Garden Memorial in 1965. (NYAPC’s kitchen was being renovated at the time, requiring the change to a venue that could accommodate the Krugs’ reception.)

Mary recalls that Rev. Newell, who served as NYAPC Assistant Minister for Social Education and Action from 1963 through 1966, “was a trip.” He remains one of her favorite pastors, with, in the words of Capital Witness: A History of The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC, “his capacities to orchestrate social action among the clergy of Washington and to strategize and press that agenda on the district’s political leadership.”

Mary was very active during the Poor Peoples’ Campaign in 1968, volunteering with the Campaign’s press office located at NYAPC. Years later, she participated in the open house the church hosted during President Barack Obama’s first inauguration. Mary remembers persuading an African American gentleman who visited the church that day to see Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation draft displayed in the Lincoln Parlor, and being moved as tears rolled down his cheeks.

Over the years, Mary served as a deacon from 1988 to 1990 and as an elder from 1999 to 2012. She was a member of the Pastor Nominating Committee that called Rev. Robert Craig in 1990. While Warren never joined the church, he has faithfully supported Mary in her work at NYAPC and served as a liturgist and a coffee hour host.

The Krugs also raised their children, Andrew and Hannah, at NYAPC. Both were part of Sunday School, where they participated in the church’s homeless ministry by serving cookies to Radcliffe Room guests. Mary and (continued on p. 6)
Warren remember Andrew’s story of riding the bus on a field trip to the Kennedy Center and seeing a homeless man he knew by name on the way there, surprising his classmates. Today Andrew holds a master’s degree in Middle Eastern studies and applies his gift for languages as a Persian language translator. Hannah earned her PhD in astronomy and, having discovered her calling to teach, now works at Holton-Arms School in Bethesda, Maryland where she is an instructor in mathematics and physics and serves as director of student research.

Lives of Service
Shortly after their marriage, Warren began law school, graduating from the University of Maryland and serving as an estate tax attorney with the Internal Revenue Service from 1969 to 1971. He then went into private practice with a small firm, Handen & Singerman, in Calvert County, which later became Handen and Krug, P.A.

Warren was appointed Associate Judge on the Calvert County Circuit Court, 7th Judicial Circuit, in 1993 and stood for election to the court in 1994. He became County Administrative Judge in 1995, holding that post through a second 15-year-term election in 2010 until he reached mandatory retirement age in March 2012. Warren continues to serve the court as a Senior Judge, primarily handling alternative dispute resolution cases.

Warren has also volunteered his time as director of the Calvert County Chapter of the American Cancer Society; director and president of the German Orphan Home Association, Inc.; board member of the Boys and Girls Club of Southern Maryland; and teacher in the Calvert County Adult Education Program. He received the Maryland Leadership in Law Award in 2001.

For her part, Mary had brief tours with the US Small Business Administration and the US Agency for International Development before landing her “dream job” as press officer for the Smithsonian, the special place of her childhood. She then became press officer for the National Park Service and served as spokesperson for the agency when Congressman Wilbur Mills’ paramour, Fanne Foxe, jumped from the car Mills was driving while intoxicated and into the Tidal Basin, earning her the moniker “the Tidal Basin Bombshell”.

Mary began law school in 1978, a year following the birth of the couple’s son Andrew, and after graduating in 1982, went to work for Handen & Singerman. Having represented the Calvert County Commissioners, Mary was persuaded by clients to run for the post. She was elected in 1990 and again in 1994, serving a total of eight years.

While campaigning, Mary “knocked on every door in Calvert County,” and found it “the best way to get a real view of how other people live.” She remembers, in particular, meeting a man who was so bitter about the Vietnam War that he had resolved never to vote again. Mary sat with him at his kitchen table, listening to his story and concerns. On Election Day, she was surprised and pleased when he appeared at the polls and emerged from the voting booth with a smile and thumbs up, saying proudly, “I did it!”

Mary’s career also included serving as a local government representative for Constellation Energy as well as public service on the board and as an officer of the Maryland Association of Counties; vice chair of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee; member of the Maryland Economic Growth, Resource Protection, and Planning Commission; chair of the University of Maryland’s Institute for Governmental Service; member of the Local Government Insurance Trust Board of Trustees; member of the Calvert County Democratic Central Committee; and member of the education transition teams for Governors Parris Glendening and Martin O’Malley. Mary jokes that she has worked “in all the bad professions—press person, politician, lawyer, and lobbyist.”

A Chaplain for Calvert Memorial Hospital
Mary also served eight years on the Board of Trustees of The College of Southern Maryland and as its chair for part of that time. It was while she was on the Board of Directors for Calvert Memorial Hospital, a role she filled for 22 years, that Mary had a conversation with Rev. Dr. Jack E. McClendon, former Associate Pastor of NYAPC, which altered his course as well as that of the hospital and the clergy in Calvert County.

After 34 years at NYAPC, Rev. McClendon had retired to his home at the cliffs in Calvert County and while driving with Mary one day confessed to being bored. “I’d like to be chaplain at Calvert Memorial Hospital,” he said, to which Mary replied, “But Jack, we don’t have a chaplain position.” He suggested she do something about that. As it happened, soon after their conversation took place, the hospital was reviewed and achieved top ranking in everything but “spiritual support.” Not long after that, Rev. McClendon was installed as chaplain at the hospital, a position on staff that remains to this day. Meanwhile, Pastor McClendon set about organizing the clergy in Calvert County for social action. As Warren says, “It was all to be expected; Jack was Jack.”

Looking ahead to NYAPC’s future, the Krugs believe the church “is on a pretty good path.” Notes Mary, “We have been very blessed by good search committees and unique pastors who have prevented us from getting too complacent or falling into a rut.” Warren agrees. “The church has maintained its sense of mission. We had Rob and then [Rev. Dr.] Roger [Gench] for nearly 30 years. Now we move on.”
John Bell and the Big Sing
by Paul Dornan

John Bell, famed hymn composer – 18 of the hymns in our current hymnal were penned or adapted by him – and member of the Iona Community, led a Big Sing in the NYAPC sanctuary on Wednesday evening, October 2. Those who packed the sanctuary were treated to a lovely, inspiring evening of song produced by themselves. The basic idea of the Big Sing is that Reverend Bell leads the assembled congregation in a group sing of hymns and songs, many of which he has written. He displayed his mastery of the medium by introducing each work, giving some idea of its derivation and inspiration, singing it, going over parts if the music included parts and then asking the congregation to follow him. What followed was magical. Those of us who question our musical abilities found ourselves surrounded by lovely voices, including ours, singing lovely melodies.

Bell introduced the program by observing that so much hymnody concentrates on the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, yet we as Christians must follow in the steps of one who lived – and offered us an example of how to live – in His ministry of healing, prophetic word and reconciliation. So Bell has focused much of his hymn-writing energies on the lived ministry of the Christ. He also stressed throughout that he needed to move way beyond his native Scotland to find musical inspiration in Africa, Asia and America. The songs he led represented those various musical traditions. John Bell’s enthusiasm for and commitment to the hymns he led suffused the sanctuary.

The Big Sing was sponsored by the McClendon Scholar-in-Residence program in cooperation with Wesley Theological Seminary, which had hosted several talks with Reverend Bell earlier that week.

The following prayer was composed by a group at the Annual Church Retreat on October 19.

A Prayer for Times of Transition

Merciful God of the covenant. You are the All-Knowing One, the constant in our lives, even when we don’t know the future, even when we are in transition.

Are we open enough to the change that you invite us to?

We struggle to fully trust your vision with us. We worry about the bumps, the turbulence, the unknown. We feel the weight of others’ expectations and needs. We’re interconnected with others, God. What change is right for us and for them?

And we’re afraid of being wrong. We’re comfortable here, not sure we are ready. We’re afraid of making the wrong decision. There could be a high cost, and we don’t know how things will turn out in the end.

But no decision is a decision. And we know that while you are constant, you are also change.

Thank you for being with us during change. Thank you for the support of friends during transition times. You ask a lot of us, but you want the best for us: Joy and abundance are the fruits of your covenant.

Thank you for getting us to this point in our lives. Thank you for changing us. Be with us, God, when we feel angry and helpless, when change feels thrust upon us, so we don’t let these emotions have the last word.

Trustworthy God, we live in the "already not yet." Grant us strength and confidence to handle transitions with grace, energy, creativity and love.

Amen.
Faith Temple 37th Anniversary Homily
October 13, 2019
by Isaiah J. Poole

(Note: Faith Temple was founded in 1982 by lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and queer people of color who found that they had no place to worship, and very soon thereafter found a home at The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church with the help of Rev. Jack McClendon. They still meet every Sunday in the Lincoln Chapel at 1:00 p.m. Isaiah Poole is a long-time member of this community.)

Scripture references:
"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them." – Isaiah 42:16

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into the wonderful light." – 1 Peter 2:9

14 You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. – Matthew 5:14-16

Our world is in a very dark place right now, and it feels as if many of us have opted to succumb to the darkness.

That succumbing to the darkness has even happened in the Christian church. To understand why I say that, let’s look at the context of the Gospel reading. You will recognize the passage as a part of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount.”

And as Matthew records it, it begins with a series of countercultural statements. Because if there is one constant in much of human culture, it is our tendency to look at people who have accumulated great wealth as being blessed by God, who have great power and use that power in aggressive ways as being specially endowed by God, who wage war and are triumphant by God—sort of like a presidential candidate who said of Sen. John McCain, who endured suffering as a prisoner of war during the Korean War, “I like people who weren’t captured.”

In a series of statements, Jesus turns that thinking on its head. Now, I know these passages are familiar to you, but actually at this time I don’t think we can read them enough. Because if we are talking about light, it matters what kind of light we are to shine.

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. This is the model of life that Jesus has laid before us. If we are to be carriers of light that pierces the darkness, this is what that light should consist of. Because the colors you use to create light matters. Use the wrong colors and the light will not really illuminate. In fact, it will distort. Things look different under a red light bulb or a blue light bulb. You don’t see an accurate depiction of reality when the light is not right. There are some details that your eyes won’t even see if the light is not pure.

A light that is comprised of a pursuit of wealth and power is a light that distorts. What we see is not as it really is. You cannot see God or God’s kingdom because the light is not right.

Jesus says that if you really want to see God and God’s kingdom, this is the light that you need: You need humility of spirit. You need to be able to feel the suffering of others as if it is your own. You need a lifestyle of gentleness and willingness to be submissive. You need a heart of mercy and forgiveness, and a heart of selflessness. You need an impulse that always seeks to bring people together into community rather than drive them apart; a heart that always strives to mend broken relationships.

Finally, the light that Jesus calls us to shine is a life that doesn’t seek to be popular, doesn’t crave to be liked but is willing to be the target of haters. For shining a light of Godliness by definition will disrupt the life and work of people whose accumulation of wealth, power and prestige depends on people’s inability to see them as God sees them.

Jesus goes on to say that you are the salt of the earth (v. 13)
the light of the world (v. 14). Let’s dig into what that really means, because I believe it gets to the heart of Faith Temple and its place in history, and what we must do to keep the spirit of Faith Temple’s ministry alive.

Faith Temple was founded to send a message of liberation to lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual and queer people. We, too, are the “whosoever” people in John 3:16—“For God loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.” That everlasting life covers our whole selves. When the apostle Paul wrote that if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that Jesus was raised from the dead, you will be saved, we came to know and accept that no one is excluded. It’s an “if-then” statement that has no “except.”

But our message is not just that God loves us just as we are. And it is not just that because of that love God has brought us from darkness into His wonderful light. It is also that God wants to use us to transform the world.

God wants us to be salt that changes the flavor of the world around us. When we are in the world, things should be different. When you add salt to water, the very molecules of the liquid respond differently.

God wants us to be light that changes how the world looks and how the world behaves. When we are in the world, the invisible should become visible. When we are in the world, behavior changes; people who do things in darkness will think twice before they do those same things in the light. Where once people were not able to see a way forward, that way should become clear.

Because you are members of a royal priesthood, you have the capacity and the authority to change the rules of the game, so that the world is walking with you in the steps of Jesus instead of their own way of the self.

Dr. James Tinney did not believe that the purpose of church was to make you feel good. Not that there is anything wrong with feeling good. His point was that the church is not about your feelings. It is about your calling. It is about being equipped to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We don’t simply bask in the light. We become light for the world.

Sometimes satanic forces wear us down. We are not perfect. We are vulnerable. We will be weak. We will be tired. We will be scarred by the battle, sometimes deeply. We will need emotional healing. We might need a spiritual painkiller. But if you came to church for an opioid to keep you high, you have come to the wrong place. We are not here to escape reality. We are here to run into the midst of it and change it.

There is a question that is hanging over us, and that question is about what is going to happen to this great church, which was central to my own spiritual formation, the place where I accepted Jesus Christ as my savior and where I learned that Jesus Christ accepted me.

I am not here to answer that question. But I will say I hold two things to be true, even though they may be on the surface somewhat contradictory.

One is that the church is not a building; it’s not a corporate entity with bylaws and a leadership structure. Those are things that churches have. The church is us. We who are believers in Jesus Christ are the ecclesia, the assembly. Buildings come and go. The organizational structures that commission and use those buildings come and go. You can accept that God ordained the establishment of a ministry and also accept that imperfect people have set in motion a chain of events that conspired to bring to an end to that thing that God has started. That is one of the things that light, properly constituted, can reveal.

What is permanent is God’s love for us and his covenant with us, which is why today the ministry of one man who suffered a political execution by the state when he was just 33 years old has grown into a worldwide community of more than two billion people who call themselves Christians. For some of us, Faith Temple is how we got to where we are as Christians. But it is not why. The why is God.

But in saying that “the church is us,” it is important to underline the word “us.” The church is not you, sitting at home watching somebody preach on television or YouTube. It’s not you walking through nature, enjoying God’s presence in the creation. It’s not you dancing to gospel house music or quietly meditating on a prayer rug. When God gave his Son to the world and opened the door for each one of us to be sons and daughters, he called us to be bound together as a family, and to live together in community. Christianity is not a solitary exercise, even though it has solitary moments. Christianity is meant to be lived in community.

Think about the fact that the prayer that Jesus taught us asks that God’s kingdom come and God’s will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God’s will is for us to be establishing a kingdom of God, here and now, that is the mirror image of what God has already established in heaven. A kingdom is a community, people living, working, striving together, and lifting each other up.

Why are we called into community? Because community is where transformation happens. It is where love happens. It is where joy happens. It is where peace happens. All of the fruit of the spirit—love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control—all speak to how we live as God’s people in community.

The darkness that I believe is covering much of the Christian church right now is the belief it is only the individual that matters—my wants, my needs, my point of view.

It is in this darkness that some Christians tolerate putting brown children in cages at the Texas border and black adults in cages around the country.

It is in that darkness that some Christians think that it is OK to not care how our actions are destroying the planet because...
maybe Jesus will rescue his chosen people before the consequences come due. But God’s grant to us of dominion over creation was not a license to consume and destroy. It is a responsibility to stewardship for those who come after us—and “no one knows the day nor the hour that the Son of Man will come.” We are already seeing nature’s wrath at our mistreatment.

It is in that darkness that we can have marches to defend an unborn fetus but not a march to defend the lives of the women who would bear those children, especially black women who disproportionately die at childbirth.

It is that darkness that some church leaders encourage the dehumanization of transgender people because they don’t fit neatly into a binary that they refuse to accept is false, as well as discriminate against LGBTQ people, while at the same time normalize the profane behavior of a soulless and mentally defective person in the White House.

It is in that darkness that some people in the church are perfectly fine with a political system that enables a handful of people to gain great wealth at the expense of the many, and preaches that the reason you don’t have the same wealth that they do is not because we live in a political and economic system that is as corrupt in its structure and operation as the people who conceived it and drive it, but because you as an individual don’t have enough faith. One of the most pernicious sins spread in the church today is the effort to confuse and disempower people so that they believe they are robbing themselves when in fact it is the system robbing them.

But light has the power to reveal that, too, so that people can distinguish between the times they are blocking the blessing of God and the times when that blessing is being blocked by forces other than themselves.

Imagine what happens when your little light stands in community next to another person’s little light, and another person’s little light, and another’s. Soon what was as dark as midnight becomes as bright as midday. That light brings life. That light reveals truth. That light enables people to see their way. That light enables people to be their full selves in a way that is impossible in the dark.

So remember that this is your calling—to be a light, yes, but not one that is solitary and passive. Be one citizen of a holy nation of light. Jesus Christ has showed us how, and has given us a calling.

Everywhere we go—wherever we go from here—are we ready as people of God to let it shine?
McClendon Scholar Program
with Peter Wehner
by Theo Brown

On Tuesday evening November 5, the McClendon Scholar Program hosted a program that addressed the deep divisions that are currently tearing our country apart. The featured scholar was Peter Wehner who is a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and a contributing opinion writer for *The New York Times*. Because of his previous work for three Republican presidents and his current role as a high profile critic of President Trump, Mr. Wehner has a unique perspective on how we got so divided and what we need to do about it.

Mr. Wehner spoke to a group of about 100 people and focused primarily on insights from recent book "The Death of Politics: How to Heal Our Frayed Republic After Trump." He outlined some of the factors that have caused our country to be so divided, including demographic changes, economic anxieties, the silo-ization of media, and the loss of trust in our political leaders. He shared some sobering examples of distrust between liberals and conservatives, but also reminded the audience that there have times in the past when our polarization was worse. He cited the obvious example of the Civil War, but also pointed out that in the early 1970s there was an eighteen month period where we had 2,500 domestic bombings. He urged us to keep in mind that we have overcome divisions in the past and spent much of his presentation talking about specific things individuals can do to help "heal our frayed Republic."

As an evangelical Christian, he bemoaned what he called the "subordination of Christianity to partisan ideology" and explained why he felt that had happened to so many of his fellow evangelicals. He said that many evangelicals feel they are facing "an existential threat" and pointed out that people who are afraid are more easily manipulated. He suggested that many evangelicals feel increasingly powerless and under attack. He suggested they have embraced President Trump because they see him as sort of a "body guard" or "street fighter" who will protect them against liberal ideology.

In spite of this distortion of faith, Mr. Wehner made it clear he believes that the answers to how to heal our divisions must be found in our Christian beliefs. He asserted that the principle of the dignity and worth of each individual should be at the center of our efforts to bring the country together. He then gave many examples of how to apply this in our individual lives and also in public policy. He also talked about the importance of civility and the need to treating others with respect regardless of how they treat us. To illustrate, he gave some powerful examples from his own life of times he has been able to reconcile with conservatives who have attacked him for his opposition to President Trump. In conclusion, he called for us to have hope for the future and to use our faith as a way to work for justice while also reaching out to our fellow citizens who have very different views about politics and the future direction of our country.

Update from the Downtown Day Services Center

Have you been wondering about the services people use in the Center on a regular basis? We've recently received the following information from the Downtown BID for March through August, and are blown away about the numbers. Almost 9,000 garments distributed in 5 months, and 4,000 showers? WOW!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>Jun</th>
<th>Jul</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lunches Distributed</td>
<td>2,150</td>
<td>2,460</td>
<td>2,990</td>
<td>3,725</td>
<td>3,386</td>
<td>3,175</td>
<td>16,786</td>
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<tr>
<td>Showers Provided</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>626</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>609</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>726</td>
<td>3,944</td>
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<tr>
<td>Loads of Laundry</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>319</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>1,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing Distributed</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>1,944</td>
<td>1,896</td>
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<td>517</td>
<td>542</td>
<td>553</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,756</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Have you been wondering about the services people use in the Center on a regular basis? We've recently received the following information from the Downtown BID for March through August, and are blown away about the numbers. Almost 9,000 garments distributed in 5 months, and 4,000 showers? WOW!
Remembering Rob Craig
by Members of the Pastoral Nominating Committee

The Rev. Dr. Rob H. Craig, former pastor, died Saturday, Oct. 19 from complications of cancer. Rev. Craig was Senior Pastor and Head of Staff from October 7, 1990 to December 26, 1999. Rob is survived by his wife Sharon, their son and daughter, Will and Callie, and their grandchildren. Death and the grief that follows are always difficult. Pastor Craig made a lasting impact on the life of NYAPC, for which we are grateful. The Pastoral Nominating Committee that called Pastor Craig offers these reflections on his ministry at NYAPC so that we might celebrate his legacy and in remembering him we may support each other in our shared grief.

From the PNC:

“For those who knew and those who did not have the privilege of knowing former NYAPC pastor Rev. Robert H. Craig, the PNC that called Pastor Craig wanted to share with you some reflections on his ministry at NYAPC.

As pastor at NYAPC, and in all his ministries, Rob Craig was an authentic exemplar of faithfulness - to God, to his family, to the church community, and to their many, many friends.

Rob was called to NYAPC in 1990, at the end of a 3-year transition period. That longer-than-usual transition was occasioned by the short and rocky pastorate that preceded it. Rob was a great pastor for a people who were in need of healing.

Rob was a believer in the ministry of the laity, encouraging people as they sought to discern their callings, and supporting various initiatives such as Sunday Night Live (two hours of multigenerational activities). Ann Davie, in particular, bears witness to his patience and encouragement as she struggled to respond to the long-delayed sense of a call to ministry and seminary. Rob was pastor as the church wrestled with the issue of gay ordination, patiently and calmly supporting the process of task force-discernment-report-eventual Session approval of affiliation with first the Covenant Network and later More Light Presbyterians.

Rob foresaw the need the church would have for resources beyond its level of pledge contributions. With his leadership, the Session approved a three-year SOAR (Stewardship of Accumulated Resources) effort and hired someone to implement it. Our current Planned Giving Director and Committee are a direct descendent of that initiative. The gifts and bequests that came to the church in the early 2000’s have enabled much of our ministry.

Rob encouraged us to recruit parish associates and our congregation has been blessed ever since with the rich talents of Pastors Frances Gench, Gary Campbell, Beth Braxton, Ann Davie, Emily Rhodes Hunter, Matthew Schlageter, Jack Mathison, Riley McDonald, and many others. Also, during his pastorate, we experimented with a Volunteer Coordinator position to help members identify their gifts and engage more effectively in the ministries of the church.

Toward the end of his ministry with us, Rob began the planning effort that resulted in the mission statement that is only now being replaced; and the long-range plan, approved in 2000, which led to the sanctuary renovation, among other things.

Hospitality and welcome were always the Craigs' gift. Rob and his wife, Sharon – a spirited woman of God in her own right who first suggested the Alternative Christmas – were models of warmth, joy, and hope. and that spirit moved through our community, healing old pains and opening us to new possibilities. They may be credited with re-starting the young adults’ group as they opened their home to younger members of the church monthly on Sunday evenings.

Rob came to us as someone who already in life had endured a cancer diagnosis and treatment. Like Jesus, he was a "suffering servant", who God helped survive that first episode, as well as several more. Rob shared with humility and honesty with us that as he faced that first bout with cancer, even as a pastor, he reached a point where he found it difficult to pray, and that when he did, the community prayed for him, and he was buoyed by those prayers.

Rob was a calm presence and a good storyteller. He taught us/reminded us about the liturgical year in very tangible ways - by wishing us all "Happy New Year!" on the first Sunday of Advent and burying the “Hallelujah” with the children at the beginning of Lent, to be dug up again on Easter. And, oh how he loved puns!

More recently Rob helped with the Vision 2020 capital campaign, visiting members with whom he had kept in touch.

We are mindful that Sharon and their children, Callie and Peter, Will and Laurie, and their children, will be missing the always-loving presence of this very fine man. This congregation was blessed by Rob and Sharon and their nearly ten-year ministry among us.”

With love,

Louise Berman, Ann Davie, Miriam Dewhurst, Mary Krug, Karen Mills, Cathy Schultheis, Dan Stokes
Remembering Amy Gillespie
by Rebecca Davis

Amy and I joined NYAPC about four years apart; she came from North Carolina in 2000, and I arrived in 2004. We shared a small Bible study with four other women, and became friends. We lived about a mile apart on Connecticut Avenue, in Northwest DC, and we would go to Politics and Prose, that fantastic independent bookstore close to her apartment you may have seen on C-SPAN, or eat pizza at the now-oddly famous Comet Ping Pong, or go to the Shakespeare theatre by her office. She would tell me about her Authenticity group, her book club with her St. Olaf friends, about her volunteer work with Community Club or her Sunday School class.

A few years after we met, we took a trip together, traveling to Switzerland and southeastern France. We drove a tiny Renault Clio town to town – Annecy, Mont Blanc, Macon, Geneva, Cluny, Chamonix, Nice. It was there that I learned that my ego could not stand more than a daily Scrabble game with Amy. It was there that Amy practiced her (to my ear) very Americanized French to tight lipped, extremely patient waitresses. As we planned the trip, Amy suggested we visit Taizé, an ecumenical, monastic community started in 1940 by a visionary named Brother Roger. Taizé is famous in our progressive Christian circles for its contemplative songs, its small groups, its hiding of Jewish refugees during the World War II.

We arrived on a rainy afternoon to find a space that was one part church camp, one part music festival; there were lovely, rustic buildings set off with onion domes, helpful brothers of the order, and young people from all over the world, earnest and thoughtful. Every day after small groups and lunch, the community gathers in an enormous, low-slung, beautifully lit space, to sit on the ground, and sing long, simple, songs of praise, in English, French, Italian, Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, more languages than I can remember. Lights and candles twinkle at the front of the sanctuary. Your mind slows down, your breathing gets deeper and soon all you can feel is the song. It seemed to me like a little window into what heaven could be like. I was enormously grateful to Amy that she suggested we visit, and then, true to form, she convinced them that two ladies of a certain age should come for the day, as the whole place is meant for young people.

So on Friday, October 25, as I was driving to Suburban Hospital to meet the helicopter that transported Amy after the acute incident that led eventually to her death, Taizé came inexplicably onto my iPhone in the car. I have no idea why my iPhone plays what it does (this, too, is magnum mysterium). That night, a very competent surgeon relieved the fluid around Amy’s heart so her kidneys wouldn’t fail, but a few days later, after consulting with her doctor, Amy decided it was time to go into hospice. As we talked about that decision with her mom, somehow we got to talking about that France trip so long ago, and Taizé. I felt myself pulled into the symmetry and the beauty of that, and I probably said so.

Amy looked at me. “I didn’t really like it,” she said, in that way she had. “You were the one who liked it.”

This made me laugh, because it was just so much Amy: always clear-eyed, often surprising, never sugar coating. Clear and truthful.

One of the things I loved about Amy was her clarity. She once told me she thought that so many of the moral quandaries that presented themselves in modern life were not really moral dilemmas at all, but lack of willingness to do what is right. I think I was probably justifying some friend’s decision about something in business, or over-empathizing with an opponents’ political argument. “I don’t buy it,” I remember her saying. “We know the right thing to do. We just have to develop the will to do it.”

Amy had a fierce urgency about doing the right thing. But it wasn’t born of a moral heaviness, but from an unadulterated joy in making people’s lives better.

She loved fixing people’s resumes. She helped more than one friend get into law school. She plotted with people about their next career moves. She mentored St. Olaf students interning at EES (Department of Justice Environmental Enforcement Section). She took on her supervisory role at work like it was a sacred trust. She acted as a class leader of the senior class of 2010 at Community Club, and then turned to leading the college admissions process. There was no greater delight in her voice than when she described a senior who had found his or her way to a college where they could excel. And it wasn’t necessarily the all-star students who pleased her most, racking up multiple scholarships, but those for whom a single acceptance email would be an enormous leap forward.

She worked with Community Club students with great

(continued on p. 14)
empathy, reminding us over and over that they were, first and foremost, teenagers, navigating complex times in their complex lives. This was born of an understanding of the pressures of transition and of loss, especially the loss of her dad, much too early.

I asked her one time while we hiked through Rock Creek Park what had drawn her to environmental law, and she said, “I love the idea that if we take care of nature it can regenerate, and flourish. It’s time well spent.” The same was true in how she spent her time in the service of other people – there was so much extraordinary potential in the people she helped.

I had the honor of sitting with Mary, Amy’s mom, in her first surgery, back in June 2015. Amy engaged in that process, like all of her treatments, with bravery, taking each decision as it came. Waiting during the surgery was tense, and scary, and sad. Dr. Lin, Amy’s outstanding surgeon, emerged from the operating room and explained that the cancer was advanced, but he was pleased with the procedure, and the chemotherapy would take it from there. We began to ask questions – what would happen next? How would it all get managed? And Dr. Lin had to remind us, gently, that we were missing someone in the planning. “Don’t worry,” he said, “you’ll have Amy.”

And so we did. She brought that moral clarity, that good heartedness, to her new life, living under the “dark cloud” as she called it, of ovarian cancer. Like all things, she addressed this with rigorous thinking and extraordinary mental control. And in this moment, she paradoxically lifted gratitude to be primary.

To a friend, she quoted Athenian lawgiver Solon. “If everyone were to bring their miseries together in one place, most would be glad to take their own home again rather than take a portion out of the common stock.” She went on: “Would I trade the life I’ve gotten to lead for the average life on this Earth? I don’t think so.” She chose not to cram new extraneous activities into each day. “If I have a good cup of coffee and the New York Times crossword puzzle, I’m pretty happy,” she once said to me. She did confess to having a “rhymes with bucket” list, eliminating things which no longer required her attention. She traveled with her sisters and mom. She spent time with friends and her beloved cousins from all over. It was some measure of how well she prioritized her time before her diagnosis that she spent so much time on things she had been doing all along: her service, her small groups, time with her family, her work.

So now it seems that we step into a time when we won’t “have Amy,” as Dr. Lin said. It’s hard to imagine, still. Amy and I didn’t talk much about the afterlife, in all our many conversations. It seemed enough to say, nearly every week in this place, in our confession: “In life and death, we belong to God.” There is, of course, tension in there being so much mystery for someone who loved clarity and certainty. Sometimes it was enough just to name that.

In our tradition, Jesus was the deliverer of new ways of thinking about the urgency of living. Some Biblical scholars tell us that when Jesus talked about “the kingdom of God,” or “the kingdom of heaven,” in parable after parable, he wasn’t so much calling forth what was to be as what could be, right here, right now, if we had the courage to reorder our lives, the way Amy did. That the time, as John said, was at hand.

So many of these “kingdom of heaven” parables Jesus gave the crowds were about creating abundance with what we are given. One in particular comes to mind, from Mark:

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds upon the earth. But after it is planted, it grows to be the largest of all garden plants and puts forth great branches, so that the birds of the air nest in its shade.

I’m hard pressed to think of anyone who felt the urgency of calling forth God’s kingdom more than Amy. We can see it, on the fifth floor of NYAPC when the Community Club gathers every Thursday, when EES does its work to protect the natural gifts we’ve been given. And those careers, and those students, and those families, and her family, will continue to grow, in the goodness that she created, in conversation, in partnership, in love. In this way, we do have Amy.

Thanks be to God, for this gift that we were all given, of Amy’s life and love and leadership.

Anne Laroche and Jack Mathison have been recruiting members on the 14th of every month for the 10:00 AM protest before the NRA Headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia. The hour long protest draws adults and parents with children every month with a total of well over 100 sometimes reaching 200 protesters on all kinds of weather. Contact Anne (solo1101@verizon.net) for more information.
Community Club, our church’s long-standing ministry to the children of this city, has a long-standing tradition. During the announcements at the end of each study hall session, the Senior Class Leader asks the assembled students and tutors for “a drumroll, please!” Tutors and students perform a drumroll as they pound rhythmically on their tables. Then the class leader announces the latest round of college acceptances for members of our senior class with frequent reference to scholarship awards, large and small. Each student is accorded an enthusiastic round of applause. That is one side of Community Club of which we are very proud, the aspirations and successes of our students. We are rightly proud that the great majority of our high school graduates go on to, and many finish, college and proceed on to promising careers.

But there is another side of Community Club as well. As I went through some old papers this week, I came upon a decade-old email from Larry Hatcher, a friend from my HUD days who was a long-time tutor in Community Club way back when. In that email, Larry gave an update on his former students [I have changed their names here]:

“Donald recently lost his job in the economic downturn that we are experiencing and has had difficulty staying at home with his wife and her adult children – she is several years older than he is and her children haven’t always been welcoming to him. Arnie has been homeless several times in the past couple of years. He is currently staying with a friend, and is a driver for Metro Access…. As you know, my two other long-term students are now deceased – Kyle was murdered on the street and Mike died of complications of Hepatitis C – Arnie and I attended the funeral. [Arnie and Mike were childhood friends and Donald and Kyle were childhood friends.] I have seen Kyle’s son several times and Donald has established a relationship with him and his family. I went to Kyle’s son’s middle school graduation last year.”

Now, of course, not every tutor will encounter the amount or profundity of the tragedy that Larry’s students had met. I remember Larry’s constant efforts to keep track of Donald as he served early sentences in jail and prison – and the deep sadness I felt when I heard that Kyle, whose smile could light any room, had been shot in the back when he found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time. But it’s important to affirm that not every Community Club student performs well in school or goes on to college or gains a full-tuition scholarship. And even our best students face real challenges as they navigate life in Washington, its streets and its schools. I have been honored to tutor 10 or so students in my 30 some years in the Club. Some students didn’t need my faltering attempts to help in math and chemistry and physics and English. Others did. Yet others could use what little I knew or could learn. Yet still others weren’t yet ready to learn much at all. For some, I had the rare honor of being present when, in the words of Deepak Chopra, “the door opens and lets the future in.” For others, I and, perhaps, they are still awaiting that door to open.

Last spring, one of my former students, Aaron Byrd, passed away at age 35. Aaron had been my student for 10 years, from 2nd through 10th grade. In all that time, he rarely brought homework, so we talked and wrote stories and drew pictures. At his memorial service, friend after friend recounted stories of Aaron’s kindness, his goofiness, his singularity. I was reminded of what I always knew about Aaron, that he was unmistakably and irredeemably himself. And that reminds me of one of my favorite passages, this from James Agee: “all that each person is, and experiences, and shall never experience, in body and mind, all these things are differing expressions of himself of one root, and are identical: and not one of these things nor one of these persons is ever quite to be duplicated, not replaced, nor has it ever quite had precedent: but each is a new and incommunicably tender life, wounded in every breath and almost as hardly killed as easily wounded, sustaining, for a while, without defense, the enormous assault of the universe.”

Two pastors officiated at Aaron’s service: Frankey Grayton and Mark Blair. Both lived in the old neighborhood. Both also had been students in Community Club. Isn’t it wonderfully meaningful that the two pastors who guided Aaron home were parts of the Community Club community? And wasn’t it also wonderfully meaningful when another of my former students, Greg, called me after my son, Andrew, died and told me, “Paul, you know you have many children.” And isn’t it entirely appropriate that I find myself praying, one by one, for each of my Community Club students? Yes, Community Club focuses much of its energy, rightly, on scholarship. Yet, for both students and tutors it offers a community helping to sustain, for a while, without defense, the [occasionally] enormous assault of the universe.

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Rev. Elmarie Parker Visits NYAPC
by Marilyn Seiber

Rev. Elmarie Parker, PC(USA)’s Regional Liaison for Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, made her second visit to NYAPC on September 13-16. This was her third visit to the Washington, DC area in the last four years during which time she has developed a network of churches in National Capital Presbytery with support for her work in the Middle East Region. Before visiting NYAPC, she met with congregations in Arlington and Mount Vernon. On Saturday, September 14, Rev. Parker gave a presentation at the meeting of the Presbytery’s Global Mission Network hosted by Vienna Presbyterian where she gave an update with a power-point presentation on the situation in Syria and Iraq, the war impact on the Presbyterian Churches in the region, and the mission work that these Presbyterian Churches continue to do.

That evening, Ann Bradley from the Peace & Justice Committee hosted a Dinners for Nine with Rev. Parker as a guest. This gave Rev. Parker an opportunity to meet some members of the Peace & Justice Committee as well as other NYAPC members.

On Sunday, September 15, Rev. Parker participated in both NYAPC worship services, assisting Rev. Alice Tewell with “Time with Children” and giving greetings to the congregation. She led an Adult Christian Education Class to describe her work in the Middle East region and gave reports on the recent situation for the Presbyterian Churches, their mission work and how they are coping with the bombings in Syria and the refugee crisis in Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon.

On Sunday evening, Rev. Parker participated in a worship service at Immanuel Presbyterian Church and led a discussion after the service.

Rev. Parker has provided great leadership and support to NYAPC and other churches in the Presbytery that have sought to become involved with the work of the Presbyterian Churches in Iraq and Syria. We welcome her work and dedication and hope she will visit again as often as she is able.

Iraq Appeal – Good Shepherd School and Nursery
The Outreach Foundation Mission Partnership Update
by Marilyn Borst, Associate Director for Partnership Development

The faithful Presbyterian families in Iraq always amaze me. And the extended family of Rev. Farouk Hammo, pastor of the Baghdad Church, is a prime example. Despite decades of hardships, terror, sanctions, and uncertainty, there is a deep commitment in this congregation to “be the Church” in Iraq and beyond. Their numbers may have diminished, but not their zeal to make Christ known. Along with Farouk’s sisters and their families and his niece and her husband, the ministries of the church – for women, youth and kids as well as outreach to those who do not yet “lift high the cross” – go on. But nowhere is the church’s vision to be “salt and light” more evident than in the Good Shepherd Nursery and newly-opened elementary school.
When our Outreach team was there in late 2017, an old house which stood in front of the nursery school was being renovated to become the elementary school. Rev. Farouk and the school’s principal, Ben, who is a member of the church, proudly shared the results of a university study done on the city’s 400 private preschools: the Good Shepherd Nursery School (which now has 108 students) ranked #2! The nursery school now acts as the “feeder” for its elementary school, and Rev. Farouk and the staff are committed to maintaining that level of excellence.

As our October 2018 team (Ginny Teit, Gretchen Tilly, Tony Lorenz, Sichan Siv, along with my colleague Nuhad Tomeh and I) learned, starting an elementary school has its challenges, some of which are financial, since it will be several years before there are enough students enrolled to cover the actual costs. In the fall they opened the first three grades: there was a “critical mass” of 20 students for grade one because those children were coming directly from the preschool/nursery. Grades two and three had only five students between them because the parents of earlier classes at the nursery had already enrolled their children elsewhere. This spring, the enrollment has climbed to 34 but it will be a while before there is enough income to cover expenses, especially for the salaries of qualified teachers, one who came with 40 years of teaching experience! But Farouk will continue to expand because they must add a grade each year in order to build the program and maintain their accreditation from the government (the Education Ministry is very supportive of these private schools, recognizing that they often offer a level of excellence that the government cannot achieve in its own schools as the country recovers from decades of instability.

This summer, the Outreach Foundation will make it possible for two staff from the Blessed School in Beirut, which cares for autistic and blind children and young adults, to travel to Baghdad to train the school’s staff, as well as staff from the schools run by the churches in Kirkuk and Basrah.

Good desks are still needed for the Good Shepherd School plus a second mini-bus and assistance for the teachers’ salaries. And they are already “eyeing” an adjacent parcel of land which would serve as a high school in the future. “Time is limited,” observed Rev. Farouk. “We want to buy the entire street and open a clinic and other community outreach services — this is our new parish.” As to these “extra-large” dreams of such a small congregation? “We trust in the Lord for every moment of our lives and ministry.” Big plans? Bigger God!!!

**TRANSITIONS**

**BIRTHS**

Graham Ethan Berry, son of Renee and Craig Berry, October 27

Taylor Weaver, wife of Will Weaver, November 10

**WEDDINGS**

**DEATHS**

Elaine Foster, September 16

Ros Ridgway, former long-term member of NYAPC, September 26

Rev. Dr. Rob H. Craig, former Senior Pastor of NYAPC, Saturday, Oct. 19

Robert Rovinsky, a member of Havurah Fabrangen, which has used our Sanctuary during the Jewish High Holy Days every year, died on Thursday, October 24, shortly after visiting our service on October 13 to explain Rosh Hashana.

Philip Moy, the uncle of David Inoue, for whom we have been praying following his entry into hospice care, died on November 2.

Jean Mankit Hong-Wong, the grandmother of Kimberly Cheng, who just recently moved to DC and started worshipping at NYAPC, died in the week of November 2.

Nancy Dickinson, November 20

Amy Gillespie, Sunday, November 24

John Gardner, former long-term member of NYAPC, died in North Carolina on November 26.
CAN held a Mass Meeting at the Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, on the occasion of the 1 year commemoration of Rosa being a guest there in sanctuary. It was wonderful to hear a report directly from her, and to hear reports of CAN successes throughout the year—thanks to so many of you!!

**Update on DC Child Detention Center**

Multiple groups led in mobilizing and rallying in Takoma in late summer to oppose the Center. At that time, the Mayor put emergency/temporary regulations in effect that would bar licensing of a 200+ migrant youth detention center until December 14th of this year.

We want to report the good news that the emergency rule has now been replaced by a permanent ruling last month by the District’s Child & Family Services Agency (CFSA). This new rule establishes a maximum capacity of 15 residents for facilities licensed by the CFSA. View it here:


While we celebrate this important and protective step, we are aware that the agency’s permanent law is NOT yet a City Council law, and therefore could potentially be easier for the Mayor or agency to rescind. Additionally, questions remain to still be answered, including (among others):

What might next happen with the $20.5+ million contract awarded to Dynamic Service Solutions?

How could future federal policy changes related to protections for migrant children potentially circumvent D.C.’s new rule, and possibly allow for new efforts to establish detention in the city? (We know, for example, that in Florida’s Homestead facility and elsewhere, HHS and ORR have “gone around” state licensing requirements under the Flores regulations by using federal properties; claiming they are not subject to Flores licensing rules.)

Also, there are discussions to be had about: What models for reunification of children with relatives/caregivers might be desired by groups most qualified and culturally connected with communities?

If you would like to be kept informed and/or join (or help schedule) meetings with city and community partners to explore these questions and next steps, please reply to this email at sstanley@dhm.disciples.org. Although the new rule is hopeful for now, now remains a time to monitor the situation and be vigilant.

**DC Cluster City Immigrant Policies Team Update**

Alex Taliadoros: Council passed the emergency bill to end cooperation between DC jails and ICE. A last minute hurdle was experienced (re. federal inmates in local jails) but the final bill came out strong. Office visits were made. DC CAN’s Susan, Peter, and Sarah actively participated and were thanked for their work. CAN members stopped by the Mayor’s office and spoke with key members of her team. The hearing for bill will be in Jan/Feb and the bill will be finalized in the late spring or possibly fall. Alex also helped lead a session on the campaign at the Oct. 24th SDMV “Teach In” held at Foundry.

**Host and Support Team Updates and Needs (Alicia)**

Beginning at the Statue of Liberty in New York City on October 25, a group of DACA/TPS individuals marched to DC, arriving in DC on November 6. CAN and individual churches stepped up to provide hospitality. The NYAPC Peace and Justice Committee donated $400 for their meals while in DC. The group had asked us to help host a dinner for 135 people on Sunday p.m., along with multiple other meals through Friday.

Churches were asked to invite the DACA recipients to talk about DACA/TPS in their weekend worship services. At 3:00 PM Sunday, the Marchers were at the Supreme Court for a Welcome Rally. There was also a rally Tuesday at the Supreme Court from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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Robin Shaffert – Ceiling on Refugees

A Presidential Determination set the Ceiling on Refugees at 18,000 (extremely low). In addition, groups that support refugee resettlement are being defunded and dismantled. An executive order was issued so that communities must agree in advance that refugees can be settled in a community (this change represents an opt-in rather than an opt-out approach). Massachusetts and New Jersey have taken action, responding with refugee-favorable letters. Multi-faith partners (including HIAS, Disciples, and nearly all of our faith communities, in partnership with the Interfaith Immigration Coalition, other resettlement agencies such as CWS, LIRS/LSS, etc., and the Refugee Council USA) are all working on key states to shore up support from both Democrat and Republican Governors and Mayors/City & County Council reps. Keep staying tuned for action steps and alerts.

Duelling demonstrations in Montgomery County. Pro-immigrant demonstration in foreground, anti-immigrant demonstration across the street.

A Visit from Njoro, Kenya
by Beth Braxton

The Njoro - NYAPC partnership states that relationships are primary. First, it is about our mutual relations of faith in Jesus Christ who calls us to care for the “least of these” in our communities. The partnership is also about nurturing our relationship and friendship as Africans and Americans. And finally, it is about building global understanding across different cultures.

Having the opportunity to meet personally our Njoro counterparts here in DC furthers all three of these elements of building relationships. Hear from some of those who were directly involved:

Beth Braxton, who hosted Susan Wambu:  

Susan Wambu, the social worker, stayed at our house. Well, I learned again that a few Kenyans prefer just plain tea with no cream or sugar as Susan does. She spoke with such concern about individual students and what their personal situations are. It gave me more of an appreciation for her work and how she is key to our ministry there in Njoro. She was so appreciative of everything we were doing in the visit. And my, was she tidy! — making her bed every morning and washing the breakfast dishes before I could get to them! I am so thankful for Susan.

Susan Wambu, Social Worker and Director of Njoro OVC, who stayed with Beth:

It has been an honour and a rewarding experiencing to work with the P.C.E.A church and the NYAPC church for a period of one year and close to three months.

My experience in the United States gave me an exposure to my work and my heart was filled with joy to see the NYAPC work hard through the OVC board to see that the Kenya children in the program get help. I was more than lucky to join others with the children at the Radcliffe Room Ministry for the homeless. This taught me to be more loving to the children, be patient with them and that all over people need our prayers. Serving them was humbling and brought a sense of belonging in the charity work done by the church.

Having a community club that is concerned with the wellbeing of children at a personal level is touching. I never had such an experience in Kenya. The history of the community club from Shamika Bradley, the co-director, brought out a reflection of a very successful program and its achievements in seeing children grow.

On Sunday, we had lunch with the NYAPC at the Radcliffe Room where I got to share my experience at the program and the children update. There was a moment of explaining to the members on the progress of the program by relating to the childrens’ wellbeing.

The meeting held by the OVC board brought light of serious individuals offering themselves selflessly for the sake of the OVC children. We shared concerns of children matters and the arising issues in their lives to see them being supported for a bright future.

I had a chance to visit a school and relate the difference of the (continued on p. 20)
school with the ones in Kenya and had a time with the school social worker. Visiting the elderly center was an eye opener of how indoor games can motivate people and for me children. We received some games which the children have really enjoyed and it has boosted their concentration level. The Sasha Bruce Centre stands out to be a life changing project for the community. The way they take care of the runaways, homeless, abused and neglected at-risk youths and their families was inspiring. I learnt a lot among them. Real follow-up on the children who need guidance and that anybody can get help.

Sharing moments and visits: Being in the USA was life changing. It was my first time to go out of the country. I visited many places, among them museums in Washington. I am so grateful to the NYAPC and promise to serve the children until we get more of their testimonies.

Transforming lives for the better remains my goal.

God bless.

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Ann Njeri, who stayed with Carolyn and her family:

Thank you Carolyn and your great family for hosting me and treating me well. Thank you for giving me many presents and giving me happiness every day. I would want to thank you for protecting me and taking good care of me every time I was in your home. You have shown me greatest love that I gain even from my family. You have showed me good love that even I was not missing my family because you also treat me as your own family. Everyday when I saw you I was feeling like I was with my family. Then I would like to tell you all when I am at home. I also told my mum about your story and even I miss you all. When I told my mum that I stayed with the generous family they told me that you have treated me well. Even I have changed very much. You have showed me a good love, care and protection. Even I was with you all I was feeling very good to spend my time with you. When we go to watch Jorn’s playing ball I also feel good like it was my brother who was playing, and even when he is going to play another ball he is going to win a trust that can lead somebody very well. Even I can thank you for spending your whole time asking me many questions about Kiswahili words and about Kenya. Thank you for traveling with me all the way to the market. Thank you for driving me every time and spending your time with me. Thank you for making me to get into the Metro bus and train. Thank you. May God bless you as a family. Carolyn I will miss you. Hope you will one day come to Kenya.

Lorie Scott, who hosted Francis Muchemi:

We appreciated the opportunity to get to know Francis, and learn about the mission program in Kenya. Clearly an enthusiastic leader, committed to serving the orphaned and disadvantaged youth in his Njoro community, he was a pleasure to host and now call friend. An international guest’s perspective on American life and global issues provides interesting counterpoint to all that occupies our attention in Washington.

Malcolm, Philip and Diane Douglas, whose family hosted Matthew Makua:

Malcolm:

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It was truly a joy to host Matthew. I learned so much from him the time we had with him, and I know it was same for him. It was inspiring to learn about the way of life in Kenya and his perspective on the world. I also was so happy to take him and Anne to school. I know that they enjoyed learning, and they also enjoyed my cross-country practice. It was also so much fun to play soccer with Matthew in a park near our house. It was such a joyful time and I would love to see Matthew again.

Philip:
It was very nice to host him. He was very nice and had good questions and did great. He had fun doing soccer.

Diane:
Matthew was a polite and delightful guest. I loved his inquisitive nature. He expressed an interest in learning how to become a journalist and showed dedication to his studies from afar by reviewing for an upcoming exam at night. Matthew was not familiar with American baseball and it was a pleasure to introduce him to the sport as the Washington Nationals were playing games in the World Series. He was amazed at the technology of the Metro tracks and tunnels. It was a pleasure to get to know this generous and enthusiastic young man.

Matthew Mokua, who stayed with Scott and Diane Douglas and their family

Thanks to Malcolm’s family for great love and care you offered to me. I really appreciate because you treated me very well. I spent my time there nicely with Malcolm and Philip. I remember the day we went to Malcolm’s school which was great. It was a great experience for me to be in an American school.

I learnt a lot from you. Thanks also to Malcolm’s parents because did their best for me. I really enjoyed especially when we ran with Malcolm and his friends around the city and how kind he was to guide me in every step. Lots of appreciation to Malcolm’s mom for she did the great job to take me a soccer field with Philip where we went for Soccer practice. I really enjoyed the practice with Philip and in my opinion Philip is the best soccer player. She also showed me some wonders at Washington like the baseball pitch, underground train tunnel and soccer pitch.

I also appreciate Mr. Douglas for he taught me a lot. He also accompanied me to the Church the day I was leaving Washington DC to Richmond. He was really a good person. When I was there, I felt like I was at home because you really took care of me.

Finally, I greatly appreciate you for the great gift you gave me. I was really happy because the great gift will always make me remember you every time. Thank you very much and may God bless you abundantly.

Morgan Brown and Ann Njeri picking apples

Kenyan visitors and NYAPC people in front of the church