



A GOSPEL FROM ST. LOUIS:

Lessons from Congregations Seeking
RACIAL AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE



2018



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)
Office of the General Assembly
100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202
(502) 569-5375 jherbert.nelsonii@pcusa.org

September 2018

THE REVEREND DR. J. HERBERT NELSON, II
STATED CLERK OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Dear members and friends of the Presbyterian Church:

The St. Louis General Assembly will be remembered for its March to End Cash Bail, with almost all commissioners walking in the hot sun from the convention center to the courthouse and jail. There I was privileged to confirm the use of \$47,000 to bail out persons arrested for nonviolent infractions who had not been convicted, but had not been released because they were not able to post relatively small amounts of cash. That money was given expressly for paying bail, bringing very Biblical images of people being delivered from prison. Many readers know that keeping people of limited means in jail often disrupts family life and jobs, reinforcing the racial and class biases rampant in our criminal justice system.

This report contains policy recommendations both for criminal justice reform—as substantiated in the 2016 Justice Department report on practices in Ferguson, Missouri, and for building up our urban congregations and their communities—in St. Louis and across our country.

I write this preface to those within and outside our church in my capacity as Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, the highest policy making body of our denomination, to confirm that this report, *A Gospel from St Louis: Lessons from Congregations Seeking Racial and Economic Justice*, was approved by the 223rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on June 22, 2018, in St. Louis, Missouri. As Stated Clerk I am directed by the Assembly rules for social witness policy to provide a brief explanation of the standing of such reports. Here I am also pleased to lift up several new elements brought together by the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy.

The General Assembly adopts studies and statements on matters of Christian conscience under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in exercise of its responsibility to witness to the love and justice of Jesus Christ in every dimension of life. The recommendations in the resolution are binding directives to the ministries and advocacy of the General Assembly agencies, but are advisory to members, sessions, presbyteries, and synods. Printed in bold type at the front of the booklet, the recommendations are to guide our own urban mission and our public witness before city councils, planning boards, state legislatures, and our national office-holders.

The new elements are three: (1) the background study material provides tested examples from five very different St Louis congregations; (2) a Presbyterian Biblical scholar and dean of Eden Theological Seminary reflects on her participation in the widespread protests for police accountability; and (3) the General Presbyter notes that while the five pastors and professor do not speak officially for the presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy, the presbytery has held together an even wider range of voices without backing off God's claim for justice and mercy in the city and surrounding towns.

This report joins an on-going conversation from the Gospel of Detroit (2014), a report from the Portland Assembly (2016), and (we hope) a Gospel from Baltimore in 2020. May you also feel the Spirit moving, despite obstacles, as we seek to be God's hands and feet for God's kin(g)dom.

Yours in the faith that we share,

J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk

A Resolution on a Gospel from St Louis:

Lessons from Congregations Seeking Racial and Economic Justice



PDS # 24-052-18-004

Copyright © 2018

The Office of the General Assembly

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202

Approved by the 223rd General Assembly (2018)

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

A policy statement is an excerpt from the Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Developed by

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)

in cooperation with Compassion, Peace and Justice Ministries, Presbyterian Mission Agency

www.pcusa.org/acswp or www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/acswp

See also www.justiceUnbound.org for current discussion

A Resolution on a Gospel from St Louis:

Lessons from Congregations Seeking Racial and Economic Justice

Table of Contents

Affirmations and Actions	1
Rationale	4
1. Introduction: A Gospel from St. Louis	4
The role of Congregational Conversations at the Big Tent Conference	5
Context of Congregational Public Witness in PCUSA	5
Context of St. Louis City and County	5
Context of Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery and Ecumenical Context	5
2. PREFACE: God’s Redemptive Action in St. Louis	
Rev. Craig Howard, Presbytery Transitional Leader, Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery	6
3. The Witness and Mission of Third Presbyterian Church, St. Louis	
Rev. Cedric Portis, Senior Pastor of Third Presbyterian Church	7
Community Transformation Strategy and Christian Witness	9
The Summer Program, Flourish Ministry	10
4. Cry, the Beloved City: Acute and Chronic Anxiety in Ferguson, Missouri	
Rev. Mike Trautman, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Ferguson, MO	10
5. The Vision and Journey of Second Presbyterian Church, St. Louis	
Rev. Susan Andrews, Interim Pastor, and congregation members	13
A Vision is Born	13
A Multi-Cultural Journey Continues	14
The Journey of Race, Reconciliation, and Reform (1838-2017)	15

6. The Ever-Contemporary Context of Church Ministry	
Rev. Clyde R. Crumpton, Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church, St. Louis	16
A Reorganized Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church	17
Today’s Challenges	18
Education for Justice	19
7. A Dream-Vision-Hope from Oak Hill, St. Louis	
Rev. Erin Counihan, Pastor, Oak Hill Presbyterian Church, St. Louis	20
From the Oak Hill Presbyterian Church Newsletter, October 2017	21
8. Marks of a Faithful Human Freedom Movement in St. Louis	
Rev. Deborah Krause, PhD, Dean of the Faculty, Eden Theological Seminary	23
I. Racism is a social disease	23
II. A Moral Summons to be Seen and Heard in STL	24
III. Critical Appreciation of our Institutional History	25
IV. Next Steps	27
SEVERAL ADDITIONAL RESOURCES on Christian witness in St. Louis and other cities ...	29

A Resolution on a Gospel from St Louis:

Lessons from Congregations Seeking Racial and Economic Justice

AFFIRMATIONS AND ACTIONS

In support of the Gospel witness from dedicated congregations and pastors in the St. Louis area, the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy encourages the 223rd General Assembly (2018) to adopt the following affirmations and actions:

1. Commends the congregations and pastors of greater St. Louis for the Christian witness in their community ministries of justice and service, and commends all those who have engaged in conversations and education about the tensions of race and class that contribute to the need for those ministries;
2. Cautions any Presbyterian Christian reading of the unjust practices and unequal structures of the St Louis area that its racial and economic divisions are not unique, so that the call to each reader and our church as a part of the body of Christ is to learn from and apply the lessons of the tragedy in Ferguson and subsequent protests to our own communities and to our larger society;
3. Affirms the support of the Reformed Christian tradition for public protest, community organizing, and the commitment to social righteousness that has led St Louis area Presbyterians, ecumenical partners, and many others to protest on matters of criminal justice and needed reforms of police practice and accountability;
4. Expresses gratitude (a) to the Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy for its hosting not only the 2018 General Assembly but the 2017 Big Tent celebration (July 6-8), (b) to those specific congregations which hosted the Congregational Conversations on “Race, Reformation, and Reconciliation,” that contributed to this report, and (c) to the congregations in Giddings-Lovejoy that are not in the St Louis metropolitan area but which are nonetheless supportive of intentional witness and program in that area;
5. In the calling of urban mission, the Assembly urges greater experimentation in the use and transformation of church properties in ways that preserve Presbyterian and ecumenical ministry and witness in poorer and gentrifying communities, noting the creative “ROC SALT Mission Center” (Rochester Serving and Learning Together), a multi-program initiative in the building of a former congregation, approved by the Presbytery of Genesee Valley in October, 2017.
6. In specific learnings from the pastors and others who have shared information and reflection on their congregations’ ministries in and around St. Louis, the Assembly encourages other congregations to consider as examples:
 - (a) The public and often prophetic leadership role of pastors inside and outside the church and the ways presbytery, synod, and General Assembly assistance can be

- provided in sometimes very stressful situations, as described in testimonies in this report;
- (b) The comprehensive summer program developed by Third Presbyterian Church, noting its training of counselors and the range of support it has received, including from the Dardenne Prairie congregation;
 - (c) The use of Family Systems analysis of high stress situations, such as that in Ferguson, MO, in church and community;
 - (d) Participation in church-based community organizing through Metropolitan Congregations United, particularly led by Second and Oak Hill congregations;
 - (e) Education programs for high school students from suburban communities that give them not only exposure but understanding of urban conflict and tension, such as ventured by the Ladue Chapel senior high program;
 - (f) Engagement with nearby seminary faculty, staff, and students, as has happened with Eden Seminary;
 - (g) Ecumenical participation, particularly with the United Church of Christ, and in interfaith partnerships as well.
7. Further to the urban mission of the PCUSA, those presbyteries that have developed overall visions for urban ministry and employ policies or principles to determine the use of funds from property sales in racial-ethnic communities, are commended for those efforts, such as the historic recommendation of Detroit Presbytery that 80% of such sales be used for continuing ministry in those areas. Urban congregations and presbyteries are encouraged to review the survey of urban presbytery property policies and practices that is available from the offices of Self-Development of People (SDOP@pcusa.org) and Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (acswp@pcusa.org); request Property Policy Survey by Rev. Phil Tom, Urban Ministry Network.
8. Encourage the Presbytery of Baltimore, in its preparation for the General Assembly in 2020, to invite city churches and their pastors to reflect on and share with that Assembly how the Holy Spirit is moving in their growth and change in membership and mission, including evangelism, mission, and witness to justice, peace, and healing in that city;
9. In the area of criminal justice and police procedure reform, affirms the findings of the Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Report of March 4, 2015, on the police practices of the Ferguson municipality, which apply more broadly to many other municipalities and to the city of St Louis itself. These findings, as summarized by Theodore M. Shaw, Esq.: *“Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department* illuminates a municipality that is dependent on practices and policies that criminalize its majority black populations through traffic violations, municipal ordinances, false arrests, charging practices, and impositions of penalties for petty violations and charges that lead to debt and imprisonment” (*The Ferguson Report* (NY: New Press, 2015), p. ix). Remedies thus supported for all civil jurisdictions include:
- (a) methods to de-escalate confrontations with all citizens, regardless of color, specifically reducing the use of electroshock weapons (and other electronic control weapons, or ECW), chemical mace, tear gas, and attack dogs, as well as guns;

- (b) revising guidelines, training, and accountability with regard to use of force and use of deadly force by officers;
 - (c) hiring a more representative and diverse police force and municipal court staff, and increasing effective civilian oversight of tested community policing practices, together to increase the professionalism of police and respect for the dignity of citizens;
 - (d) eliminating bond, cash bail, and in-person appearance practices that have no public safety justification and serve to imprison people punitively for petty sums, disrupting family life and employment, and adding to arrest records on technicalities, bringing justice into disrepute;
 - (e) reducing the incentives for prosecutors to use their discretion in charging and disclosure of evidence to seek higher incarceration rates while increasing the number and capacity of public defenders to protect poor suspects from coercive plea bargains; practices that currently tilt the justice system toward the well-to-do.
10. Further to the reform of police practice in the arrest of suspects, use of deadly force, and prosecutorial favoritism in the fair trial of officers involved in killing civilians, the General Assembly supports gun violence reduction (policies detailed by prior Assemblies), better training, greater transparency and departmental accountability to reduce the numbers of persons killed annually by police (1,146 in 2015, of whom 234 were unarmed; 1091 in 2016, of whom 169 were unarmed) and the pattern by which young African American men are four times as likely to be killed as young white men (see <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/08/the-counted-police-killings-2016-young-black-men>). Reporting of civilian and police officer deaths to the FBI should be standardized and made more comprehensive, including data on the proportion of persons involved with mental illness, with specific protocols for reducing their death and incarceration rates.
11. Further to the reform of the US prison system, the largest in the world, the General Assembly affirms the longtime Presbyterian Church goals of reducing incarceration rates, particularly of nonviolent individuals; restricting the solitary confinement of all prisoners, especially those under 21; developing restorative justice programs involving (when possible) the victims of fraud, theft, or violence, and thus ending mandatory minimum sentencing rules; the removal of financial incentives for incarceration, including the end of for-profit prisons and underpaid convict labor; revision of multi-decade sentences and punitive restrictions on parole, particularly with older inmates; and greatly improved education and rehabilitation programs for inmates, including strict enforcement of the provisions of the Prison Rape Elimination Act of 2003 in all jails, prisons, and immigrant detention facilities.

RATIONALE

In eight reflections, including:

1. Introduction: drawing on Big Tent congregational conversations
2. Preface: Rev. Craig Howard, Presbytery Transitional Leader, Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery
3. Rev. Cedric Portis, Third Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO.
4. Rev. Mike Trautman, First Presbyterian Church, Ferguson, MO.
5. Rev. Susan Andrews & Congregation, Second Presbyterian (summary & chronology)
6. Rev. Clyde Crumpton, Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church
7. Rev. Erin Counihan, Oak Hill Presbyterian and Presbytery Moderator
8. Professor Deborah Krause, Eden Seminary

1. Introduction: A Gospel From St. Louis

This report looks at Christian faithfulness in today's city of St. Louis, Missouri, described through the witness of five congregations, with reflections from a theological educator and the General Presbyter of Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery. It does not presume to speak for all St. Louis Presbyterians or congregations. It does make recommendations that build on previous Presbyterian Church urban mission policy, and for this reason involves the Urban Ministry Network and the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy. Just as protests over police accountability in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri contributed to a national wave of protest, so the lessons gained from St. Louis Presbyterians matter to the larger Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), particularly to those in city congregations. The title of this report is not ironic, but a way to affirm the Good News that comes to us from all the peace-seekers in St. Louis.

This is not a report from the presbytery, but testimony from several congregations and their pastors that is part of a conversation about urban ministry begun by the General Assembly report, "The Gospel from Detroit."

(https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/acswp/pdf/the_gospel_from_detroit.pdf).

That report's call for renewed urban ministry and urban strategy was prompted by the 2014 Assembly meeting in Detroit soon after that city's painful bankruptcy process. The Portland Assembly built on that report with a shorter statement:

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/City-Churches-Conviction-Conversation-Call-to-Action.pdf>.

There was a conviction that the Assembly could not simply meet in a major city and not pay attention to the voices of local Presbyterians involved in justice struggles. This report is to help in that listening and learning in St. Louis, to complement the hospitality of the Committee on Local Arrangements (COLA), and to support the "Hands and Feet" initiative led by the Stated Clerk and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA). Theologically, this is all about incarnation and the search for wholeness in a complex and sometimes conflicted time and place.

The role of Congregational Conversations at the Big Tent Conference, July 6-8, 2017

The “Big Tent” is a conference held during the year between General Assemblies, originally a gathering of 10 networks of particular concerns from across the church. At the 2017 Big Tent in St. Louis, the theme of “Race, Reconciliation, and Reformation” was addressed by a panel, most of whose pastor members then hosted conversations at their churches for groups of participants (who were bused to each site). This report builds on the presentations made by the pastors on the panel and the congregational conversations, which were distilled in follow-up conversations.

Context of Congregational Public Witness in PCUSA

For some people, the public witness of the church simply means the condition of its building, seen from the outside and with outsiders’ eyes. Another frequent and more justifiable focus is on the pastor, key representative of the congregation. The pastor not only helps the congregation discern its mission, but often leads in particular areas. If the pastor’s basic worship and caring responsibilities are done with sincere commitment, he or she will be trusted, even if not everyone in a congregation shares all his or her views. The pastor and other leaders in the congregation can then serve as effective bridges to other parts of the community, through ecumenical colleagues, community organizations, other civic partners and projects. The public witness of the church can then be part of an evangelism that presents the whole gospel of Jesus Christ in places where the community is in need of justice and healing.

Another part of a congregation’s social ministry reflects its denominational tradition and connections to its presbytery. These links can give the members a larger horizon for understanding how God is active in the world. Each congregation’s public witness comes out of that set of relationships and sense of mission, combined with the challenges of their historical moment. In the case of Detroit in 2013, it was a financial crisis and bankruptcy. In St. Louis in 2014, with the killing of a young black man in Ferguson, it was the exposure of racial injustice. This led to some very intentional and Spirit-filled public witness, some of which is described in this set of testimonies.

Context of St. Louis City and County

According to the Census Bureau, the demographic context of St Louis is a city of 311,000 in 2016, down from 319,000 in 2010, in a standard metropolitan area (SMA) of almost 3 million, ranking 19th in size in the United States. That SMA contains East St. Louis, a smaller separate city in Illinois. Black (46%) and White (44%) Americans constitute the majority of the city’s population. Though Hispanic (4%), Asian Americans (3%), Native Americans and persons claiming 2 or more races reside in the city, most attention is given to the relations between the two larger populations. The administrative structure restricts the city itself to boundaries established in 1877, constricting its tax base and putting most historic growth in inner- and outer-ring suburbs. There are 89 municipalities in St Louis county, meaning a large number of smaller governmental entities that are demographically primarily White.

Context of Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery and Ecumenical Context

Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery consists of 78 congregations with 119,164 members. Ten congregations are in St. Louis, four without ordained pastoral leadership, and a number of other

congregations are considered St. Louis congregations though they are in neighboring suburbs. The Presbyterian Historical Society provides an interactive map of Presbyterian presence in the city and region:

<https://pcusa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapTour/index.html?appid=8dfe240a91a4405b84f4c3ef82f03845>

As in the case of Detroit and many major cities, policies that led to the creation of largely white suburbs dramatically weakened the “Mainline Protestant” congregations in the city, and some of those congregations themselves moved to the suburbs. The Presbytery of Giddings-Lovejoy is developing new strategies to witness to the reverse migration of middle class young adults into some sections of St Louis and its inner-ring suburbs today. St. Louis is also the historic center of three denominations, the Evangelical & Reformed Church (now part of the United Church of Christ), the Missouri Synod Lutherans, and the Church of God.

From the work of the **Urban Ministry Network**, which was initiated in response to the Gospel from Detroit, the context of urban mission is one of presbyteries seeking to encourage growth with diversity, to strengthen congregations that serve areas with people of color, to provide creative options for transformation and witness with properties, and to inspire the new wave of gentrification with a concern for justice.

2. PREFACE: God’s Redemptive Action in St. Louis

Rev. Craig Howard, Presbytery Transitional Leader, Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery

The church of the 21st century is a church of action. Whether we call it missional, community-focused, or outward-motivated, change is the new reality. Congregations are shifting the life of the church from within the confines of pews and walls, into the streets and drama or even liturgy of the public square. We are experiencing it in Giddings-Lovejoy, and in the city of St. Louis.

Some of the activity is news-worthy and garnishes national attention. When the streets came alive with protest over the killing of Anthony Lamar Smith, pastors and members of Giddings-Lovejoy were there. We marched, we chanted, and some were even arrested. It was action for justice that maintains a community’s moral framework. It was action fed by our worship in Spirit and in truth. Other activities are low key and more humble. After spending a decade stripped of its accreditation, the St. Louis public school system received full accreditation in 2017. In response, several congregations in Giddings-Lovejoy are partnering with individual schools in tutoring, field trips, and providing supplies.

Public protest has created different conversations in our congregations. We are talking about unfair housing, inadequate healthcare, and economic and ecological injustice. These conversations are happening in our pews and in the coffee houses where we meet. As a presbytery, we are committed to dismantling racism and white privilege. This means reading in book groups, attending trainings in presbytery gatherings, and coming together as congregations sharing pulpits, choirs, and fellowship. We are determined to break the habit of Sunday morning being the most segregated public hour of the week.

The experiences of the congregations that follow embody God’s redemptive action. They are in the city, and in suburbs. Some are wealthy in dollars, all are wealthy in justice. These five congregations saw what was happening to the city of St. Louis and decided to turn their faith into

action. They are far from the only churches stepping up, but all were involved in Big Tent ‘congregational conversations’ about Race, Reconciliation, and Reformation.

In a letter this past Fall inviting the PCUSA to St. Louis, the Presbytery leadership wrote, “St. Louis is by no means alone in struggling with what it means to be an inclusive and just community in the 21st century. Urban, suburban and rural; North, West or South; gay, straight and other; Black, Brown, Yellow, Mixed and White – all of us are learning how to become the beloved community, a reality which Jesus lived and died and rose again to create.”

This is still our struggle. As a presbytery we have not yet attained the goal of being the beloved community. But we press on to make this goal our own, because through his death and resurrection, Christ Jesus has made us his own.

Yours in the faith and action that we share, (The Rev.) Craig Howard, D.Min.

3. The Witness and Mission of Third Presbyterian Church, St. Louis

By the Rev. Cedric Portis, Senior Pastor of Third Presbyterian Church

[This is the first of five congregation-based voices heard by participants in the Big Tent Gathering of Presbyterians, July 6-8, 2017, in St. Louis, Missouri. Rev. Portis presented the meditation below at the “congregational conversation” hosted by Third Presbyterian on July 7th. After the meditation are two brief statements on Third’s approach to mission. Rev. Portis is a member of the Urban Ministry Network, PCUSA and Co-Chair of the Committee on Local Arrangements for the 223rd General Assembly.]

Excerpts edited from: **The Reality of Race, Meditation by the Rev. Cedric Portis**

“When the Pharisees challenged Jesus, he often replied, ‘have you not read what it says in scripture?’ When longtime white Presbyterians, trapped in the ruts of racism, ask this Black disciple for insight on how to change this country, I ask, have you not read Acts 17 and 26, where it says that ‘God has made of one blood all the nations of this earth’? Is this not a denomination of *Word* and *Sacrament*? God has said we are equal. Why don’t we start there, long before the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution and the contradictions of our history.

Change has to start in the pulpit. We cannot build upon the pre-existing condition of racism developed over almost 500 years. Not your fault? Correct. Contemporary white people didn’t do those horrible things. But you still reap the benefits of slavery. And you are shaped by an inherited belief system as it relates to the African-American. This belief system conditions how you see what appears on TV, and what happens when you are in the company of a person of color.

Pastors, we must preach the truth about the pre-existing condition of racism and not pretend it doesn’t exist or ignore it. Do most PCUSA pastors preach scared because they fear for their

jobs? God has not given us the spirit of fear. Do you fear that if you preach the truth about this pre-existing condition, you will be denied a pulpit? But if you don't preach the truth about this condition, you are denying the people the treatment necessary to eradicate this racism. We cannot excuse a condition that we see when there is more compassion and outrage when a gorilla in a zoo is shot than when a young black man is left dying and dead in the street for hours.

It is not just a church issue. But the spark for change must come from the church. We have been silent, indifferent, or ambivalent about addressing this condition in the context of our local churches for far too long. It is killing people, and it is killing our culture. If we continue to let this condition become terminal, we are to blame.

Due to cell-phone camera technology we have now become more exposed to the epidemic of the killing of unarmed black men by police officers. We are outraged and we should be. But, beloved, this is not a new phenomenon. I believe that God has made it so that humanity as a whole may witness it. So that we might be moved by compassion to do something about it. I feel that God is calling the church to stop crossing to the other side of the street while the person is lying, dying a short distance away. The Lord we serve is still calling us to be the Good Samaritan. But why does the killing racism persist in our United States, despite some advances?

In my view, this has to do with the depth and distinctiveness of American slavery. Slavery has existed as long as there have been human beings, well before the pharaohs of Egypt. But most of the time slavery was not linked to racism, and it did not label the enslaved group, 'nonhuman.' But American slavery did. And when Africans were labelled non-human or sub-human, the sixth commandment doesn't apply anymore. Matter of fact, most of the Bible doesn't apply any more. I can kill the African slave because it is not murder, because they are subhuman. They are animals. I can tear their families apart. I can run chemical experiments on them, because no one cares. Society comes to view them as nonhuman.

And this became the attitude of the church, with our balcony seating arrangement for the animals and countless other separations and alienations. And the practice was continued because it provided for a good conscience. The atrocities of Monday through Saturday were nothing more than owners dealing with their animals. The African slave was no different.... Greed allowed for the systematic de-valuing of human life.

So how did people not hear what is written in Exodus 22, Leviticus 18 and 24, and most ironically and cruelly, Deuteronomy 27? That text says that anyone who has sex with an animal must be put to death. Slaveholders must have ignored that as they continued to rape African women *and* men from the mid-1600's through the mid-1800's. Furthermore, legal decisions came up with the perverse formula that African-Americans were to be counted 3/5ths human for the purposes of apportioning state representation. Does that not reflect the less-than-human label? Think of that when you hear today that an African American has to be twice as good to be considered or noticed for achievements. In a way, they are still multiplying that 3/5 by 2 to get at least a whole number.

The condition of domination was part of how our young nation was formed and how it has been informed through an inherited framework of inequality. This is why there is not outrage of a whole nation when the killing of unarmed black men by police goes on and on. This is why the disappearance of young black girls in Atlanta goes on without alarms going off. This is why the Tuskegee syphilis experiment could go on. This is why Ferguson was burned down but the

National Guard protected Clayton... why Watts was burned to the ground but Beverly Hills was untouched. We as a country have grown up viewing the African American as less than human and until that is addressed, the killings will continue, the disappearances will continue, and we as a country will continue to implode.

Brothers and sisters, this history is our pre-existing condition. But it does not have to be our reality ... or our future. Don't get me wrong. This is not just a 'white people have to change and everything is going to be all right' scenario. There is work to be done in both cultures so that cross-cultural synergy can be possible in a spiritual, emotional, and physical co-existence.

Black lives have to start mattering to Black people inside as well as on signs and slogans, T-shirts and tattoos. We, too, suffer from this pre-existing condition in how we view ourselves, even in little things. I thought all white people could play golf...until I wore out a bunch of colleagues on a course. But children of God, we are called to be trailblazers... Salt and Light. Those elements Jesus calls us don't accept a reality, those elements change the reality.

So we must stop living like we don't face a pre-existing condition. How do we change? Maybe you are called to partner with another ministry. *[Third partners with the Dardenne Prairie church, which helps support Third's extensive summer program for children, and their pastor spoke that night at the Big Tent conversation.]* Be in prayer about where God is leading your ministry individually and collectively.

When we think of the amount of work to be done, we can be paralyzed. But that is partly because we want the change to occur overnight, without us being involved. That is a fantasy. The systemic change that is required to change history may indeed look like a snow mountain when we have only a shovel. Then remember that we believe God can move mountains-- but our charge is to start digging! One scoop at a time with our families. One scoop with ourselves, then one scoop with our schools, our elections, our places of work, our social clubs, and above all, in our places of worship.

We keep shoveling with the expectation that one day we won't live in fear of one another, one day we won't live in a city where in one place they have an abundance of food and resources and just a couple miles away there are food deserts and limited resources. One day we can worship together not out of a mandate or out of guilt but because we love God and love one another. One day when the Glory comes it will be ours. One day when the war is won, one day when all is said and done, we will overcome the pre-existing condition caused by the existence of dehumanizing slavery in this country. Then we will all stand and cry, Glory!

Community Transformation Strategy and Christian Witness

[The brief statement below was made on April 27, 2017, in affirmation of the presence of the Rev. Cedric and Mrs. Varonaki Portis and the contribution of Third Presbyterian Church to the Police Officer Memorial Prayer Breakfast of the St. Louis Area Police Chiefs Association.]

Community Transformation has various essential components. Resource provision through partnering with other organizations who serve the community is one of them. Third Presbyterian Church was proud to be a Silver Level Sponsor of the St. Louis Area Police Chiefs Association at their Police Officer Memorial Prayer Breakfast yesterday.

Third Presbyterian Church understands that financial support to other partners and foundations in community is part of the church being a resource-providing transformational entity. So yes, we were the only church sponsor and many were shocked and surprised that Third Presbyterian Church was sponsoring at the same level as some multi-million dollar companies. Our church understands that we can't be everything to everybody. Thus we are charged--as we are able--to support financially others in community who do what we can't do to transform our larger community.

Jesus said be salt and light. Don't blend in... change things ... and we are doing just that: changing the traditional way the church is thought of in the St Louis community. We will be a resource provider--not a resource extractor--in our community. We will continue to be a bright light of transformation.

The church owes a tithe to the community in which it serves. It is a blessing when we can also witness as the salt and light of Christ. Be blessed. Pastor Cedric Portis

The Summer Program, Flourish Ministry

From the Third Presbyterian Church website

[In early 2017, Rev. Portis, Rev. Crumpton (see two sections further on), and the Rev. Paula Cooper, then of Curby Memorial Presbyterian Church, all spoke to the Urban Ministry Network. Rev. Portis described several distinctive community engagement programs; this summer program has become sufficiently large—300 children-- to require a separate administrative structure.]

Flourish mission is a 501c (3) designed to support Christ-centered educational ministry that strengthens its participants by providing information and services that build character, create competency, and encourage comradeship. We create programs to offset the negative impacts that technology, lack of financial resources, and lack of parenting are having on our community. We will continue to create programs where creative and social activities combine to strengthen young people with high self-esteem and the capacity to make moral decisions. Our camp is staffed with professional teachers that teach throughout the year at various schools but come to share their love for children and God with us during the summer. [Edited excerpt.]

4. Cry, the Beloved City: Acute and Chronic Anxiety in Ferguson, Missouri.

By Rev. Mike Trautman, Pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Ferguson, MO.

On August 9, 2014, an 18-year old African-American by the name of Michael Brown was shot multiple times and killed by a white police officer during what seemed to be a routine police stop for allegedly violating a local Ferguson regulation. This event triggered a series of events that caught the attention of the nation and the world.

A group in our congregation was already involved in a considerably lower intensity dialogue on race with neighbors, and we were totally caught off guard on the aftermath of August 9th. Tension and anxiety shot throughout the church and the metro St. Louis area. I needed to regain my bearings in the midst of the maelstrom that ensued and so I turned to my mentor the Rev. Dr.

Paul Smith, who cut his teeth in the Civil Rights Movement and the fight for African Americans that has been ongoing over the last fifty years. Under Paul's guidance I turned to Howard Thurman's "Jesus and the Disinherited" for theological insight and then to the Family Systems theorist, Murray Bowen, in order to understand the psycho-social dynamics that were spiraling out of control. I have also drawn on Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald's book, *Blind Spot*, and Daniel Kahnemann's, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. These works were essential in preparing my pastoral and mission responses to the crises at hand.

My title is an adaptation of Alan Paton's, *Cry, The Beloved Country* (1948), a novel about tragedy, love, and heroism in apartheid South Africa. The poet, Archibald McLeish, speaking when Paton received the Medal of Freedom in New York (1960), echoes the Family Systems approach to living in places of tension with integrity:

"To live at the center of the contemporary maelstrom; to see it for what it is and to challenge the passion of those who struggle in it beside him with the voice of reason-with, if he will forgive me, the enduring reasons of love; to offer the quiet sanity of the heart in a city yammering with the crazy slogans of fear; to do all this at the cost of tranquility and the risk of harm, as a service to a government that does not know it needs it..."

Family System's theorists define anxiety as the response of the organism to real and imagined threats in its environment; suggesting that people's behavior can be greatly affected by such real and imagined threats. They also see anxiety as being manifested in two ways, acute anxiety and chronic anxiety. "Acute anxiety generally occurs in response to real threats and is experienced as time limited." (Kerr and Bowen, *Family Evaluation 1988*, p.113), while chronic anxiety is not time based and usually resides hidden and deep seated in the lives of people affecting their ability to navigate their way through life.

Although Bowen and Kerr tend to think of chronic anxiety as more of an imagined threat, I see chronic anxiety as a culmination of life events that leave its mark on an individual's sense of self and one's sense of safety in one's environment. Certainly in Ferguson we have seen the devastating effects of when an acute anxiety producing event (the shooting of Michael Brown) awakens the chronic anxiety (economic disparity, police enforcement issues and a sense no one really cares what happens in certain neighborhoods) that lies just beneath the surface producing a tsunami of intense emotional reactivity.

The early burst of looting and property violence coupled with growing crowds of protesters were seen by many to be a real threat to the civic life of the community of Ferguson. While at the same time there was a growing imaginary "real?" fear that all the protesters were potentially dangerous which led police to an overwhelming display of force that resembled more a military intent on combat, than a civic police force called to protect the crowd as well as local businesses. An anxious police confronted an anxious crowd and Ferguson seemed on the verge of intense violence. Fortunately, people of courage and insight on both sides of the divide were able to use their presence and their power to make important decisions that prevented more extreme forms of violence. Bowen believed that people who showed such differentiation (maturity) could make a difference even in the midst of such intense reactivity.

"Either/Or thinking" became commonplace among many, as people increasingly were polarized by the events unfolding around them. I was struck how the anxious environment sped up everything that was happening so much that there was little time for thoughtfulness as everything seemed to be reaction to something else. Context, nuance and complexity were quickly cast

aside by the growing anxiety which was manifested in automatic emotional reactions. It was as if all of us were strapped into a giant roller coaster speeding down the tracks with no brakes or hill to stop us from descending into madness. Blame and scapegoating become rampant as people wanted to fix the problem by coming to judgment without having all the information needed to make such important decisions as to the facts of the shooting and who deserves to be punished (if anyone) for the death of Michael Brown.

BFST (Bowen Family Systems Theory) was invaluable in helping me begin the process of thinking and feeling my way through the early weeks. I am convinced feelings are essential in helping the higher functioning cognitive parts of the brain navigate human relationships. Being open to my feelings during this time enhanced my ability to be compassionate and respectful of others, whose journeys are quite different than my own. BFST has spurred me to become curious and to put aside, as much as one can, preconceived notions of who is right or wrong, and come face to face with one's own reactivity, biases, and internal contradictions. While I certainly was not the ideal "non-anxious presence," I do believe that my work in studying BFST and my work in my own family of origin, provided a small levee that helped hold back the onrushing waters of reactivity and anxiety that surrounded me and that exist within me.

Viewing this event through the BFST lens has made me aware of the roles that all of us play in this ongoing tragedy, and that awareness invites us to a renewed sense of personal responsibility. I relearned how hard it is to step out of linear cause-and-effect thinking and to think through the simultaneous issues using "systems thinking". Linear cause-and-effect thinking may offer the possibility of immediate relief from the issues at hand, and perhaps indicates a number of quick fixes that can put a damper on the growing anxiety; however, it also leads to a stunted view of the various interactions that fuel much of the anxiety and reactivity at work. Such symptom relief does not provide the depth to get to the deep roots of the presenting problem. Systems thinking helps one reflect on such hot button issues as "white privilege", "racism", and racial biases in police enforcement. There is much more that BFST is inviting me to learn from what is happening in Ferguson.

In addition to trying to be "differentiated," or self-aware and able to step back from group anxiety, the family systems theory does support showing up and being a "non-anxious presence," and from that independent position determining whether to adopt a more prophetic or pastoral approach. As a pastor and as a church committed to the people of Ferguson for the long haul, our public witness, outreach, and hospitality seek to treat everyone as equals in God's eyes. The two other resources, Blind Spot, and Thinking, Fast and Slow, add two elements, to my self-understanding at least.

Perhaps the best illustration of "blind spots" or perhaps, "mind bugs," is the Implicit Association Test (IAT), which measures your responses to split second images of people of different races. Despite my conscious commitment to anti-racism, I had a similar experience to that of Malcolm Gladwell: "I took it the first time and it told me I had a moderate preference for White people... I was biased—slightly biased—against Black people, toward White people, which horrified me because my mom's Jamaican.... So I did what anyone else would do: I took the test again! ...Same result. Again, same result, and it was this creepy, dispiriting, devastating moment." Malcolm Gladwell, author, *The Power of Thinking Without Thinking*, talking to Oprah Winfrey.

Thus, beyond the particulars of Ferguson—which it is our responsibility to address—there is our awareness: “Part of what IAT tells about us when it reveals hidden biases, whether about the elderly, dark skinned people, or gay people, is that the membrane that divides the culture “out there” from our mind “in here” is permeable. Whether we want them to or not, the attitudes of the culture at large infiltrate us.” (Gladwell, pp.67-68.)

What Daniel Kahneman’s book gives us is an understanding of Thinking Fast, or System 1 thinking, which operates automatically and quickly, shaped by evolution to provide a continuous assessment of the main problems that an organism must solve to survive: How are things going? Is there a threat or major opportunity? ... approach or avoid? Thinking Slow, or System 2 thinking allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations, and involve subjective experiences of agency, choice, and concentration. (Kahneman, p. 21) The problem is that System 2 can be lazy and over-rely on System 1’s quick responses—which we know are influenced by systemic bias—and we can regress, and not see the bigger picture.

The long-term mission of a church in a place like Ferguson is to live out reconciliation in ways that disrupt the black/white dichotomies of thinking and unthinking—often difficult with our white majority as a traditional Presbyterian Church. It is also challenging as any social body to attempt to transcend (or at least resist) our tribal evolutionary history of distrusting “others.” So we try to tell a different story of respected and valued compassion and capacity for conversion and transformation. In Bowen’s phrasing, “the confidence individuals have in their beliefs depends mostly on the quality of the story they can tell about what they see, even if they see a little.” (Kerr and Brown, p. 87) Jesus put this way, "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom, change your hearts and lives, and trust the good news. Mark 1:15 (CEB translation)

Ferguson in 2018 is a community whose future is yet to be determined. At this point it straddles a fine line between renewal and decay. The press has left, and the name Ferguson has morphed into a meme of racism unchecked and the hidden face of American life. Yet alive within the meme are religious communities, people of courage and conviction, and a variety of community groups dedicated to renewal, trust and restorative justice so that all people have the ability to live their lives free from the constraints of racism, poor education, and limited economic opportunities. Now is the time for the church, locally and nationally, to give itself to God's reign of good news. Rev. Mike Trautman

5. The Vision and Journey of Second Presbyterian Church, St. Louis

By the Rev. Susan Andrews, Interim Pastor, and congregation members

A Vision Is Born

Second Presbyterian Church is a historic urban congregation, established in 1838. Now in its third location, in the eclectic neighborhood of the Central West End, Second Church has mirrored the racial journey of the city. The original founders and members of the congregation were the financial and social elite of the city, with a heart for reaching out to the poor and the needy. But as demographic and racial changes came to St. Louis, these Presbyterians had decisions to make. In the 1880’s when the Civil War was tearing apart the state and the nation,

Second Church took a strong pro-Union and abolitionist stance. The church split, and eventually moved to a new location. Then, in the 1960's, when the Central West End was in decline and civil rights issues were convulsing the nation, Second Church – by a vote of 511 to 500 – decided to stay in the city. As a strong anchor institution– along with Barnes-Jewish Hospital, St. Louis University, and the Washington University School of Medicine – Second Presbyterian Church has offered leadership and witness as the Central West End has come back to vibrant life.

The culture and witness of Second Church is strong in many areas. The historic building, designed by Theodore Link, is an architectural landmark in the city, with a basilica dome, red tile roof, and elegant Tiffany windows. The newly refurbished Schantz organ is known city wide, and the church hosts a free music series each year that draws hundreds of community participants. Curious and progressive in its outlook, Second Church adults engage in serious conversations around issues of race, theology, and social ethics, and the congregation expects strong, progressive preaching. Blessed by significant endowments and generous members, the ministry and witness of this 225 member congregation remains strong.

But the most outstanding strength of this congregation is its extensive community outreach – over 150 of its members are involved in one or more hands on ministries in the community. The Good Ground Food Pantry has been feeding hungry people every Saturday for over 40 years. A dozen members tutor in two inner city schools. Meals are prepared and personally shared with homeless shelters every winter. Second Church hosts the largest urban Girl Scout troop in St. Louis, and regularly provides support and counsel to formerly incarcerated individuals. Each month, a group of volunteers provides a birthday party for residents of a nearby home for indigent women. Partner organizations which share the Second Church building include a Care and Counseling Center, an active neighborhood organization providing support and advocacy for the elderly, and a large ecumenical, interfaith social justice advocacy consortium. Second Presbyterian Church sings, talks, and walks the Good News of the Gospel.

A Multi-Cultural Journey Continues

Since the late 1800's, Second Church has welcomed black members – though they were few in number until recently. In 2006, when a local black congregation split, 20 members of that community joined Second Church – bringing the balance within the congregation to 20% people of color and 80% white members. Including the growing LGBT membership, Second Church has, all of a sudden, become a truly multi-cultural congregation – with all the gifts and all the challenges that such a reality brings.

Recently the Session has become 50 % white and 50% black – a crucial step in becoming a changed community. Three different sets of conversations related to racism and white privilege have opened up new levels of understanding, resulting in deepened friendships and increased authenticity. Some of these conversations have not been easy, but honest listening to the experiences and feelings of those who are different has enriched the fabric of the congregation's life. Perhaps most difficult has been acknowledging differences in worship and music styles. Second Church is steeped in classical European liturgical and musical traditions – and opening up to new genres of music continues to be the most challenging part of this multi-cultural journey.

What Second Presbyterian Church is learning is that the church of the future will not be like the church of the past. Given the dynamic demographics in the neighborhood, the secular forces

drawing people away from the church, and the changing spiritual needs of younger generations – as well as the varying life experiences of different racial groups – Second Church has the unique opportunity to become a new kind of spiritual community for curious, contemporary people. May it be so! Susan Andrews

THE JOURNEY OF RACE, RECONCILIATION, AND REFORM(1838-2017)
SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – ST. LOUIS

October 10, 1838 – Second Presbyterian Church organized – first building at Fifth and Walnut. Session resolved to open one night weekly to preach the Gospel to the people of color in the city.

1840 – Greeley Sunday School and Mission started as outreach to the poor – 1800 students

1841 – Marie Bailey becomes the first African American member of the congregation. She attended the “Colored Sunday School.”

1861 - Elder Hamilton Gamble, charter member of 2PC, **only dissenting vote** on the State Supreme Court in the Dred Scott decision – which reinforced the institution of slavery

1864 – church split, with Second taking a strong pro-Unionist and anti-slavery stance

Christmas Day, 1870 – new building dedicated at Lucas and Thirteenth

1872 – Dr. Samuel Niccolls (Pastor, 1865-1915) elected Moderator of the General Assembly

Late 1890’s – a group of Chinese men were welcomed into the church

1896 – Second Church moves to Westminster Place and Taylor – a new wealthy neighborhood with mansions and an exclusionary housing covenant – seeds of Delmar Divide are sown - congregation becomes a “blue stocking” church

July 19, 1915 – Dr. Niccolls advocated for the leadership of women on national entities

1940’s – neighborhood begins to “decline;” tract of land purchased for eventual relocation in Ladue; plans went awry and Ladue property sold

1950’s – neighborhood continues to change and deteriorate; mansions become boarding houses; whites move out; middle class blacks moved in; hardening of the Delmar Divide; black worshippers were welcomed awkwardly.

June, 1955 – Dr. Skinner (a member of GA Committee to write the Confession of 1967) arrives

April 15, 1958 – Second Church members commit to pray about their future – leave or stay?

January 25, 1961 – by a vote of 511-500, 2PC decides to stay in the city – immediately transforming from a fashionable congregation to an urban, missional congregation

Spring, 1961 Earline Clay becomes the first black member joining through the Confirmation Class process

May 25, 1969 – members of the Black Liberation Front marched into the church, demanding to speak and urge reparations; they were welcomed to the pulpit.

1970s – ecumenical partnerships focused on strengthening education and housing for the poor; the first black pastor, Paul Smith, becomes a Parish Associate; the church welcomes several black families

1970s – Good Ground General Store (Food Pantry) begins weekly ministry – continuing today

1990’s – tutoring programs and urban Girl Scout troop begin and continue today

2013 – Second Church welcomes 20 new black members, supported and welcomed by the Rev. Mary Gene Boteler – bringing the percentage of non-Caucasian members to 20% - the official definition of an inter-cultural congregation. A growing number of LGBTQ believers also join the congregation.

2015 – Rev. Boteler is visible and vocal after the police brutality episodes in the Ferguson area; the congregation becomes supportive of the Black Lives Matter movement.

2015-2017 – Recommitment to the vision

- 1) Over an 18-month period, three series of Holy Conversations are held for black and white members to learn about each other's histories and to talk candidly about Racism and White Privilege.
- 2) The strong music tradition of 2PC is expanded to include more jazz, gospel, and global music.
- 3) Black History Month is recognized and celebrated in worship.
- 4) Session leadership is half black and half white.

And Second Presbyterian's Journey Continues...

6. The Ever-Contemporary Context of Church Ministry

by the Rev. Clyde R. Crumpton, Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church, St. Louis

The history of the Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church provides an iconic example of racial change in a major US city. The church is thought to have evolved from an interdenominational mission school and chapel which were located on the Cote Brilliante Tract. As the neighborhood increased, more and more persons requested a formal church organization, and voted in favor of a Presbyterian church. The St. Louis Presbytery organized the new church on September 29, 1885, with approximately forty-five charter members.

At the time of construction (1894-5), the church's new building was considered one of the most handsome structures in the area. The new church ministered to a Caucasian membership. It grew and prospered for many years. But in the late 1940s and early 1950s change began to occur. The number of White families began to decline due to a breach in a "restrictive covenant," which restricted non-White families from purchasing properties in this neighborhood of Cote Brilliante. The case of Shelley vs Kraemer decided by the Supreme Court [344 U.S. 1 (1948)] had a significant impact on Cote Brilliante, as it voided the widespread practice of keeping African-Americans (and other racial-ethnic persons) from buying property through restrictive covenants.

In 1945, Mr. J. D. Shelley, an African-American, bought a house at 4600 Labadie Avenue (close to the church, at 4673 Labadie). He was unaware that a restrictive covenant existed on that property since 1911. The owner agreed to not enforce the covenant, but another resident, Louis Kraemer, who lived nearby sued in St. Louis Circuit Court to enforce the restrictive covenant to prevent the Shelley family from taking possession of the property. The trial court ruled in Shelley's favor, but the Missouri Supreme Court reversed the decision in favor of Kraemer. The Shelley's appealed to the United States Supreme Court. On May 3, 1948, the United States Supreme Court rendered its landmark decision holding that "racially restrictive covenants" cannot be enforced since this would constitute state action denying due process of law, in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. The national impact of this victory for racial justice led to the Shelley home being listed as an American Historical Landmark. (It remains a private residence, not open to the public.)

Not surprisingly, African-Americans began to move into the neighborhood at a dramatic rate. The Cote Brilliante School was designated as a school for African-Americans and other changes were made in the community to accommodate the changing population. Despite a continuing decline in the church membership, no effort was made to minister to the new neighbors. The congregation, which had supported Kraemer, sought to sell the building and move the congregation. They also considered combining with other White congregations. Eventually the members began to sell their homes and move to the suburbs, abandoning the church. The final communion service was held on Sunday, May 27, 1956. In just eight years, from the time of the Supreme Court decision in 1948, until the final communion service at Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church in 1956, so many White families had moved out of the neighborhood that the All-White church CLOSED! In just eight years! The epitome of “White Flight!”

The Presbytery retained jurisdiction over the church and its properties. It stipulated that the church be re-opened as a mission for the Black neighbors and that the name “Cote Brilliante” be retained. After extensive search, a call was extended to an alumnus of Johnson C. Smith Seminary, Rev. William G. Gillespie, who was then pastoring in Raleigh, NC, to come as “Stated Supply.” (Our early history is excerpted and edited from the church’s website: <http://cbpestl.org/church/history/>)

A Reorganized Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church

Reverend Gillespie arrived in St. Louis on August 1, 1956. There was no fanfare upon his arrival; he had no friends or relatives to greet him, no place to live, and no one from the Presbytery to assist him, as promised. He only had a key to the front door of the church. His family was forced to return to their home in Knoxville, TN, to await a vacancy in the church manse that had been rented to others. His furniture was stored in the church sanctuary and the Pastor’s study. He registered for a room at the Northside YMCA.

The church had been closed during a long, hot summer. It was surrounded with tall grass and weeds. The interior was shabby and in disrepair and water covered the basement floor. Reverend Gillespie realized he had assumed a tremendous task. Thoughts of leaving the city went through his mind. With encouragement from his wife, he decided to face the challenge before him. He tackled the maintenance problems alone. He was the janitor, the groundskeeper, the secretary, the mechanic, as well as the preacher.

Reverend Gillespie prepared brochures and placed a sign on the lawn and an article in the local newspaper announcing the reopening of the church and introducing himself. He walked the streets knocking on doors inviting neighbors to his first worship service scheduled for September 16, 1956. Eighty-nine neighbors responded, of which three joined the church, at that first service. This was the beginning of the reorganized Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church.

By December 22, 1957 Reverend Gillespie was officially called as Pastor. He became known and respected throughout the country. He was elected as the first black Moderator of both the Synod of Missouri and the Presbytery of St. Louis. Locally, educational and senior housing facilities and programs he pioneered were named after him. He served as Pastor for 53 years until retiring in 2009. He was a pillar in the community. At his funeral in 2011 an apology was presented by the Executive Presbyter, on behalf of the Presbytery, for not being there as promised in 1956 to support Rev. Gillespie in reopening the church and re-establishing its

ministry. The apology came 55 years too late, 2 years after he retired and 1 week after he had passed.

Today's Challenges

Today, Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church continues to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity, our neighbors; continues to maintain divine worship, promote social, economic and political righteousness; to participate in God's mission to care for the needs of the sick, the poor, and the lonely; and to free people from sin, suffering and oppression. This holistic understanding of the Gospel reflects the Great Ends of the Church and the legacy of Rev. Dr. William G. Gillespie who, as an activist, re-established Cote Brilliante under the guiding dictum of a loving, caring, sharing, serving congregation. Cote Brilliante today includes in its ministry to the community a food pantry, clothes closet, benevolent fund, youth and senior activities, and encourages community awareness, engagement and activism, i.e. voter registration and voter education, tutoring and mentoring in neighborhood elementary schools, and collaborations with other community organizations for jobs, housing and a prison re-entry program.

At the same time, since the death of Michael Brown in 2014 at the hands of Law Enforcement in neighboring Ferguson, MO, events have called us to be clearer about the social implications of the Gospel. The current Pastor of Cote Brilliante, Rev. Clyde R. Crumpton has actively engaged and challenged the Cote Brilliante family and neighbors to take a stand for justice and righteousness for the greater good of the entire community, to oppose racism, oppression and privilege. Our call to action was reinforced after another "Not Guilty" verdict of a White police officer in September 2017, in the shooting death of an unarmed Black man, Anthony Lamar Smith, which was actually caught on video. This pattern of impunity directly contradicts the love and justice of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which is at the core of the Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). This is why we actively engage in protest, to seek justice where harmful injustice abides. Our young people want to see clergy on the street, and we need to be there – often in clergy wear – for the awareness and consciousness of everyone.

At the Big Tent panel discussion in July 2017 at Washington University, it was stated that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has been "dismantling racism" for decades, yet it still seems pretty intact. In fact, Jim Crow (the name and face of racial discrimination) is now James Crowe, Esquire. An example of James Crowe, Esq. was seen in the campaign rhetoric of now President Donald Trump in his seemingly coded language of fixing the problem with urban America. It seemed to speak particularly *to* rural White America *about* Black America, suggesting Black America is the problem with America. Later Mr. Trump appealed to Black America asking, "What do you have to lose?" Our response, "Everything!" Affordable healthcare, livable wages, affordable housing, public education, the right to vote; everything that is currently being challenged, compromised or taken away. James Crowe, Esq. represents the language and culture that makes race in America an issue. This keeps America divided with the age-old tactic of divide and conquer. As it appears, racism has not gone anywhere; he just made a wardrobe change! This is where the church also must be engaged.

But God is not about race and sometimes economics are not either. Keeping people divided appears to allow the rich to oppress everyone and in the process get richer! This appears underway in the weakening and redirection of funding for the *Affordable Healthcare Act*, although its passage under President Obama may appear as racially motivated by some. Minimum wages continue to be eroded, which puts more money in the pockets of big business.

Affordable housing funds are being cut or moved around to benefit developers, with the Secretary of HUD (Housing and *Urban* Development), a Black man, the one appointed to bring the bad news to urban America. The Secretary of Education has indicated that charter schools will have favor over public schools. Who will control those charter schools? Add now the tilt upward of the tax law. The rich are getting richer, the poor poorer – poorer healthcare, poorer income, poorer housing, poorer education – poorer future. This is where the church must have a voice for the voiceless.

Now, because we say “Black Lives Matter” does not diminish the fact that all lives matter. All lives do matter and whether Black or White, poor, low-income or middle-class, rural, suburban or urban. And, yes, poor, low-income, and middle class White America is also under attack! They, too, have everything to lose! But as long as James Crowe, Esq. and the coded language from leadership make Black America the problem, too much of White America cannot see their pockets being picked and their rights and privileges eroding. Yet, God is still in control and quite aware of how people in America, all people, are being treated, mistreated, abused or neglected. America is behaving like the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 and not the sheep. Look at the massive influx of guns into urban America. This is why the church must take a stand.

Since August 9, 2014, upon the death of Michael Brown, we have been forced to observe the true social, economic, and political dynamics of our community and country. Since that day, more of that top layer of American fabric has been pulled back, uncovering the infectious spread of racism through generations of systemic political, judicial, and educational control and manipulation. The entire nation was afforded this examination, at the expense of the Ferguson community, and communities like Charlottesville, Virginia, where the neo-Nazi edge of White Supremacy came into view. However, just as the St. Louis community was moving into a place of healing, we re-lived the experience of unaccountable police power in the dismissal of charges against the white officer who had been videotaped shooting Anthony Lamar Smith. James Crowe, Esq. showed up in the courtroom masked as the judge. The St. Louis community is again under examination.

Since 2015, across the United States there have been over 600 instances in which a Black civilian has been killed by a police officer or died while in police custody, circumstances that closely parallel the killings of Michael Brown and Anthony Lamar Smith. To name a few, lest we forget: Eric Garner, Tamir Rice (age 12), Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Sandra Bland, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile. Over 600! This is why the church must seek justice.

Education for Justice

In her book, *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander identifies the New Jim Crow in various contexts, i.e. social, economic, judicial, and political, among others, each demonstrated through the effects of mass incarceration. (See https://www.vanderbilt.edu/ctp/The_New_Jim_Crow.pdf) Alexander comments that she “came to see that mass incarceration in the United States had ... emerged as a stunningly comprehensive and well-disguised system of racialized social control that functions in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow” (p. 4). “Strikingly similar to Jim Crow” is what we identify as James Crowe, Esq. Alexander states,

“Arguably the most important parallel between mass incarceration and Jim Crow is that both have served to define the meaning and significance of race in America.” She adds, “Slavery defined what it meant to be Black (a slave), then Jim Crow defined what it meant to be Black (a

second-class citizen). Today mass incarceration defines the meaning of blackness in America: Black people, especially Black men, are criminals. That is what it means to be Black” (p. 197).

In other words, Blacks in the United States are looked upon as slaves, second-class citizens and criminals! This, of course, is by design and viewed this way by the neo-Nazi, white supremacist, other so-called hate groups and some poorly educated and/or poorly informed White Americans. This is why the church must educate.

Given this history of slavery, racial discrimination, and mass incarceration, we may wonder how much the protests of Blacks and Whites matter? Our history – America’s history – will not change. Can we seriously think that protest alone will dismantle racism?! Should we not dismantle the *Dismantling Racism and Privilege* (DRAP) program itself and strengthen *Advocacy Committees* for justice and equality? Under God, should we not organize as faithfully as we can – economically, socially, politically, and judicially, for the disenfranchised (Black and White) to become stakeholders with the rights and privileges of all other U.S. citizens?

In our contemporary context the church is called to be a voice for those unheard and the oppressed, to advocate for truth, justice and the Christian way, to love thy neighbor and promote peace. We seek to fulfill what the LORD requires, that we act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God. This is the legacy on which we must continue to build. Herein lies salvation for both the oppressed and the oppressor. Perhaps not much has changed since Rev. William Gillespie arrived in 1956. But the ministry and mission of Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church endures, striving to further develop a sustainable community of healthy families, schools, and businesses. The legacy of this loving, caring, sharing, serving congregation continues in the love of God, in the light of the Gospel, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God’s Peace and Blessings from Cote Brilliante Presbyterian Church,
Rev. Clyde R. Crumpton, Pastor

7. A Dream-Vision-Hope from Oak Hill, St Louis

By the Rev. Erin Counihan, Pastor, Oak Hill Presbyterian Church, St. Louis

I originally wrote the letter below to share with the presbytery and the congregation I serve during the Stockley Protests in St. Louis in October 2017. Our community was rising up, again, after another police officer was acquitted on murder charges, this time in the 2011 killing of Anthony Lamar Smith. (This case had lingered for a long time, and the judge’s ruling was released only after he had retired and moved out of state). Since 2014 when Michael Brown was killed, and shortly afterward VonDerrit Myers was killed in our Oak Hill neighborhood, our community has been called to both conversation and action.

Starting in those initial protests, the community stood up and said we can’t take this anymore. We people of faith then started trying to listen and follow the young leaders who have refused to be silent, who have refused to accept these injustices, and who have continually called us out, and in, and urged us on. We read and discussed books, we worked with community organizers, we listened to speakers and theologians, we had hard conversations over lunch after worship. Some of us marched. Some of us offered our buildings as safe sanctuary for protesters. Some of

us went to committee meetings and civilian oversight board meetings, and meetings with elected officials.

But as you can see from this letter I wrote in 2017, more than three years into this work, we still debate how to go about this work and if pastors and churches should be doing this work. I've heard good, wise, faithful people speak of their disappointment in specific protest tactics, their frustration about a lack of clearly identified leadership and/or goals of the movement, or that this kind of repeated, public protest is just creating more division. But I've also seen new leaders rise up, new relationships developed, new passions and ministries ignited, new learnings explored, and new understandings take hold. So we continue having hard conversations about race, about justice, about politics, and about how our churches and we as people of faith "should" engage in these conversations. And still, we do the work. There's been more and more Presbyterians who show up to the meetings, who follow young people of color into the streets and up to city hall, who are reading new news sources and research, who are being changed by a movement that God has called us to hear, notice, and engage.

Because this "Gospel from St Louis" is a way of sharing what our struggle means with readers from across the country, the letter below is only slightly edited. It was written not only for the congregation I serve, but for the presbytery that elected me moderator. These positions of trust require the sharing of truth. Thus my letter reflects conversations in both church communities, and seeks to explain why I—and a growing number of others—cannot let this witness, this conversation, or this work, go.

FROM THE OAK HILL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH NEWSLETTER, October, 2017

"This is hard.

And I get that. This conversation that we are having in our community here in STL and in neighborhoods, schools, churches, and communities all around our country, about racism and policing and protest. It's hard. All the emotions. All our different cultural backgrounds and personal relationships, histories and experiences, political leanings and theological positions. It makes it hard and complicated and difficult to talk about. But I have this little flicker of a vision or a dream or a hope that church could be the very place we can go and gather and discuss and debate the things that matter most to us, the passions of our hearts and the great questions of our spirits, and disagree and explore and learn and try, and still stay in relationship with one another. In my dream-vision-hope it is still hard, but it is good and gives us life and reeks of faithfulness and makes God proud. *So here it is.*

I am a rule-following girl. Looking at my Facebook posts, my photos, well, even listening to my sermons, over these last months and years, you may not think so, but deep in my heart, I am a rule-following girl. I like to make lists and check things off. As a kid I loved getting gold stars on the chart for assignments completed. I love a super detailed worship bulletin and I still read all the instructions before I even take the pieces out to play a board game. My friends tease me because even jaywalking makes me anxious.

I am a rule-following girl. The rules provide structure and order and help me to understand my proper place here, and how things are supposed to run over there. Maps and rules and agendas and plans are how I make sense of the world and my work my church and often, even, my identity.

And much of that is because the rules are designed to work for me. The rules are designed for my comfort. The rules are designed to keep me safe, to help me advance, to keep me wealthy, to keep me protected. I am a straight, white, cis, Christian, middle-class woman. With a very few exceptions, the rules were designed to help me. But the thing I keep learning is this: the rules don't work that way for people who don't look like me. Friends and neighbors and strangers and scholars and journalists and authors tell me about how the rules in our society hurt, silence, oppress and kill black and brown people, Muslim and atheist people, LGBTQ people, and so many others.

I often hear folks who look like me say, "Well, if he just followed the rules..." But then I see another video of someone of color following the rules and getting pulled over and arrested anyway. Of someone going to the bathroom where the rules say they are supposed to and getting assaulted anyway. Of someone trying to follow the rules or obey a command and ending up dead anyway. And so what do I do when the rules that protect and uplift me, are keeping others down? What does God call me to do?

And I hear it in my head: *Do justice, seek kindness, walk humbly with God.*

For me, *doing* justice has meant working to change the rules, to make them more equitable. That means doing my research, organizing with others, signing petitions, engaging with elected officials, pursuing legal action, and participating in direct action, too. Yup, that means taking to the streets, and standing there, to demand justice. So, me, the rule-following girl, ends up in the street breaking the very rules that make me so comfortable. Breaking the rules in order to help change them. In order to stop squashing my neighbors. In order to stop killing my neighbors. In order to dismantle the white supremacy that serves me so well. In order to be a part of bringing God's justice to all. In order to bear witness to God's rule-breaking love and grace and power, even in this time and in this place.

And it's super uncomfortable. And it is divisive. And it messes with our commutes and our comforts, our theologies and our understandings, our structures and our community. And that is hard. And that is also the point.

I know we don't all agree. I hope we can all talk about it. I hope that if you are excited or angry, if you are confused or motivated, if you are frustrated or disappointed or inspired or curious, that we can talk about it. I am just a phone call, text, email, or coffee date away. Please reach out. Ask questions. Pray. Join our Touchy Topics Book Club to read and learn, attend a meeting of the STL Anti-Racism Collective and get training, get involved with MCU's Break the Pipeline campaign and take action.

May God be with us as we discuss. May God be with us as we debate. May God be with us as we work and do the justice that is required of us. May God be with us as we love. As we love. As we love.

Pastor Erin

8. *Marks of a Faithful Human Freedom Movement in St Louis*

**By Rev. Deborah Krause, PhD, Dean of the Faculty,
Eden Theological Seminary, Webster Groves, Missouri.**

As a religious leader I saw the police killing of Mike Brown and the uprising in Ferguson in 2014 as a revelation. In the true meaning of “apocalypse,” it was an “unveiling” of the deeply entrenched structural racism and white supremacy on which the region of St. Louis is built. It’s not that these structures have not always been present, destroying and demeaning Black lives while benefitting lives like my own, but Ferguson shone a light on this system that demands a reckoning. As a lifelong resident of this region and a lifelong member of the Presbyterian Church (USA) within it, I would say that the revelation of the “marks of a faithful church” through Ferguson would be to be working actively to dismantle these structures, and to interrogate and root out the idolatrous hold of white supremacy that has blocked the church thus far from being a meaningful agent for anti-racism and social transformation.

I’ve been asked to reflect as the General Assembly prepares to meet in STL this summer (2018) on how the experience of the Ferguson freedom movement has informed my thinking about “the marks of a faithful church.” Since Michael Brown was killed by Ferguson officer Darren Wilson in August, 2014, my thinking about the church has been deeply informed by following the Ferguson protest movement, interpreting the Bible—my field is New Testament, serving as Academic Dean and Professor at a theological school (Eden Theological Seminary) where students, faculty, and staff have been grappling with the theological and ethical implications of the protest, and to experiences in my home congregation (First Presbyterian, STL, where my husband Bill Perman serves as pastor) and the presbytery.

In the following reflections, some of which are taken from sermons, articles, presentations, and teaching I have done over the past four years, I explore how four marks of a faithful church following Ferguson are (I) the conviction that Black Lives Matter (BLM), a confession of sin and of faith; (II) hearing the call of God to go out into the streets with ecumenical, interfaith, and nonfaith partners; (III) the critical interrogation of our institutional histories and their complex complicity with racism; and (IV) the vision to work for God’s redemptive purposes in solidarity with those who suffer injustice.

I. Racism is a social disease. It is not about personal preference – whether or not we have a black co-worker, or best friend. Racism is about social power – factors beyond our own personal will, and it is knit historically into the social, economic, political, legal, educational, and religious institutions of our country. In fact, it is so deeply and historically knit that it poses innocently and naturally as “the way things are.” But the way things are is not natural – it is constructed.

- Disparities of Police stops between white and Black people in which in St Louis, city and county in 2015 roughly 50% of the people stopped were Black even though Black people make up less than 28% of the population – are not natural.
- Disparities in children moved by the public school system from in-school discipline to the juvenile justice system – in 2014 over 1000 Black children were so moved, and just 60 white children – are not natural.

- Disparities in national wealth in which white households hold \$142,000 on average, while Black households hold less than \$19,000 – are not natural.

In this context as a white Christian I hear the declaration “Black Lives Matter” (which was created by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi to decry the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of Trayvon Martin) to be a confession of sin for white people of faith in America. BLM has for me cut to the truth of where we are and where we are being called to be as a nation. Currently to say “Black Lives Matter” is to confess that our country does not function to value Black lives equally. If it feels like a challenge, or even a prejudicial thing to say, if you want to retort: “All Lives Matter,” please listen. Saying BLM is a way to illumine the disparities of structural racism in our society. It is a way to say that until we can value Black lives in this country, then all lives do not matter. One of the frontline leaders of the Ferguson protest movement, Cathy (‘MamaCat’) Daniels puts it this way, “Of course ‘all lives matter,’ but until mine matters as much as yours, I’m going to be specific: Black lives matter.” For those of us in the majority, BLM is to confess that we have much work to do in dismantling the structures and practices of racism in this country that have rendered Black children more vulnerable to illness, poor education, and a racially unjust prison system, while most of our kids benefit. To me, a mark of the faithful church in North America following Ferguson is a church that is confessing the sin of racism and white supremacy.

But that is not the only way I hear this refrain. For me, BLM is also an Affirmation of Faith. In short, while protecting our Black and Brown sisters and brothers from the wages of structural racism is our *duty* as white people of faith, eradicating white supremacist ideology from our own psyches, habits, and institutions – even churches -- is our collective *calling*.

In this sense BLM is more than a summons to honor and protect the value of Black lives. It is a call for those of us who are white to relinquish our idolatrous commitment to our whiteness, and to get free to our own humanity. As we work on our racism, therefore, we do not do it simply to be well-intentioned white people trying to help the less fortunate. We do it as Christians who are dependent on the grace and love of our creator God. We do it with the passion to be liberated from the disfiguring and damaging power that racism and white supremacy have over our lives. We do it because we yearn to be free and whole – in God’s image. A mark of the faithful church in North America after Ferguson is a church that is affirming its faith in the sovereign God of creation by interrogating our idolatrous worship of whiteness and working to live into our baptismal calling of living in the Spirit of Christ -- neither Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female.

II. A Moral Summons to Be Seen and Heard in STL was a statement made by religious leaders in response to the Ferguson protests of August 2014. It called on people of faith to “consecrate the streets of St. Louis as safe places for all our citizens” in the midst of nonviolent protests to “hold accountable a system of policing and criminal justice that stigmatizes Black and Brown people.” It promised,

“You will see and hear us as we are summoned by the prophetic witness our young people have been making for over two months in STL. We believe that nothing short of a movement for human freedom is being rebirthed in our community, calling us as individuals, worshipping congregations, and as a region to see one another as beloved children of God and to live our lives that way.”

The statement was drafted by the Clergy Caucus of Metropolitan Congregations United, an inter-faith and ecumenical community organizing effort of about forty congregations and hundreds of individuals in the STL region. We drafted it as a rationale for people of different religious commitments to see and claim the moral and faith-based dimension of the Ferguson freedom movement. The statement was clear that we had been called out of our churches, synagogues, mosques, community centers, and other organizations by the young people who first stood in the streets of Ferguson in the face of militarized police response to protest the police killing of an unarmed teenager, Mike Brown, and to demand an end of racist practices of predatory policing in our region. As religious leaders we wanted to name what we saw as the movement of the Holy One in their protest, and our intention to follow this movement and its leaders into the streets to demand justice for Mike Brown and the transformation of policing in our region.

I have been thinking that the Ferguson protest movement might teach us about some ways that “Next Church” (the current historic transformation of ecclesial forms and structures) is really happening. Whatever form the church is going to take it must be able to move into spaces with others (of different faiths and no faith at all) to witness to and join the redemptive work of God in the world. The Ferguson protesters called us out of our churches, schools, and homes and into the streets. Following them and listening for God’s purpose in this work for justice in our region has re-organized us into relationships and activities that hold hope for our ongoing reformation into whatever the Spirit holds in store for the church that is next.

III. Critical Appreciation of our Institutional History:

As Academic Dean at Eden Seminary, I've been thinking a lot about the history and the vocation of the school I serve in light of the Ferguson movement and God's call to transform the structural violence of racism in our society. Those of us who serve and lead Euro-American legacy institutions (such as many theological schools and churches in North America) face the challenge of attending to the very complex histories of our institutions and discerning in what ways they have been agents of social transformation, and in what ways they have perpetuated injustices, such as structural racism. Rather than constructing heroic tales, we are called to discern both how we have served the redemptive work of God in the world, and how we have thwarted it. My friend and colleague, Leah Gunning Francis (who now serves as Vice President for Academic Administration at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis) interviewed me for her work *Ferguson and Faith: Sparking Leadership, Awakening Community* (Chalice Press, St. Louis, 2015). In response to her question about how a school like Eden learns from and participates within the Ferguson protest movement, I shared the following reflection of the seminary's history in relationship to racism:

Eden was founded in 1850 by German-Prussian immigrants who were running away from war. They built the school to meet the needs of their growing immigrant population on the frontier, and the place they choose to locate is eastern Missouri in 1850. Turns out, they walk right into a war, and build right on top of where racial tensions are getting ready to blow up. And so from the beginning, quite unwittingly, the school has been involved in this country's struggle for human freedom. Now it's had lots of days, decades in fact, where it pretended like that argument wasn't going on, but the school was founded on the threshold of the Civil War, and in the middle of an on-going struggle.

Maybe this has something to do with why we're still here. Maybe what happened in Ferguson is not incidental to our history, but integral to it. I can't help but wonder if the traditions,

resources, and mission of our school are called by God to be in service of this particular struggle in North American for human freedom.

In the early years of the school you have events like the Camp Jackson Affair in 1861 where German immigrants helped to hold the armory against a secessionist attack (led by the governor) outside of St. Louis. The role of the German immigrant population (who were largely anti-slavery and pro-Union) in fighting off that attack is well established. Eden students (then on the Marthasville campus), and members of area Evangelical churches were among the civilians who helped to hold the armory. When I think about those students and church members, I cannot help but think of colleagues and students who took to the streets of Ferguson after the shooting of Mike Brown to stand against state sponsored racism and violence. Imagine, back in 1861, the Governor of Missouri was trying to raid the armory for the South. The seminarians and church folk who stood against the governor no doubt withstood a lot of public challenge that they were destructive, disobedient, and out of line. Doesn't that sound familiar? Then and now, the call to stand in the street and stand up against the forces of dehumanization is consistent. Maybe that's why we are still here!

But you know it is also a lot more complicated than that. Early on the Germans, who were pacifists, and who hated slavery, were on the right side of history in many ways. They're in Marthasville where there are plantations, and they're in the slave state, but they don't have slaves. All this is true, yet they were no doubt segregationists and probably racist, despite being right on the slave question. This ambivalence is a huge part of the history and current reality of this school.

And the ambivalence lives in the churches. The German heritage churches in towns all around St. Louis include some very conservative communities. Racism has certainly abided in these towns, and the churches haven't transformed that – just as the Seminary has not transformed the broader St. Louis area. We are caught in this web of sin, and even while we have some resources for naming and fighting it, we are also often unable to extricate ourselves from it.

One story in our history gets at this ambivalence on race in a powerful way. When I first joined the faculty at Eden in 1992 I remember learning that the Seminary was the first Euro-American institution of higher learning in Missouri to admit a person of color. That was in 1932. That fact was shared with me as a part of the heroic history of the school as an agent of social transformation, and I was proud of it. I have over the years pointed out to friends and colleagues at St Louis University and Washington University that their schools (in 1945 and 1958 respectively) began to integrate decades after Eden. In 1932 Eden admitted an AME pastor named Joseph Gomez to its STM program, the first Black student admitted to a White graduate school in the state of Missouri.

Since Ferguson, however, I have done some reading that has somewhat clouded this heroic history. Turns out that Rev. Gomez was admitted at Eden, but only after he had first been denied. According to Gomez's biography written by his wife, Joseph and the local chapter of the NAACP identified the seminary as a good candidate for testing desegregation on the basis of its mission statement. At the time, Eden had a mission that read something like: "Eden Seminary...is a school open to students of all Christian denominations." So Gomez, on the basis of that mission statement, applies, and he's rejected. And I think he probably knew he would be because it's a White segregated institution. So anyway, he was denied.

That little detail was left out when I first heard the story, but it is such an amazing part of it, because Gomez and the NAACP went on a letter writing campaign in the St. Louis Argus and church publications pressuring the school to admit him because the mission statement says “open to students of all Christian denominations” – and this is a student of Christian denomination. So what is preventing you? At that point, the faculty reconsiders and admits him. He graduates in 1934 with an STM.

Now this kind of strategic social pressure seems like a foreshadowing of the kinds of challenges to segregation that lead 20 years later up to Brown vs. Board of Education. It’s like a precursor to the landmark desegregation act in our nation’s history – and Eden is a part of that history. As it turns out we were a reluctant part in that history. It was our vocation, embodied in that mission statement that bore the seeds of our redemption – that paved the way for Gomez and others to call the seminary out of its sinfulness to join the human freedom movement. This has helped me see the ambivalence of the seminary towards its role in the human freedom movement. We are at once culturally reluctant and vocationally summoned beyond our acculturated horizon. That is who we are. It’s far from heroic, and it should always alert us to the need of God’s grace in the witness of our sisters and brothers who suffer and who are in the struggle.

Recently in a Board of Trustees strategic planning meeting I told the Gomez story. We were talking about our vision and mission. I proposed we state very openly that we are an anti-White supremacist, antiracist institution, because who knows what horizon of our acculturation we’re not seeing today.

If we claim that we are an anti-racist and anti-White supremacist school we will need to move from that old comfortable idea of “how can we be more welcoming and hospitable” to Black students and people of color. If we are called to be engaged in the human freedom movement, then what we’re doing is not just trying to be welcoming to African Americans. We’re working to engage all our students, faculty, and staff (White, Black, and Brown) as agents of transformation, as agents of anti-racism, as agents of human freedom in their leadership in church and society.

White supremacy is idolatry. Every part of the tradition of this school, from the Evangelical German and Reformed heritage to the faculty’s current liberation and postcolonial theological perspectives hates idolatry. So if we hate idolatry and if we want to create transformational leaders, what kinds of transformation are we talking about? Of this society? Of us, of the people? What needs to be transformed is our sinfulness and brokenness which is expressed socially, systemically, most pointedly, I think, in our context as White supremacy and structural racism. This is the summons of our vocation in our place and time—both as a school and as part of the church. Rather than a center that welcomes people in, the metaphor of a movement is helping me to see the seminary as an agent through which God’s purposes are flowing – if we can just have the faith to open up and join in.

IV. Next Steps

I recognize the recommendations section at the beginning of the overall report has action plans, for St Louis and other cities, with regard to urban ministry and presbytery strategies with buildings and other resources, and that other recommendations address criminal justice issues. In St. Louis Metropolitan Congregations United has led congregations (some of which are PCUSA) in working for racial justice in campaigns like “Break the Pipeline,” which seeks to

change school policies toward transforming structural racism in the criminalization of Black and Brown children in schools in our region. This is just one dimension of how the Ferguson protest movement continues to impact the witness and work of churches in our region.

It is important to note that the movement keeps moving. As it does so, I believe it will continue to serve as a resource to faithful churches about how and where and among whom God is working for justice in our region. Over these four years, protesters have continued to keep the pressure on the Mayor of STL and the County government to implement policing reforms. This was seen in the re-organization of Ferguson protesters under the new hashtag # "ExpectUs" after the "not guilty" verdict of SLMPD officer Jason Stockley in August, 2017, following his videotaped killing of Anthony Lamar Smith two years earlier.

In addition to calling for important policing reforms, the protest movement in STL has taken to the streets to decry economic disparity in our region, particularly around the vulnerability of unhoused people in STL. One important Ferguson protest leader, Cathy ("MamaCat") Daniels has organized in these past years among Ferguson protesters to prepare and share food with unhoused people in the City of St. Louis (which is a violation of a city ordinance). Her group, which she has named "Potbangerz" shares food and advocates for housing solutions in the face of gentrification and efforts to displace unhoused people from the city's central corridor.

The St Louis City budget commits over half its operating revenue – more than \$250,000,000 annually – to "Public Safety" (meaning police) and yet it has no plan and has not allocated adequate resources to house 300+ people in the past several winter months of dangerously cold weather. During the winter of 2017-18 in STL, a man who still has not been identified, died in a dumpster. A man named Grover Perry died in a Porta-Potty. What I admire about the witness of the protest movement is that it has seen the connection between the need for reimagining "Public Safety" (aka policing) and the deadly disregard of our city leaders for the safety of our unhoused citizens. The same leaders who have protested racist policing for the last four years in our region have moved into the streets of our city to keep our unhoused family safe and alive. Far from being committed to a single social justice issue, the Ferguson movement – with leaders like MamaCat – is witnessing to the power of solidarity. For those of us in the church this has much to teach us about what loving our neighbors as ourselves looks like. As we attend to this in our local contexts of church, it will be powerful to see what kinds of connections of solidarity we can build across cities, regions, and global contexts to strengthen our witness of living out that we belong to God and to one another.

SEVERAL ADDITIONAL RESOURCES on Christian witness in St. Louis and other cities:

Metropolitan Congregations United organizing against the “Great Divorce” of the city from the county...

<https://www.piconetwork.org/ferguson/Hands-Up-Sabbath-Toolkit.pdf>

deray McKesson@deray... Why protest? Because we can imagine an America that is better than this. Because blackness is not a weapon or a crime. #Ferguson

<http://news.stlpublicradio.org/post/congregations-make-conversations-about-race-priority#stream/0> .

Sojourners Commentary . <https://sojo.net/articles/unrest-st-louis-it-was-built-be-way>

By [Karen Anderson](#), [Deborah Krause](#) 9-27-2017

A Racial Justice Resource List, edited by Elizabeth McDonald-Zwoyer, member, Second Presbyterian Church, St. Louis, MO.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7eM2T7bW5A4My1yTC1ad11YSWM/view>

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly 2014 report: “The Gospel from Detroit.” (https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/acswp/pdf/the_gospel_from_detroit.pdf).

The Portland Assembly (2016) built on that report: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/wp-content/uploads/City-Churches-Conviction-Conversation-Call-to-Action.pdf>. (Prior urban ministry thinking in *Church & Society* magazines, Nov/Dec 95 & Sep/Oct 87, available at acswp@pcusa.org).

The photos and pictures (on the covers) are to suggest parts of the story from Michael Brown’s death in Ferguson to the March to End Cash Bail at the General Assembly, both of which were witnessed and captured visually by private and public sources within and apart from PCUSA. For more information on photos contact acswp@pcusa.org.

Presbytery Commission for the Installation of Reverend Clyde Crumpton.

Front row, from left: Elder Joyce Addison, CBPC Clerk of Session; Rev Dr Craig Howard, Transitional Leader, Giddings–Lovejoy Presbytery; Rev Dr Deborah Krause, Dean, Eden Theological Seminary; Rev Clyde Crumpton, Pastor, CBPC; Elder Phyllis Weaver, CBPC; Ruling Elder Mike Willock, Giddings – Lovejoy Presbytery Moderator

Back row, from left: Rev Cedric Portis, Pastor, Third Presbyterian; Rev Erin Counihan, Immediate Past Presbytery Moderator, Pastor, Oak Hill Presbyterian; Rev Sean Butler, Pastor, Florissant Presbyterian; Elder Tom Hood, Past Moderator, GLP.



Contributions to this report were prepared primarily by the pastors of five St. Louis city area churches and the dean of Eden Seminary; we use the building pictures to symbolize the witness of the congregations and seminary in each of their parts of greater St. Louis. Because most of the contributors are represented in the installation picture, we use that to show those authors. Further information can be found at the congregation websites and that of Giddings-Lovejoy Presbytery.



METROPOLITAN CONGREGATIONS UNITED
presents
FROM PIPELINE TO PATHWAY COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY

Thursday
NOV. 9th 2017
at 6:30 PM

HARRIS-STOWE STATE UNIVERSITY | HENRY GIVENS AUDITORIUM
3026 LACLEDE AVE. | ST. LOUIS, MO

ENDING CRIMINALIZATION OF BLACK
BY INTRODUCING SCHOOL, POLICE
JUVENILE COURT REFORMS.

HARRIS-STOWE
COLLEGE OF ADMINISTRATION



The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)
www.pcusa.org/acswp or
www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/acswp

The Office of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
100 Witherspoon Street • Louisville, Kentucky 40202-1396

PDS # 24-052-18-004