

THE RACIAL EQUITY TORCH

Volume 31, Issue 1, Fall 2021



GROW | TRANSFORM | EMPOWER | LEAD | DEVELOP



**A Message from the Acting Director,
The Rev. T. Denise Anderson**

Preparing Presbyterians to take the helm for social reform

The Impact of Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries Leadership Institutes

Social reform is described as any attempt that seeks to correct injustices in a society. It is a kind of social movement that aims to make gradual but deliberate change, or change in certain aspects of society, rather than rapid or fundamental changes. Social reform doesn’t just happen. People who are involved in social reforms do so with the aim of improving the quality of life.

This edition of the Racial Equity Torch shares stories of some of the many Presbyterians who have been and continue to be on the frontline for social reform.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the systemic and ongoing disparities of health care, education, employment, economics, and justice that exist for Black, Brown, Asian and Indigenous people in this nation. If ever there was a need for social reform it is now. Today there is a need for inspiring, accountable governance and leadership in our churches, our local and national government and law enforcement throughout America.

As churches continue to embrace the Matthew 25 invitation, it is important to recognize that there is an ongoing need to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, eliminate health-care disparities for the sick, and provide equal justice under the law for those in jail and compassion for those on the margins. But we must also recognize and address the need for social reform within our own systems.

Through the Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries’ (RE&WIM) Leadership Institutes, Presbyterians of color are being prepared to step into leadership roles to spearhead social reform within the denomination and their communities.

To date, 16 leadership events have been held, including a wide range of topics such as the Clergywomen’s Leadership Institute/Young Women’s Leadership Development Event at Big Tent, the African American Executive Leadership Seminar, the Pan Asian English Ministry Pastors

Conference, the Native American Leadership Development Event, and the Hispanic/Latina Women’s Leadership Institute: “Encuentro de Mujeres en Liderazgo” in November 2019.

And despite the pandemic that impacted every corner of the world in 2020, RE&WIM hosted a Virtual Center of Learning — including an E-Conference of the Year-Long Mentoring Event for Leaders of Color in Pastoral Ministry and will be holding an African American Executive Leadership E-Seminar in 2021.

We invite you to join RE&WIM as we engage the Church in its mission to become more diverse and inclusive of racial, ethnic, cultural and language groups, and equip women for leadership in all ministries of the Church.

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Save the Date

Oct. 18 to 20, 2021

To celebrate the first 50 years of the National Caucus of Korean Presbyterian Churches (NCKPC), the first Jubilee Symposium, “This Is Our Story,” will be held as a hybrid event from Oct. 18 to 20, 2021, in Denver. This event is not only for testifying to God’s faithfulness in the Korean American churches of the PC(USA) for the past 50 years, but also for envisioning the next 50 years of Korean American churches that serve and bless the third to fifth generations.

The keynote speakers include a fifth-generation Chinese American sociologist, third-generation Japanese American theologians, and first- and second-generation Korean American scholars. Through the keynote presentations and a panel discussion, they will share their stories and experiences for the future of Korean American churches. With the rise of anti-Asian racism in the United States, Dr. Russell Jeung, co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate and an expert on Asian American hate crime, will also address the emerging issues.

If you have any questions, please email nckpcjubilee@gmail.com.

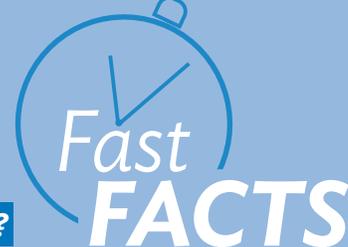
Oct. 29-31

The 2021 National Vietnamese Presbyterian Conference will be held on Oct. 29-31 at 11832 Euclid St., Garden Grove, California. For more information or to register contact Dao Nguyen’s at quynhdaont@gmail.com.

IMPORTANT NEWS CONCERNING THE TORCH MAGAZINE

The Torch Magazine is moving to a digital format. That means the Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries will no longer be mailing copies of the magazine to individuals’ homes. However, while the digital platform is the most efficient method for distributing the magazine, we realize that not everyone may prefer this method of receiving the publication.

If you prefer to receive a printed copy of the publication, please email your name and mailing address to Jewel McRae at jewel.mcrae@pcusa.org.



Did You Know?

- ❖ H.R. 40, the “Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African American Act,” is strategically named after the failed promise of 40 acres and a mule to freed Blacks after the American Civil War.
- ❖ The commission of 13 people would be tasked with researching the history of enslavement in the United States and systemic racism, including federal and state governments’ role in supporting it, and recommend appropriate remedies to Congress.
- ❖ People of color are 3X more likely than whites to live in areas with restricted access to nature.
- ❖ 70% of low-income communities live in areas lacking green spaces.
- ❖ 61% of drinking water systems on Native American reservations had health violations compared with 27% of all public systems in the United States.
- ❖ The Environmental Protection Agency has denied 95% of the civil-rights claims brought by communities of color against polluters.

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

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

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

The Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter announces plan to leave the Presbyterian Mission Agency

‘Serving has been a privilege, of which I am exceedingly grateful’

by Gail Strange

LOUISVILLE — After serving the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for more than 26 years, the Rev. Dr. Rhashell D. Hunter has announced her plan to leave the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA). Hunter has served as the Director of the PMA’s Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries (RE&WIM) for the last 14 years. She left at the end of April.

“I have discerned through prayer to God that this call and ministry is completed,” she said.

“This serves as a bookend to my ministry at the Presbyterian Mission Agency, in a way, as I began this ministry after Easter many years ago.”

Hunter reflected fondly her journey to Louisville.

“I remember preaching at my church in Michigan,” Hunter said, “and then packing and moving to Louisville the week of Thunder Over Louisville.” Thunder Over Louisville is one of the nation’s largest fireworks show and is the kickoff event for the festivities leading up to the Kentucky Derby.

“I remember the excitement of the new call, and I am excited today as I start a new chapter in ministry,” Hunter said. “Serving Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries with our ministry partner Presbyterian Women, Inc., in the PC(USA) has been a privilege, of which I am exceedingly grateful.”

Hunter says that while experiencing the COVID-19

pandemic and the pandemic of racism, as well as the political and economic climate, she has rediscovered that life is, indeed, precious and sacred.

“I intend to continue to contribute to the common good in impactful ministry. I look forward with great anticipation and hope to all God has in store for Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries and for me in the next exciting chapter in God’s ministry,” Hunter said.

Prior to joining the PMA, Hunter broke ground while serving for nine years as the pastor of Community Presbyterian Church in

Flint, Michigan. She was the fifth installed pastor and the first and only African American and woman to serve as pastor in the 85-year history of the church.

She served also as the associate pastor for worship, music, and the arts at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago. She is past Moderator of the The Synod of the Covenant and has served as adjunct faculty in homiletics at several Presbyterian seminaries across the country.

“I am so grateful for the leadership and vision Rhashell has provided for the Church and the RE&WIM,” said the Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, president and



Hunter has a love for preaching and a commitment to building bridges in intercultural communities.



The Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter

executive director of the PMA. “Her passion and commitment to developing Presbyterian leaders of color and particularly clergy women of color within the denomination are especially important and will impact the Church for generations to come.”

“The RE&WIM area is vitally important to our future as a Matthew 25 Church. I am deeply thankful for Rhashell’s many years of dedicated service to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and continue to hold her in prayer during this time of discernment,” Moffett said.

Moffett said the Rev. Denise Anderson will serve as acting director of RE&WIM while the PMA visioning process is completed. Anderson will be working with the RE&WIM leadership staff including Jewel McRae, coordinator for Women’s Leadership Development and Young Women’s Ministries; Tim McCallister, coordinator for Mission Program Grants and Schools and Colleges Equipping Communities of Color; and Susan

Jackson Dowd, executive director of Presbyterian Women Inc.

Commenting on Hunter’s contributions to the denomination, the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the PC(USA), said, “Rhashell Hunter has served the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) well in some very difficult times. She continued the work begun by individuals such as Otis Turner, Jim Reese, Rita Dixon, and others who sought to position our denomination for a significant ministry that would accommodate all people who would transition into United States citizens with a desire to commit to faith in Jesus Christ.”

“At every level of the church, she has been able to celebrate the gifts of preaching, teaching, and building a multicultural and pluralistic church. Rhashell has represented the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) well while exemplifying the teachings of her parents, who loved the Lord.”

Reflecting on his relationship with Hunter, the Rev. Dr. Thomas F. Taylor, president and chief executive officer of the

Presbyterian Foundation, said, “I vividly remember meeting Rhashell about 15 years ago. I was immediately struck with her unusual combination of whimsicality, wit and wisdom.”

“Her values and commitments insightfully expressed special concerns for issues like diversity, equity, and inclusion, especially as those related to younger generations. In all her emphases, however, her deep love and commitment for Christ and the Church were always at the center,” he said.

Dowd also has a fond memory of Hunter. “In September 2014, Mary Jorgenson, then moderator of Presbyterian Women Inc., surprised Rhashell with a PW Honorary Life Membership during a Presbyterian Mission Agency Board meeting. Until she heard her name, Rhashell did not realize that Mary was describing her as she read the many reasons this person would receive this PW leadership honor.”

“Rhashell has quietly and not so quietly supported PW at PC(USA) tables for 14 years,” Dowd said. “She is a frequent and valued presence at PW tables, and a close and valued partner and staff colleague.”

Hunter has a love for preaching and a commitment to building bridges in intercultural communities.

Pastor, acclaimed scholar was a staunch advocate for civil rights activism

Gayraud Wilmore, leader of the Commission on Religion and Race

by Gail Strange

LOUISVILLE — The Rev. Dr. Gayraud Wilmore was a pastor, renowned scholar of African American church history, the first executive director of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.'s (UPCUSA) Commission on Religion and Race (CORAR) and a key figure in the civil rights movement.

Wilmore graduated from Benjamin Franklin High School in Philadelphia in 1937. Following high school, he matriculated to Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. Wilmore's studies were interrupted when he was drafted into the army. A member of the famed "Buffalo Soldiers," Wilmore served with the all-Black 92nd Infantry Division in Italy during World War II.

Wilmore received his call to the ministry in 1943 while dodging bullets in a foxhole. Following the war, Wilmore returned to school and received his bachelor's degree in 1947 and his Bachelor of Divinity in 1950, both from Lincoln University. He was installed as the pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in West Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1950, where he served for three years.

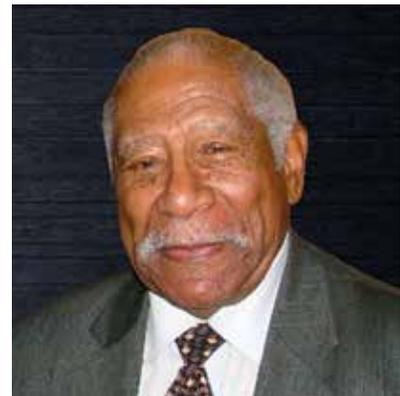
A staunch advocate for civil rights and a leader in Presbyterian civil rights activism, Wilmore worked to desegregate the West Chester public schools and in 1951 his son was the first Black student to attend an all-white elementary school. In 1953, he became the

associate executive of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.'s Department of Social Education and Action. At the 175th General Assembly (1963) of the UPCUSA, the Assembly created the Commission on Religion and Race (CORAR), appointing Wilmore as its first executive director. In this position, Wilmore oversaw several racial justice initiatives and organized protests.

He traveled to Presbyterian churches to train pastors how to organize protests and lobby for civil rights and joined demonstrations throughout the South. Wilmore was one of the founders of the National Conference of Black Churchmen in 1969 and played an integral role in the creation of the UPCUSA's Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People in 1970.

"Reverend Wilmore's leadership at national and local levels made the Presbyterian Church more inclusive, representative and compassionate," said Nancy J. Taylor, executive director of the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia. "As his personal papers at PHS show, Wilmore's advocacy for African American Presbyterians from the 1960s into the 21st century never stopped. His legacy is a touchstone for historians today who are researching justice movements in the contemporary church."

Wilmore enjoyed a long and



Rev. Dr. Gayraud Wilmore

influential academic career. As a leading scholar in Black theology, Wilmore was a professor at six different seminaries and lectured at colleges across the United States. From 1959 to 1963, he was the only Black professor at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

His academic career included teaching social ethics at Boston University School of Theology from 1972 to 1974 and teaching at Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School from 1974 until 1982. In 1982 he became the dean of divinity at New York Theological Seminary and served in that position until 1987.

Following his stint at New York Theological Seminary he went on to teach church history at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. In 1990, he became the editor of *The Journal of the ITC*. From 1995–98, Wilmore was an adjunct professor at the



The Rev. Gayraud Wilmore at a press conference with Southern Christian Leadership Conference leaders, including the Rev. Hosea Williams, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta Scott King and Andrew Young. (Photo courtesy of Presbyterian Historical Society)

United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio.

Wilmore wrote or edited 16 books throughout his career, including “Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans” and “Pragmatic Spirituality,” which was published in June 2004. He was a contributing editor to *Christianity and Crisis*. Wilmore and his wife, Lee Ella Wilmore, retired to Washington, D.C., in 2000.

The Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary kicked off its 2021 Black History Month with the establishment of a new student organization, The Gayraud Wilmore Society of Black Seminarians

(SBS). The organization centers the distinct voices of the seminary’s Black students by providing a sacred and unified space that uplifts Black community, cultural experiences, social connections, mental health and the academic support of the Black student body at Louisville Seminary.

In 2019, Louisville Seminary conferred an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree on Wilmore. It was the first such degree conferred in the seminary’s 165-year history.

According to SBS President and second-year Master of Divinity student John Randolph, the formation of the group was inspired by three separate factors. First,

seminary alums laid the groundwork in developing an organization that centered on shared cultural experiences. Second, the “three-headed monster of 2020” (including sickness from the global pandemic, the events leading to the Jan. 6 violence at the U.S. Capitol and violence from the injustices inflicted on Breonna Taylor) inspired the need to understand the fallen world in which students would minister. Lastly was the desire to honor Wilmore, a paramount figure in Black theology.

Wilmore died on April 18, 2020, at the age of 98.

Four days that changed the face of education

‘I was put on this earth to serve,’ Dorothy Counts-Scoggins says

By Gail Strange

For more than a year, many schools across the country have been closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As COVID-19 restrictions are eased and the new school year approaches, we recognize that obtaining a quality education has not always been accessible to Black people in this country.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*. On April 20, 1971, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously declared busing for the purposes of desegregation to be constitutional. The decision in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education* settled the constitutional question and allowed the widespread implementation of busing, which remained controversial over the next decade.

The courageous efforts of the late Rev. Dr. Darius Swann and his wife, Vera, who played a pivotal role in the civil rights movement, enabled African American students in Charlotte, North Carolina, to penetrate the barriers of educational inequities.

But it was one student in particular who endured the relentless ridicule and very real danger in pursuit of her education who is the face of school integration in Charlotte.

On Sept. 4, 1957, 15-year-old Dorothy Counts-Scoggins, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister

and professor of philosophy and religion at Johnson C. Smith University, made her trek to an all-white Harry P. Harding High School in Charlotte.

“So, I tell people, and I have carried the same thing with me my whole life and that is my father said to me, before I got out of the car, he said, ‘I want you to remember that you are inferior to no one.’”

She was one of four Black students enrolled at various all-white schools in the district. This was three years after the historic *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which the court ruled that state laws establishing racial segregation in public schools are unconstitutional, even if the segregated schools are otherwise equal in quality.

The city of Charlotte began discussions concerning integration of the Charlotte schools following the *Brown* decision. “The community started having discussions that nothing was done and maybe they needed to test the system and see what would happen,” said Counts-Scoggins.

“They approached several families in Charlotte, my family being one of those, and asked if they would be willing to submit applications for their children to attend predominantly white schools. My father was a part of the group that had been having conversations around what was equitable with their children and Charlotte.”

According to Counts-Scoggins, 20 African American families were approached to enroll their children in Charlotte’s all-white schools. “Of the 20 Black families that applied, five families were accepted, and it ended up four families actually sent their children to the schools,” she said.

“My father applied and there were three of us that were in Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools at the time. I had one brother in elementary school, and I had an older brother who was a senior in high school. And I was going into high school in 10th grade, but they only accepted me out of our family.”

According to Counts-Scoggins, all four of the students accepted into the white schools were assigned to four different schools. “I think it was deliberate that the four of us were assigned to four different schools. It was very strategic,” she said. “The school that I was assigned to basically was a school that was within walking distance from where we lived; we lived on the campus at Johnson C. Smith, and it was about two blocks from the school.”

She recounted her experience at the all-white Harry P. Harding High School. "I was only there actually four days because of the harassment that I received," she said. "My parents felt that I was not getting any support from the administration there as well.

"The first day was a very hard day for me. It was a lot different from the first day of the young man who went to Central High School. He eventually did graduate from Central, and he got support from the principal. I didn't get any support from the principals. My parents went down and talked with the principal prior to my going on to first day. And the principal did not really give the support we felt that we thought we should have gotten, and on that first day there were probably two or three hundred people gathered outside."

She recalls the street leading to the entrance of the school being barricaded. "The barricade was about two blocks away and I had to walk those two blocks to get there," she said. "The streets were lined with adults as well as a lot of students. When we got there, my father was with Dr. Edwin Thompkins, who was dean of the Johnson C. Smith Seminary and a very close friend of my dad's. He went with us that morning. When we got there, he said to my dad, 'Is there anything that I can do?' My dad said, 'Why don't you go with her? I'll see if I can find someplace to park.' And he did. So, in the picture that traveled the world is the picture of Dr. Thompkins walking with me. People think that's my dad.

"So, I tell people, and I have carried the same thing with me my whole life and that is my father said to me, before I got out of the car, he said, 'I want you to remember that you are inferior to no one; you hold your head up high, and you can do anything that you want to do.' So, those things have carried me. I will



At age 15 Dorothy Counts Scoggins was the first African American to integrate the all-white Harry P. Harding High School in Charolette, NC.

be 75 years old in six months," said Counts-Scoggins.

"There was a white citizens council that was formed several weeks before school opened and the woman was there and she was the one who was issuing the students on and telling them, 'You know what to do,'" she said. "They had made signs with racial slurs and remarks. As I proceeded to walk by, they threw things at me. And one of the most humiliating things was she told them, 'Spit on her.'

"By the time I got to the entrance to the auditorium, spit was dripping from the bottom of my dress. This was a dress that my grandmother, my father's mother, made for me to wear to school that day. She was a seamstress. And every year when I went to school, she always made me a new outfit to wear to school. That was something precious to me because my grandmother had made this dress for me. I walked and I kept my head up high and I kept focused on the door because I truly felt that once I got to the inside of the building that things would be different. I walked into the auditorium, and I found a seat at the end of the row. And I sat there by myself."

Counts-Scoggins says that

sort of treatment continued to happen, and nothing was done by the administration or the teachers. "When I went into the classroom, I was ignored by the teachers," she said.

Returning home after her first day of school, Counts-Scoggins recalled the day's events in a conversation with her parents. "They asked me if I wanted to return and I said, 'Absolutely.' I really felt that once they got to know me, things would be a lot better. I told them about the incident of the two young ladies that were sitting with me and that I felt that things would get better," she said.

She woke up Thursday, the next morning, with a very high fever. Fearing stress could have an impact on her health, her doctor recommended she stay home until Monday. Her parents informed the school that Counts-Scoggins would not be returning to school until then.

"I got better over the weekend," she said. "When I arrived on Monday, there were no barricades, there were no people, my father was able to drive me down to the entrance of the schools. When I walked into the school, they were shocked. They felt that after



One of Dorothy Counts Scroggins passion is interacting with young people. She shares her story and encourages them to pursue their dreams.

that first day, the things that had occurred, I would not be coming back on Monday.”

Unfortunately for Counts-Scoggins, on Monday the same kinds of harassment began to happen inside the school walls — the pushing and shoving, the name calling and the mistreatment. She recalled times while changing classes, the principal witnessed the harassment and ignored it before going back to his office.

“When I got home that afternoon, I told my parents what happened,” she said. “I’m a very determined person. I’ve always been that way. I told them, ‘This has got to change. This will eventually change.’ On Tuesday, I was sitting in the cafeteria, and I was eating and all of a sudden, a group of boys surrounded the table and they spat on my food. I just picked up the tray and took it and put it on the conveyor belt and walked outside and sat out on the lawn.”

One of the young ladies Counts-Scoggins met on her first day of school came outside and began talking to her. She and her

parents had just recently moved to Charlotte. She, too, was also a new student at Hardy. This made Counts-Scoggins feel better.

“When I went home that day, I shared that encounter with my parents,” said Counts-Scoggins. “I told them, ‘Well, at least things got a little better because I at least have one person who I could consider friendly and that I could talk with.’ But then I shared with them about the incident of the young men spitting in my food. I said to them, ‘You know, there are a lot of things that I can take. But I need to be able to eat if I’m going to be there all day. And I don’t know whether I wanted to go through that experience of the spitting in my food.’”

After that incident, Counts-Scoggins exercised her option of leaving school and eating lunch at home. Her parents made arrangements for her to be picked up and returned to school for classes after lunch.

Regrettably, not much else changed for her over the next two days. “In my classes, I was basically ignored,” she said. “I’d raised my

hand, but the teachers just ignored me; it was as if I wasn’t even there.”

While the harassment was relentless, Counts-Scoggins says that when she was hit in the back of the head while at her locker, the harassment became physical. But when the very real threats and acts of violence impacted her family members, Counts-Scoggins became more concerned. The Charlotte police chief’s response to her father’s report of shattered glass from a broken car window, threatening phone calls, things thrown on the family’s porch and trespassing on the family’s property caused the family to realize that the situation was not going to get better.

According to Counts-Scoggins, Charlotte Police Chief Frank N. Littlejohn responded to the family’s complaints by saying, “I cannot guarantee her safety.” And with that, Sept. 9, 1957, was Counts-Scoggins’ last day at Harry P. Harding High School.

Counts-Scoggins continues to be an active and staunch supporter of social justice and civil rights. “My whole family is filled with generations of teachers,” she said. “But I said, ‘No, I’m not going to teach.’ I have a degree in social work. I am trained in sociology and psychology, and I always wanted to serve. Because of my experience, I vowed one of the things that I would do with my life was to make sure what happened to me didn’t happen for another child.

“I have spoken all over the country and I tell people I would rather speak to young people,” she said. “I tell them there are a lot of sacrifices that have been made for you to be where you are today for you to have what you have.

“I was put on this earth to serve, and I think what happened to me at Hardy reinforced me in terms of what I needed to do and what my life should be about.”

‘This is the right time to write elected officials’

National Caucus of Korean Presbyterian Churches calls for elected officials to take action against recent crimes on Asian Americans

by Gail Strange



The Rev. Byeong-Ho Choi, pastor at Bethany Presbyterian Church in Marietta, Georgia, is moderator of the National Caucus of Korean Presbyterian Churches.

Over the past year about 3,800 hate attacks were recorded against Asian Americans. According to research by the Center for the Study of Hate and Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, attacks increased by 150% in 2020.

In March following the mass shooting in Atlanta, where a lone gunman is accused of killing eight individuals, including six Asian women, the National Caucus of Korean Presbyterian Churches (NCKPC) issued a statement denouncing violence against Asian

Americans.

Most recently, the NCKPC has written a letter to members of Congress and is encouraging all Presbyterians to join in contacting their local, state and national elected officials to seek systemic change through legislation to protect Asian Americans.

The Rev. Byeong-Ho Choi, pastor of Bethany Presbyterian Church in Marietta, Georgia, and moderator of the NCKPC, says the group decided this was the right time to write to elected officials.

“It has been good to see the

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community demonstrating and protesting to raise its voice against bias crimes,” said Choi. “With more exposure and awareness to experiences of the AAPI, the NCKPC determined it was the right time to write to elected officials to seek systemic change through legislation and magnify the movement.”

The NCKPC is urging legislation for more stringent anti-bias laws in addition to increased security measures in areas with increased AAPI demographics. Choi says the hope for these measures is to promote racial unity and peace while denouncing racism and hate crimes.

Choi noted that in addition to the NCKPC and the National Asian Presbyterian Council, many non-Presbyterian congregations, AAPI politicians, and anti-Asian American hate organizations have joined the NCKPC’s campaign efforts. “We are confident that the other caucuses of the PC(USA) will respond positively to the invitation we sent them to stand with us,” he said.

Recalling another time in history when the attacks on Asian Americans have also been blatant

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A portrait of Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, an African American woman with short, curly grey hair, wearing black-rimmed glasses and large, ornate earrings. She is wearing a patterned top and has her hands clasped in front of her. The background is a soft, out-of-focus landscape.

"Teaching is my ministry. I love to teach. To empower. To equip. To set people free . . . to live into the graces and gifts they've been given."

Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon

Remembering a pioneer and legend

Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, 1950-2018

The Presbyterian Mission Agency has created a scholarship fund to honor the name and legacy of the late Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon, a pioneer and legend in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The Women's Ministry Fund (E049991) supports Presbyterian women of color, clergywomen, college women and other women with opportunities for leadership and spiritual development as well as mission opportunities in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Gifts in memory of Dr. Cannon can be made online or by mail. Those wishing to donate toward the scholarship can contribute online at presbyterianmission.org/donate/e049991-womens-ministries. To send a check please make it payable to "The Presbyterian Mission Agency" and write "in memory of Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon – E049991" on the memo line.

Please mail your gift to:
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PO Box 643700
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

Lucy Craft Laney leveled the field through education

Laney founded school in Georgia

By Gail Strange

It has been said that education is the “great equalizer of the conditions of men.” Lucy Craft Laney proved this statement to be true. Born 11 years before the end of slavery, Laney was born free on April 13, 1854, in Macon, Georgia.

Although there were laws that prohibited Black people from reading during Laney’s time, with the help of Ms. Campbell, her parents’ former slave owner’s sister, Laney was able to read by the time she was 4. Ms. Campbell’s generosity and her parents’ open-arms policy with strangers and family taught Laney the importance of giving and sharing. These lessons would be the foundation for her success. In 1869, at the age of 15, Lucy entered the first class of Atlanta University.

Always concerned with change for the better, for Laney, educating the children of formerly enslaved people was paramount. She began her teaching career in Macon, Milledgeville, and Savannah before, due to health reasons, settling in Augusta, Georgia. With the encouragement of Christ Presbyterian Church in Augusta, Laney started the first school in Augusta for Black boys and girls.

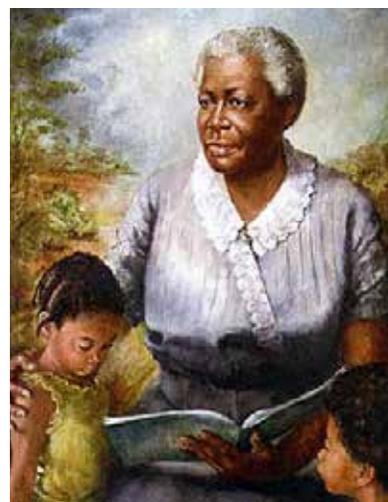
The school opened on Jan. 6, 1883, in the basement of the church with little money and only six students. Laney did not have much, but what she did have was dedication and determination, which would prove to be all this unique woman would need. In 1885, the first class graduated from Laney’s school. By that time, the school had

234 students and needed a bigger facility and more money.

Looking to expand her school, Laney traveled with a one-way ticket, little funds and fervent prayers to tell the General Assembly of the Northern Presbyterian Church of Minnesota about her school and to request funding. Unfortunately, Laney was unable to convince the Assembly to commit to funding her school. However, they did pay for her return trip home. Laney was unsure how she would proceed from there, but she knew that her mission was a good one and that her school would continue.

Shortly after her trip to Minnesota, she received a letter from Francine E.H. Haines, who had heard her speak at the convention. Haines was so impressed with Laney and her mission that she was able to secure \$10,000 for the expansion of the school. Laney was so touched by the kindness of this stranger that she named the new school after her. In 1886, Haines Normal and Industrial Institute was chartered by the state of Georgia and moved into its new location at 800 Gwinnett St. (now Laney Walker Boulevard).

Laney was a forward-thinking person. She believed that the only way for Black people to be successful in America was by being well educated. She also believed that in order for the race to continue, its women must be educated as well. Her students studied the classics, Latin, algebra and various trades. She produced well-rounded young adults who also studied the arts and



Lucy Craft Laney’s portrait was the first portrait of an African American woman to be displayed in the Georgia state capitol.

music and participated in sports. Laney made sure that students who graduated from Haines were ready to compete in society.

In addition to starting her own school, Laney started the first Black kindergarten in Augusta, Georgia, and the first Black nursing school in the city, the Lamar School of Nursing. Many people were influenced by the work that Laney did at Haines. Mary McCleod Bethune, who worked with Laney for a year, was so impressed by Laney’s accomplishments that she went to Florida and founded Bethune-Cookman College. This outstanding institution continues to thrive and produce thousands of African American graduates.

After a life of selfless dedication to the education of her people, Laney died on Oct. 23, 1933.

For Native Americans, fight for civil rights is related to treaty rights

‘U.S. government has broken every treaty’

By Gail Strange

Native Americans have been on the frontlines of social reform in the United States since Europeans arrived in the 1400s.

The Rev. Judy Wellington, a Presbyterian Mission Agency Board member from Arizona, says one of the greatest issues facing Native people currently in this country is the threat to tribal sovereignty, which is protected by treaty agreement. “There is to be a nation-to-nation relationship between tribal governments and the federal government, but the U.S. government has broken every treaty,” said Wellington. “The relationship is complex, and the history is not taught, so the country fails to recognize the unique status of First Nations communities and the various Indian policies that have been developed. For the most part, we were not allowed to remain on traditional homelands in peace, but faced war and policies of extermination, removal, assimilation and termination of some tribal nations. Today, tribal governments claim the right to self-determination.

“The general lack of understanding in this country about the diversity among First Nations communities, cultures and histories has led to misunderstanding. We are often lumped together under the term ‘Native American.’ I can understand the use of this term when speaking about a collective history, but when referring to a

particular people in a specific place, it would be respectful to use the term that the community uses for itself. By failing to do that, we negate their existence. Although some school curriculum includes content about us, it is often history and does not include information about the contemporary context. Invisibility in one’s own homeland is an issue with intergenerational impact. Even so, whether on a reservation or in an urban center, there are healing efforts that work best when approached as a community,” she said.

Wellington says that throughout history, the big picture issues impacting Native people and social reform remain the same. Language preservation, which carries concepts of being; legal jurisdiction issues; land development and natural resources issues; access to adequate health care; and healthy food are some of the practical issues that continue to challenge Native American tribal communities. And the ways that tribal governments approach these issues locally will vary across the country. But Wellington says that when it comes to federal policy and legislation, many tribes work together to achieve mutual goals.

“At the personal level, young people are faced with challenges that prior generations did not have,” said Wellington. “At the same time, they also face issues of identity and their place in a country that



The Rev. Judy Wellington, Presbyterian Mission Agency Board member says it will take allies stepping up to support Native Americans for there to be change across the country.

barely knows their people still exist. Some have retained a stronger connection to their people’s values and lifeway, while others have done much more assimilating. Young people are deciding the value of tribal affiliation for themselves and how much, if anything, they can contribute to preserving their unique identity. Not all tribal nations are the same, and when parents come from different tribal communities, there is more for young people to consider.”

Another key element of social reform is fighting racism. While Rochelle Walensky, director for the Centers for Disease Control and

Prevention, has declared racism “a serious public health threat,” Native Americans have experienced the impact of racism from the first days of contact through today.

“When the basis of European settlement and then U.S. nation building on this land is founded on the notion that the brown-skinned original inhabitants and their cultures are detrimental, then racism becomes a building block, even if it is unconscious,” said Wellington. “That impact has been detrimental psychologically, spiritually and in all ways to Native Americans and their communities.

“I have observed greater resilience and healing efforts where the traditional language is still spoken and the values that support communal well-being are still held in high regard. The concepts carried in the Indigenous languages that I am aware of hold the values of human interconnection with all Creation and a priority of communalism over individualism.”

Reflecting on the historical role the Presbyterian Church played in racism and biases toward Native Americans, Wellington said, “The Presbyterian Church, among other denominations, joined the federal government in providing boarding schools for Native Americans in the 1800s. Although we cannot judge the values of the 1800s by today’s standards, we can assess how the 19th-century attitudes of Euro-American white superiority fueled structures and policies.

“While students were provided an education and given practical skills for functioning in white society, they were discouraged from retaining their language, spirituality and traditional ways. There were a few places where Presbyterians supported the translation of the Bible into the local Indigenous language, but that was not a policy of the denomination, and most tribes did not receive efforts to

develop a written form of their language.”

Wellington said, “As a pastor, I think about the impact of teaching that one’s own language is not of value. Well-meaning Christians removed children from their families during the boarding school era, and at the time, I suppose it was as benevolent an act as could be expected. Certainly not everyone suffered personally from being in the boarding school, but the Indigenous communities suffered from the impact of negative perspectives carried in curriculum toward them and the racist attitudes held by well-meaning staff.”

“I have heard many stories about the shame experienced by boarding school students, even as they expressed gratitude for having received an education. I also think about the division that a certain kind of Christian teaching fostered in communities. Families became split between Christian and non-Christian, adding to the disruption of community well-being,” she added.

As for the role Native Americans played in the civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s, Wellington says for Native Americans, the fight for civil rights was related to the exercise of treaty rights and better treatment on reservation homelands. In some places, federal or state laws restricted or made it illegal to do traditional hunting, fishing or ceremonies.

She recalled one example in the state of Washington in the mid-1960s. “Fish-ins were organized by members of the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) in defiance of state law to protest the denial of traditional modes of fishing protected by treaty. These NIYC members had participated in the ‘Freedom Rides’ and civil rights marches in the South, and they used what they had learned about activism and civil disobedience.”

It was at this time that the American Indian Movement emerged as an activist group with autonomous chapters across Indian Country. Chapters still exist in parts of the country to support local Native American communities when asked.

Wellington says for real change to happen, white Americans need to be more respectful of Indigenous people and people of color. “I know this will require the hard work of dealing with structural racism, which hurts everybody, including white people,” she said.

“Some people have a difficult time with the idea of pluralism. But for many First Nations communities, there was a traditional understanding of seeking peace with neighbors. Of course, there were wars, and some were more aggressive than others in taking resources. However, it did not seem to be the case that any one people would seek to completely destroy another.”

“There is also an acceptance that the Creator provides what is needed in a particular geography for life-giving practices,” she added. “What is helpful in one place may not be the same for another. This brings me back to the idea of respecting others’ ways of being.”

For Native people, justice issues are not necessarily police brutality or voter suppression but are more matters of environmental racism and injustice that have caused a change in this country.

Different tribal leaders have lead efforts in their area to address environments justice issues. Perhaps one of the most noted actions recently has been the protest in North Dakota of the construction of a \$3.8 billion, 1,172-mile oil pipeline. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe filed a lawsuit against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, and Native youth gathered to stop the construction of the

pipeline that was to be laid beneath the Missouri River near Standing Rock.

The peaceful protesters and those who joined them called themselves “water protectors.” This was done to draw attention to the need to protect their community’s water supply from a potential oil spill. Thousands gathered at Standing Rock to protect the water. Their message was a call to leave oil in the ground and move toward renewable energy sources, which echoes the message of environmentalists to care for Creation.

Wellington acknowledged that environmental conservation is something that Native people have contributed to through the sharing of their traditional knowledge when the dominant society has asked.

She says in California, the forest service is looking at working with the tribes whose homeland includes the forests of Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks.

“Their traditional ways of caring for the forests made fires useful for future growth rather than massively destructive in the past few years,” she said. “I don’t know that a change in the country will come because of what Native Americans do, but certainly particular regions will benefit as they take notice of what the tribal communities near them are doing.”

Wellington says it will take allies stepping up to support Native Americans for there to be change across the country. “If white America does not see our causes as in their best interest, it will not

matter that we have a just cause. It goes back to my comment that we are so few and our voice so small among the other voices. We have an uphill struggle in that the Indigenous values that undergird justice-seeking most likely do not match the values that drive the economy or status quo even in the formation groups and ways of doing business,” she said.

“In my experience with different Native communities, social reform is connected to aspects of community healing, which is a wholistic term. Young people have always played a part in the work for social reform, as have women. The healthiest and most effective groups are those that incorporate the strengths of all in their actions — women, men, young, old.”

THIS IS THE RIGHT TIME, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

and vicious, Choi commented on the 1992 Los Angeles riots. “The police brutality toward Rodney King triggered the 12th riot in Los Angeles that lasted from April 29 to May 4,” he said. “Fifty-three people were killed, several thousand injured, and financial loss and damages amounted to \$1 billion. During the riot, Korean American-owned small businesses were attacked, looted, razed and burned by rioters.”

“Korean American small business owners sustained 45% of the total losses, nearing half of a billion dollars. The business owners and their families not only sustained material losses but they also had their American dream shattered,” said Choi.

“Many left Los Angeles with nothing and dispersed throughout the United States. It is outrageous that in 2021, the AAPI are facing significantly increased rates of hate crimes in this country and must fear for their safety. Many of the AAPI

are American citizens, naturalized having left their homeland and pledging allegiance to this nation, or they were born here. Yet racists and bigots menace and scream, ‘Go back home!’”

Ever the “perpetual foreigner,” this experience “is heartbreaking and frightening to the AAPI,” he said.

Choi says the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has a clear vision on dismantling racism based on the Bible, specifically Matthew 25. “The PC(USA) is rightly pioneering and living into and putting the practices of Matthew 25 into action by focusing on forgiveness, love, and reconciliation and building up the kingdom of God without racism,” he said.

When asked what people can do to become allies of the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, Choi answered, “Individuals can pray, listen, and learn, send an encouraging letter and stand with and act for the

AAPI movements in their local communities. Seeing and hearing the AAPI will help fight against the image of the ‘perpetual foreigner.’”

The NCKPC Moderator said, “Over 30,000 American soldiers fought and died in the Korean War from 1950-53, defending the freedom and liberties of Korea. Regarding faith, American missionaries, many who were martyred, helped to spread the Word of God throughout Korea. Koreans and Korean Americans have a deep sense of gratitude toward the United States. Yet the racism and bias crimes that Korean Americans face along with the AAPI is heartbreaking.”

“Thus, the NCKPC speaks out and seeks to take action, seeking justice, reconciliation, forgiveness, peace and unity in this country in the footsteps of its Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”

He's called 'an unparalleled source of institutional knowledge' who loves the gospel and the Church

By Robyn Davis Sekula, Presbyterian Foundation

The Rev. Dr. James Foster Reese officially retired in December from his position with the Presbyterian Foundation as Minister of Specialized Interpretation, a consulting position he has held since 1995.

Reese, 95, has been an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church for more than 70 years and has been an active and committed extension of the Foundation's staff. His work will continue through the Ministers of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

"We are incredibly grateful for Jim's wisdom, the connections he has made in the church and the many ways in which he has served Christ through his work," said Tom Taylor, President and CEO of the Foundation. "He is so well-respected and beloved in the PC(USA), for good reason. He has been indefatigable, with one of the longest-lasting careers in the Church, and has been an unparalleled source of institutional knowledge. Jim loves the gospel. He loves the Church. He has no doubt improved the PC(USA) through his tireless service."

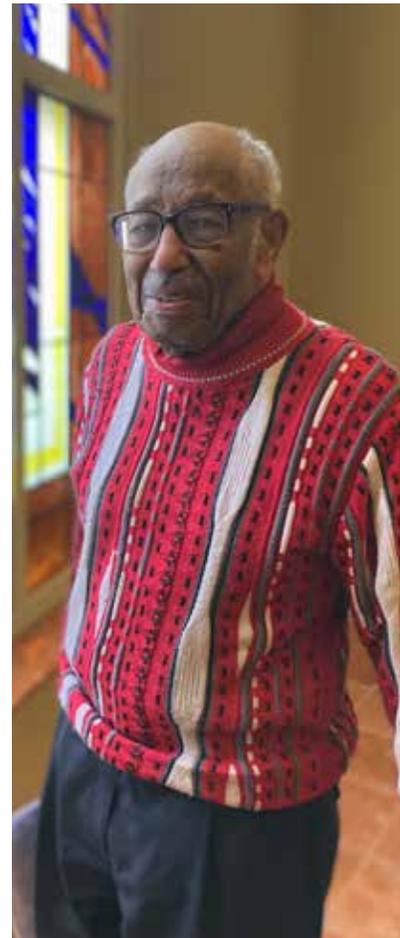
Reese is a native of Harrodsburg, Kentucky. He holds a bachelor's degree from Knoxville College, a Master of Divinity from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and a Master of Education in Religious Education from the University of Pittsburgh. He holds an honorary Doctor of Divinity from Knoxville College and a Distinguished Alumni Award for

Excellence in Specialized Ministry from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He is also the recipient of the Edler G. Hawkins Award, (National Black Presbyterian Caucus), the Lucy Craft Laney Award (Black Presbyterian Women's Association) and the Maggie Kuhn Award (Presbyterian Senior Services).

Reese was first called to be pastor of Trinity United Presbyterian Church and Miller's Ferry Presbyterian Church in Alabama. He was next called to serve as pastor of First United Presbyterian Church on the campus of Knoxville College. He took an academic sabbatical from KC to serve as Professor of Homiletics in Kenya, and upon his return, agreed to serve as the Christian Education Consultant for the Synod of Catawba in Charlotte, N.C.

Prior to his "retirement" in 1993, Reese served in a number of progressively responsible positions with the Presbyterian Church, with his last being the Director of the Racial Ethnic Ministries (now Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries).

Post-retirement, he has held nearly as many prestigious positions as he did previously, including service as the Interim Executive Presbyter for the Presbyteries of New York City, Detroit and Newark. At age 93, he "re-retired" as supply pastor for the Germantown Community Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, and, still known as an outstanding



At age 95, the Rev. Dr. James Foster Reese has retired from his role with the Presbyterian Foundation.

preacher, is often called to preach at events and programs across the country.

Robyn Davis Sekula is vice president of communications and marketing at the Presbyterian Foundation. She is a ruling elder and member of Highland Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Ky.

The Impact of Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries Leadership Institutes

Statistics show that the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has more pastoral leaders of color and women in ministry today than ever before. Nearly 50% of the new worshipping communities in the PC(USA) are led by pastoral leaders of color, clergywomen and intercultural leaders. As the PC(USA) becomes more culturally inclusive, it is important that its executives, heads of staff and church leaders also become culturally inclusive.

According to the 2016 study *Gender and Leadership in the PC(USA)*, 38% of the denomination's ordained clergy are women. This is the largest percentage in the history of the Church. Women bring different leadership styles and gifts to ministry. These gifts and styles of leadership are shaping the future of the PC(USA).

The Church is committed to developing leaders for the future, so it is necessary at this time to focus on nurturing leaders of color and women to serve the Church today and in the future.

Inaugural Leadership Institutes

In Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries, we are committed to providing opportunities for leadership development, so we inaugurated Leadership Institutes for leaders of color and women. The first institute was the **Racial Ethnic Clergywomen's Leadership Institute** held at Montreat



Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries provide opportunities for leadership development for leaders and women of color throughout the PC(USA.)

Conference Center in Montreat, North Carolina, in September 2010. Nominations were received by mid council executives of clergywomen of color who had been in parish ministry for at least five years and who exhibited skills and gifts for leadership in the larger Church. A group of clergywomen of color were then invited to attend the institute. The participants and the leaders were African American, Hispanic/Latina, Asian, Korean, Native American and Middle Eastern.

The second institute, the inaugural **Clergywomen's Leadership Institute/Young Women's Leadership Development event**, was held at Big Tent 2011 in Indianapolis, and this institute was open to all clergywomen and young women interested in church leadership. Dr. Cynthia Campbell, president emerita of

McCormick Theological Seminary and retired pastor of Highland Presbyterian Church in Louisville, was the keynote speaker at the Clergywomen's Leadership Institute luncheon. Theresa Cho was also a speaker for the luncheon, which was held in conjunction with Young Women's Leadership Development ministries, which provides resources to women ages 18–35 who are considering greater leadership opportunities in the Church.

The next institute, the **African American Executive Leadership Seminar**, was held at Montreat Conference Center in August 2011. Nominations were received by mid council executives of African American clergy, elders and commissioned ruling elders who had been in parish ministry for at least four to six years and who exhibited skills and gifts for

leadership in the larger Church.

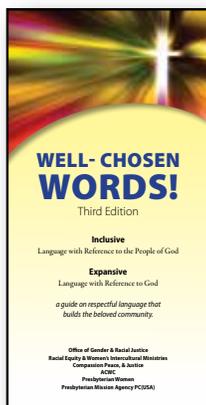
A group of African American clergy, elders and commissioned ruling elders were then invited to attend the institute. Some of the featured leaders for the seminar included the Rev. Mark Lomax (pastor of First Afrikan Presbyterian Church of Lithonia, Georgia), Elder Vince Patton (who served as the Racial Ethnic leadership development manager in the Presbyterian Mission Agency), the Rev. Warner Durnell (who served as executive presbyter for North Alabama Presbytery), the Rev. Curtis Kearns (who served as Presbyterian Mission Agency executive administrator), the Rev. Dr. Arlene Gordon (who served as executive presbyter for the Presbytery of Tropical Florida), the Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter (who served as director of Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries), the Rev. Sterling Morse (former coordinator for Cross Cultural Ministries), the Rev. Dr. Lonnie Oliver (former associate for African American Congregational Support), Jewel McRae (coordinator for Women's Leadership Development & Young Women's Ministries) and more.

These leaders of color are working to bring social reform to the denomination and their communities.

FEATURED RESOURCES

Well Chosen Words

Using inclusive and expansive language is one way to acknowledge and celebrate all people and bring recognition and a sense of belonging to people who have been historically marginalized in society and even in the church. This resource seeks to broaden our expressions of God and the many human reflections of our Creator as we live into beloved community.



Who We are

Intercultural Ministries and Support for Congregations of Color

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

Leadership Development & Recruitment for Leaders of Color

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

Women's Leadership Development and Justice Ministries

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

In covenant relationship with Presbyterian Women in the PC(USA), Inc.

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Rev. T. Denise Anderson ,
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Gail L. Strange,
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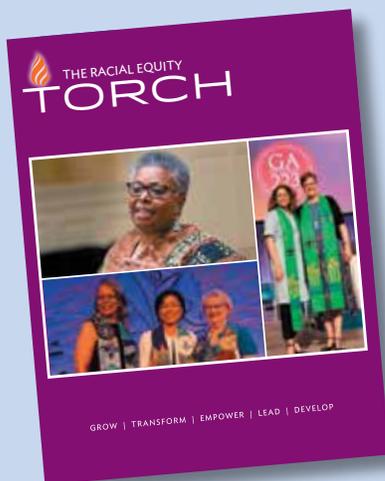


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The Racial Equity Torch is published by *Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries*. Since 1989, it has offered news, events, and issues of concern to Presbyterians of color. It connects you to new resources and upcoming events; it equips you with information to bolster your faith life and ministry; and it inspires you as we share stories about Presbyterians of color in the church. It is printed three times a year and is also available online.

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