



THE RACIAL EQUITY  
TORCH

Volume 29, Issue 3, Winter 2019



GROW | TRANSFORM | EMPOWER | LEAD | DEVELOP

# THE RACIAL EQUITY TORCH



## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

*This edition of the Torch Magazine highlights Native Americans in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Rev. Irvin Porter is the Associate for Native American Intercultural Congregational Support. The following is Irv's reflection.*

Native American Presbyterian church pews on Sunday mornings aren't as filled as we would like. Many don't have pastors nor offer many programs for children, youth or Sunday school. Nevertheless, there is an emergence of leadership coming from Native American Presbyterians and exciting things are happening.

The American Indian Youth Council, currently led by three alumni, Brandyn Monahan, Troy and Krista Langley will hold its Youth Conference in the Tacoma, WA area in the summer of 2020. Of the Native American Consulting Committee's ten-members, four are first-time members: Jo Ann Kauffmann (Synod of Alaska-Northwest), Anthony Trujillo (Yale Divinity School), Charlotte Fafard (Synod of the Southwest) and Holly Haile Thompson (Synod of the North East).

Many congregations have faced tough times both historically and currently but have adapted and are determined to live and work for the glory of God. Recent General Assembly Actions include:

- The Apology to Native Americans, Alaskan Natives and Hawaiians
- Repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery
- Expanded Response to the Doctrine of Discovery
- Initiative to Repair Critical Infrastructure Needs of the Churches and Properties in the Historic Native American and Alaskan Native Mission Fields.

Native Americans work hard to help the church understand its history with Native people, how they can partner with Native congregations and learn more about issues reservation communities face. Native Americans mythology has clouded who they really are and have always been.

Mitákuye Oyásin, a phrase from the Lakota language meaning "all my relatives" or "we are all related," suggests the world view of interconnectedness of all things, all beings, all of God's creation. The Presbyterians also have a word to describe relationship: Connectedness.

*Rev. Irvin Porter*

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# Save the Date

## **January 29 to February 1, 2020** **Association of Presbyterian Christian Educators (APCE), Little Rock, AR**

APCE seeks to advance educational ministry in the church and provide an increased witness of faith in Jesus Christ. The 2020 conference theme is “Getting Outside the Box.” <https://apcenet.org/2020-annual-event-little-rock/>

## **March 2 - 4, 2020** **NEXT Church National Gathering, Cincinnati, OH**

Plan on attending the 2020 NEXT Church National Gathering. <https://nextchurch.net/gathering/2020-national-gathering/>

## **March 8, 2020** **Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday**

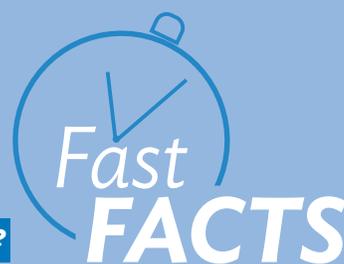
The theme for 2020 is “Honoring Women’s Spirituality, Struggle and Survival. Order the resource through the Presbyterian Church Store, item 27501-20-001, or download from [www.pcusa.org/women](http://www.pcusa.org/women). Also, available in the November/December issue of Horizons magazine. <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/racial-equity-womens-intercultural-ministries/allwomen/>

## **March 9 - 20, 2020** **64th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, New York, New York**

2020 is a pivotal year for the empowerment of women and girls, as it marks the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). <http://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020>

## **April 24-27, 2020** **Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice, Washington, DC**

This high impact weekend is sponsored by the ecumenical Christian community and seeks to strengthen our Christian voice and mobilize for advocacy on specific U.S. domestic and international policy issues. <https://advocacydays.org/about-ead/future-planned-national-gatherings/2020-national-gathering/>



### **Did You Know?**

- ❖ The first inhabitants, ancestors of modern Native Americans, arrived in North America 25,000 years ago. Known as “Xach’itee’aanenh T’eede Gaay”, or sunrise girl-child, by the local indigenous Alaskan people.
- ❖ The Presbyterian Church’s first mission work among Native American tribes was in 1741 when Azariah Horton established the Shinnecock Indian Mission at South Hampton, NY.
- ❖ The Indian Citizenship Act of June 2, 1924 granted full U.S. citizenship to the indigenous peoples, Native Americans, of the United States. During World War I, Native Americans were categorized as “White” when enlisting in military service.
- ❖ There are ninety-five Native American Presbyterian congregations throughout the U.S.
- ❖ Dakota and Nez Perce Presbyterian ministers were so numerous on their own reservations that they sent many out to other reservations to serve as missionaries.
- ❖ The Native American Consulting Committee was created by the General Assembly to represent Native American Presbyterians and serves as their “caucus”.

**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.

# What comes next after a denomination apologizes for its sin?

## An important step in healing is to hear the stories of affected Native Americans

by Mike Ferguson | Presbyterian News Service

Two years ago, the current and former Stated Clerks of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) journeyed to Utqiagvik (Barrow, Alaska) — the nation’s northernmost city — to apologize to Native Americans, Alaska natives and native Hawaiians for damage inflicted by the church in previous decades.

That act came as the result of action by the 222nd General Assembly (2016), which directed the apology within and beyond the denomination “especially to those who were and are part of ‘stolen generations’ during the Indian-assimilation movement, namely former students of Indian boarding schools, their families and their communities,” according to assembly minutes.

The Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, the current Stated Clerk, used his Coffee with the Clerk Facebook Live platform to talk about ways Presbyterians can continue their work to honor and include Native Americans. His guests were the Rev. Irv Porter, the denomination’s associate for Native American Intercultural Congregational Support, and the Rev. Vernon Broyles, a volunteer for public witness serving in the Office of the General Assembly.

Porter, an enrolled member of the Pima Tribe who’s also descended from the Nez Perce and T’hono O’odham tribes, is also the part-time pastor of Church of the Indian Fellowship in Tacoma, Wash. He said many Native Americans have used storytelling to begin healing



From left, the Rev. Vernon Broyles, the Rev. Irv Porter and the Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson, II, participate in “Coffee with the Clerk” Monday. (Photo by Randy Hobson)

from the intergenerational trauma that comes from being torn from their family to attend a boarding school.

“I highly recommend the church hear the stories of where people are coming from. Not to rehash what happened, but in telling their stories, there’s healing,” he said. “An apology is really just the beginning. To hear a national church, apologize is one thing. Now Native American people are waiting to see what will be the next result.”

The forced education by white people that many Native children experienced two and three generations ago impacted each one differently, Porter said. Many children grew up not speaking what would have been their Native

tongue and not knowing the family stories that other children learn by heart at a young age.

“Some went on to have very good lives,” he said. “For others, this was the beginning of traumatic experiences they had for the rest of their lives,” trauma they often passed on to their children and grandchildren, he said.

After viewing the video of the Rev. Gradye Parsons, the former Stated Clerk of the PC(USA), apologizing on behalf of the denomination, “you could see in people’s faces” the impact the apology made as Parsons’ words were translated into their indigenous language, Porter said.

Walk into a Presbyterian Church

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# Celebrating Indigenous Peoples Day

## Many communities honored the nation's first residents

by Gail Strange | Presbyterian News Service

Traditionally, on the second Monday of October the United States celebrates the anniversary of Christopher Columbus' arrival in the Americas on October 12, 1492.

However, on the second Monday in October of 2019 many communities across the nation celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day rather than Columbus Day. Indigenous Peoples Day is part of a growing movement to end the celebration of the Italian explorer and rather honor and recognize Indigenous people, the original occupants of the Americas.

Many scholars believe it was Viking Leif Erickson who first came to what would become known as the New World from overseas. They believe Columbus wasn't the first European to discover what we know as the Americas and that he first landed on the island of Guanahani in the Bahamas. And, according to the Encyclopedia Britannica, Columbus never set foot in North America, but in present day Venezuela on his fourth journey.

While Columbus didn't technically discover America, he was instrumental in the colonization of North America and its lasting effects on this nation.

In an effort to help Presbyterians realize the atrocities enacted upon Indigenous people, the Presbyterian Mission Agency through the Native American Intercultural Congregational Support ministry has conducted the Blanket Exercise so that individuals can better visualize the impact of Columbus and the Church's actions against Indigenous people.

The exercise explores the tenets of The Doctrine of Discovery, the 1493 papal edict promoting the appropriation of land and the subjection of inhabitants of that land during the era of European exploration.

Part physical experience and part history lesson, the Blanket Exercise raises awareness of the systemic and systematic process Europeans, the U.S. Government and the Church used to steal land, separate families, forcibly take children from parents to boarding schools and murder hundreds of thousands of Native Americans.

During the exercise individuals are invited to stand on the blanket of their choosing among about 20 or so covering the floor. Four individuals

read from a script which outlines the cruel effects the Doctrine of Discovery had on Native Americans. An assistant periodically rolls up corners and edges of the blankets until there was scant room for participants to stand.

As the blanket exercise plays out, crowd members — playing the part of the up to 30 million Native Americans present in what Europeans called the New World when Christopher Columbus landed on Caribbean islands more than five centuries ago — took a seat as disease, warfare, broken treaties, forced migration and mandatory boarding schools took their toll. In the end, very few people remain standing on what's left of the blankets.

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The Rev. Irv Porter, at left, led participants in the 2019 Presbyterians for Earth Care Conference in the Blanket Exercise on Aug. 8, 2019 at the Stony Point Center in Stony Point, New York. (Photo by Rich Copley)

# UN Commission on the Status of Women prepared her for action and advocacy

by Gail Strange | Presbyterian News Service

For Madison McKinney, attending the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women was an “incredible experience.”

“To hear all of the different languages and to meet people from all over the world was a once-in-a-lifetime experience,” she said.

McKinney, who was sponsored by the Native American Intercultural Congregational Support office of the Racial Equity & Women’s Intercultural Ministries, is the first Native American young woman to attend the Commission as a representative of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The 20-year-old was part of a group of young PC(USA) women attending the annual Commission for the first time.

As an adolescent, McKinney said she struggled to navigate between her two worlds. After she was born in Albuquerque, N.M., her family moved to South Dakota when she was three months old. “South Dakota has a very large Native population,” she said.

During her formative years there, McKinney said she was trying to figure out who she was. “While my friends and the community were Native American and practiced traditional Native American spirituality, both of my parents were Presbyterian pastors,” said McKinney. “I was trying to find a balance of participating in my culture while also practicing my Christian faith and typically those two don’t mix.”

McKinney says there have been moments in her life when she decided she would focus on her



Madison McKinney, 20, recently helped represent the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at the 63rd session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. (Photo by Rich Copley)

Native American culture or on the church, “but I was still missing something,” she said. “It wasn’t until we moved to Lawrence, Kansas, that I realized it’s OK to do both. It’s OK to be proud and participate in both aspects of my life, because that’s who I am. I couldn’t change who I was. I can’t pick or choose one over the other. I had to find a way to balance it out and over the years my faith and my spiritually have gotten a lot stronger.”

McKinney says when she accepted both her Native culture and her Christianity she became more involved in the church. Her first endeavor with the church was to serve on the American Indian Youth Council, through the Native American Intercultural Congregational Support office. She then went on to serve as a liaison

to the Native American Consulting Committee (NACC). “Serving as liaison to the NACC was my first involvement with a committee of adults and I learned a lot,” she said.

McKinney is currently serving for a second year on the session of her church. At her mother’s encouraging she applied and was accepted to serve on the Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns. “Things took off from there”, she said. “I was invited to attend the Commission on the Status of Women.” This sponsorship was again through the Native American Intercultural Congregational Support office.

When asked about factors that place Native culture and Church culture at odds, McKinney answered, “For the most part you don’t mix the two and there’s a lot of historical reasons for that.

You either embrace your Native culture or Christianity. There's a lot of negative feelings around Christianity because in Native Americans' minds, Christianity was there to basically get rid of us.

"The feeling is," she said, that "if you convert to Christianity, you're not a true Native American and you're letting our ancestors down."

McKinney said her parents helped her in both realms.

"They had to find the balance of being Christian and Native," she said. "They made sure we knew and incorporated both practices in our lives. We took part in Native ceremonies, but we also practice Christianity. They showed us we're just a mix of it all."

"My faith doesn't make sense but it's a calling for me," she said. "Sometimes my involvement in

church created a conflict with my Native friends and others would say I was hanging out with the wrong group. They don't want to trust the church and trust God, but I've found healing in the church."

McKinney says in retrospect it was during the times that she pushed her faith away that God showed up most prominently. As a Native American, Madison says she has experienced racism. "I was always being told I wasn't good enough," she said. "And that's when God would move. Just when I needed him the most, God would move every time."

"I would pray, and I would say, 'If you're God, show me the answer,' and God's timing was always perfect in providing me what I needed when I needed it."

Growing up in church and

reading Scripture, McKinney says she learned settlers were imposing injustices on Native Americans on their own, and it was not the Bible telling them to do so. "The Bible never told them to kick people off their land or to do them harm," she said. "It was just people being evil and not the Bible. So, I find peace in that."

As it relates efforts to by the PC(USA) to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, McKinney said, "We are grateful for the apology the church is offering but that was the past. The question is, what are you doing now, how are you going to help change the future? An apology only means something if it's followed by actions."

"There were no suggestions or concrete ways offered to rebuild the relationship. We don't blame the current Presbyterian church," she said, "but the current church needs to do more to repair the relationship. There needs to be clear directions of what we're going to do."

McKinney says she'd like to see the focus on a commitment to rebuilding the relationship between Presbyterians and Native Americans. "After the apology we're on the right track," she said. "I'm hopeful!"

As to her experience during the Commission on the Status of Women, she said, "CSW has been amazing. I want to find more Native youth who are willing to come to events like this."

"I've been empowered to be among other young women who care about these issues," she said. "To hear all the different languages, to see the regalia and to find out that all of these other countries care about the same matters has been amazing."



After helping to represent the PC(USA) at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, Madison McKinney had this to say: "To hear all the different languages, to see the regalia and to find out that all of these other countries care about the same matters has been amazing." (Photo by Rich Copley)

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 shawl over a dark top. Her hands are clasped in front of her chest. 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 (Eo49991) 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/eo49991-womens-ministries](https://presbyterianmission.org/donate/eo49991-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 – Eo49991" on the memo line.

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

# Three women receive Katie Cannon Scholarship

**Inaugural scholarship recipients will each receive up to \$1,500**

by Gail Strange | Presbyterian News Service

Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries has announced the 2019 recipients of the Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon Scholarship.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency established the scholarship to honor Cannon's name and legacy shortly after her death in August of 2018. The scholarship supports Presbyterian clergywomen and college women of color as well as other women of color with opportunities for leadership and spiritual development, helping women to develop leadership gifts and be equipped for even greater service in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

In 1974, Cannon, a legendary figure in the PC(USA) was the first African American woman ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the former United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

The Katie Cannon Scholarship sponsored by the Women's Ministries Fund provides qualified applicants up to \$1,500 for expenses for leadership development in the United States.

The inaugural scholarship recipients include the Rev. Zaida Rodriguez, a Hispanic clergywoman currently serving as a chaplain in Raleigh, N.C. Rodriguez will use her scholarship for a Chaplaincy Research Summer Institute held by the nation's top chaplain academics. Rodriguez said the research program will help her acquire the necessary research skills to create written materials in both English and Spanish to benefit pastors and lay leaders in their pastoral care for the



Katie Cannon, the first African American woman ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the former United Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). (Photo Contributed)

sick and their families.

Dana Purdom, a bi-vocational African American leader in the Presbyterian Church, is passionate about social justice and continuing her preparation through education that focuses on addressing systemic injustices and understanding intersectional issues. She will use her scholarship to cover a portion of her tuition expenses at Union Theological Seminary.

The Rev. Ngochuong "Cedar" Dang is the senior pastor at The Vietnamese Presbyterian Church in Garden Grove, California. Dang will use her scholarship to cover tuition cost as she furthers her education at New Theological Seminary of the West. Like Cannon, Dang is a pioneer in that she is the first woman

to be installed as senior minister of a Vietnamese-language congregation in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

"The Rev. Dr. Katie Geneva Cannon is an important part of the landscape and contemporary history of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)," said the Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter, director of Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries. "Katie was a mentor and a colleague. She was also a role model, breaking ground and providing opportunities for women of color to lead in ministry positions in the PC(USA)."

Your gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering provide leadership development opportunities and help Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color provide quality education for our future leaders.

# Native American women are emerging leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

**Given the chance, these women and others are proving their mettle**

by Gail Strange | Presbyterian News Service



Left to right are Gina Enos, Danielle Palomino and Fern Cloud, photographed at the 2019 Native American Women's Gathering in Suquamish, Wash. Enos and Palomino were voted co-moderators for the 2021 gathering. Cloud is the commissioned ruling elder at Pejuhutazizi Presbyterian Church, Upper Sioux Community in Granite Falls, Minn. (Photo by Gail Strange)

Women are playing increasingly pivotal roles at every level in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). From moderators to heads of agencies, from stated clerks at the middle governing body level to synod and presbytery executives and pastors, women are at the forefront. And not to be excluded from this wave of women leadership are Native American women.

Since 2004, Fern Cloud, a member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate Tribe on the Lake Traverse Reservation in northeastern South Dakota, has served as the commissioned ruling elder (CRE) at Pejuhutazizi Presbyterian Church, Upper Sioux Community in Granite

Falls, Minn. She is among the first Native American women to lead a native congregation in Dakota Presbytery.

Cloud says her rise in leadership has been a journey. "Once they saw that I was committed, things begin to happen," she said. "First they appointed me chairman of the Baltimore Dakota Presbytery Partnership, and that has been a while." The partnership provides learning camps for the churches in the presbyteries. The summertime learning camps help Native youth retain information learned during the school term.

Cloud is actively engaged in the denomination in several leadership

positions. She currently serves as stated clerk and treasurer of Dakota Presbytery, moderator of the Native American Consulting Committee and a member of the Racial Equality Advocacy Committee (REAC), and is the former moderator of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies. She also works for the Upper Sioux Community as a tribal historic preservation officer.

As an artist and cultural consultant, Cloud does presentations and workshops on the Doctrine of Discovery, missing and murdered indigenous women, boarding school tragedy, U.S. government policies that affect Native Americans and Healing the Sacred Hoop.

“Women are stepping up more and being appreciated for what they bring to the table,” said Cloud. She says leadership roles in the Dakota Presbytery were primarily held by men. However, after doing a good job within the presbytery, she has held a lot of positions not normally held by women. “I’ve attended every General Assembly since 2006,” said Cloud. “It is important that Native American are represented at the table.”

Danielle Palomino is an emerging Native American leader. She grew up in the Church of the Indian Fellowship on the Puyallup Reservation in Washington state. As a fifth-generation Native and Presbyterian, Palomino said she was expected to be involved in her church as a youth.

“I attended vacation Bible school, Sunday school and summer camp. It’s just what we did as youth in the church,” she said. “Then as an adult I dedicated myself to the church. I just thought that’s what you do to be a Presbyterian and to be a Christian.”

She most recently served on the committee that organized the Native American women’s gathering held last month in Suquamish, Wash. “When we heard about the Presbyterian women, we jumped at the chance to get involved,” she said. “We wanted everyone included. I was one of seven women who worked on the committee.”

“I wanted to implement change,” she said. “I wanted to implement really good workshops for our ladies to take ideas, tools and a message of hope back to their reservations and their communities.” The event was the largest Native American women’s gathering to date.

Palomino teaches reading and math at a Native school and serves as an interventionist and paraeducator. “I’m still trying to figure out my undergrad program and where I want to go. I love education but I feel a calling to



Danielle Palomino is the newly elected co-moderator of the Native American Presbyterian Women beginning in 2021.

ministry,” she said. “I am trying to figure out a dual program where I can progress. It is taking me some time, but I will get there. I’ve always worked for tribes whether it’s my own Suquamish Tribe, or the Muckleshoot or Puyallup tribe. That’s been my calling, working within the tribes.”

Palomino says she also feels a call to bring her ministry to the community and to the reservations.

“I enjoy working with youth. They are our future leaders,” she said. “Those are the souls that are going to be out there advocating for us, educating us and supporting us and building our communities in the future and that’s really important. The youth ... that’s my calling.”

With a professional background including working as a dispatcher and a medic response security officer working with the military, Palomino said, “Coming from my background and going into education and ministry is quite a transition for me.”

At the gathering, Palomino, along with Gina Enos, were voted co-moderators of the Native American Presbyterian Women beginning in 2021. Palomino has recently been nominated for a national PC(USA) committee.

“I was asked to serve on this

committee because they wanted to include a voice for Native Americans,” she said. “If there are other groups or committees that have a calling for Native American participants, I would be more than honored to sit on these committees and to have input on how to implement positive change and to pave a wider path for more women and Native people to be a part of these committees.”

Another dynamic duo of Native American women leaders are the Rev. Danielle Crawford McKinney, a Presbyterian Women board member and a teaching elder in Dakota Presbytery, and her daughter Madison. Both women are involved at the national level of the PC(USA).

Rev. McKinney, whose great-grandfather was one of the first Native American Presbyterian pastors in Dakota Presbytery, is a student rights specialist at Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, and an enrolled member of the Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate tribe.

She encourages church leaders to visit Native congregations and reservations “so that the youth can see people in leadership capacities.”

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# Stillman College's Presbyterian roots go back nearly 150 years

## Christmas Joy Offering helps college continue its mission

by the Rev. Dr. C. Mark McCormick



Stillman College, in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, has long historic ties to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (Contributed photo)

The founding of Stillman College toward the end of the 19th century was an act of courage and faith. It was not, however, an action taken without consideration and debate.

Stillman College is a historically black liberal arts college affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). During the month of February, residents of the U.S. and Canada celebrate Black History Month.

The theological tone of the late 19th century was complicated by the acknowledgement of people of faith that there was a divine call to evangelize all people, including the newly freed slaves, which was challenged by the need of whites to maintain distinction between the social and political engagement of

white society with black society.

The Rev. Dr. Charles Allen Stillman was an active voice in the debates and the discussions of this era, but his contribution was not limited to words. He was also a man of action.

What Stillman began as an institute to educate African-American ministers for work in the Church has become a four-year liberal arts college with a mission to serve the underrepresented in our society and to provide them with the opportunities that result from educational experiences rooted in the conviction that every person has the potential to succeed, given the right assistance and the opportunity to do so.

Stillman was born in 1819

into a devoted Presbyterian family in Charleston, S.C. Beginning with the founding of Charleston, Presbyterians of various backgrounds worshiped together before the founding of the First Presbyterian Church. English dissenters gathered with Scottish, Irish, French Huguenots, and Independent Presbyterians, all worshipping together in the new city in the 18th century.

Stillman was educated at Oglethorpe College (now Oglethorpe University) and then at Columbia Theological Seminary before he received his first call to serve as installed pastor. Yet it was his call to the Black Belt of Alabama that opened the pathway to his imagination and

his opportunity to shape the life of the Southern Church as an agent of God's purposeful invitation to people of color to participate in the Gospel ministry.

After the conclusion of the Civil War the national debate over the position of freed slaves in American society swung between those who promoted equality and those who sought through every agency to maintain the distinction between status of the races. Though the national debate within the Presbyterian Church often focused on the concerns of predominantly white ministers who feared that full inclusion would put their race under the authority and possible judgment of black ministers, Stillman and those who agreed with him took the more pragmatic position of providing education to prepare for the time when the Church would be ready to grant African-Americans full standing as Ministers of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church.

In 1875, just two years before the conclusion of the era of Reconstruction, Stillman and the Tuscaloosa Presbytery made an overture to the General Assembly that Tuscaloosa Institute, later Stillman College, be chartered for the education of African-American ministers. The Institute opened in 1876 using a private home for classrooms for instruction.

As the Institute grew, so did its challenges. The records of the General Assembly revealed not only that the enrollment remained small, but also that the support from the Church nationally was meager. This remained the case despite the dedicated work of white ministers to keep the Institute open in order to provide opportunity for those who did not have broad options in the late 19th century. The work was supervised by various offices of the General Assembly focused on

evangelism more than education.

The potential of African-Americans to serve the call of the Gospel in dynamic ways was demonstrated early by the work of Rev. William Sheppard, an alumnus of Tuscaloosa Institute who in 1890 was appointed as a missionary to the Congo by the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Board. As evidence that his status as an African-American was yet viewed as a limitation, the Mission Board would only send Sheppard with a white man to accompany him. Thus, the Revs. William Sheppard and Samuel Lapsley made their way to the Congo to serve as Presbyterian missionaries to an unreached people.

Unfortunately, Lapsley succumbed to disease within two years of his arrival. Sheppard, however, formed a lasting relationship with the people of the Congo and was instrumental in calling the European powers to address the human rights abuses that were promoted in the region by the Belgian government and the Kasai Rubber Company. His work for fair treatment and justice among the colonized people of the Congo gained Sheppard recognition and is a testimony to the impact graduates of the small Theological Institute in Tuscaloosa could have on the lives of African-Americans and on the world.

In 1895, when Stillman died, the Institute that now bore his name still struggled for resources and for support from the Church that had authorized its founding. In the early 1890s, with Sheppard working for justice for the indigenous people of the Congo in Africa, Stillman Institute was entering its third decade when Rev. A. L. Phillips, pastor of South Highland Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Ala., succeeded Stillman as Superintendent of the Institute.

In his annual report to the General Assembly in 1896, Phillips reported that the Institute's leaders "... have tried to work in the face of indifferences and hostility when we had every right to expect sympathy and help." It is clear that the Presbyterian Church professed that it felt that the work of educating ministers to serve the black church was important since they appointed ministers to oversee the work through agencies of the Church, but there was often little financial support for that work.

In spite of these challenges, Stillman College has maintained its historic mission to serve the underserved and to provide opportunity for students who would not find that opportunity elsewhere. Today, the majority of the student body are the first in their families to seek a college.

Today, the College maintains its historic covenant with the Presbyterian Church and understands that its role as a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in the United States as vital to the success of African-Americans in our society. Stillman and its ministry were overseen in the 19th and early 20th centuries as a home mission, and is today the final HBCU that still receives funding through the Christmas Joy Offering of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. In that way, Stillman College is today one of the remaining environments in which African-American leaders are formed for service in the Church, and its relationship with the Presbyterian Church marks its work as ministry.

*This story has been edited for brevity. The author, the Rev. Dr. C. Mark McCormick, is Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Stillman College.*

*What comes next, continued from page 2*

with mostly Native worshipers “and a lot of what you’d see is familiar,” Porter said. But the visitor would also see a few elements not present in most Presbyterian churches, he said.

“There’s time for people to share what God is doing in their life,” he said. “People can go on and on, but nobody leaves. The 60-minute issue (capping worship at one hour) is not there for Native Americans. It has everything to do with being there in the spirit of what is happening.”

Looking at the mistreatment of Native peoples and the denomination’s eventual apology in theological terms, Broyles said, “Sin is sin.”

“One thing that has come through

clearly in conversation with Alaska native people is that we as white people look at nature as something to be exploited,” he said. “The Genesis story clearly lays out the unity of God’s creation, and Native people understand that.”

To Alaska natives, “the killing of a whale is a sacred act. It’s not, “There’s an animal that we can eat. Let’s kill it and cook it,” Broyles said. “White culture often sees game, wildlife and the environment as something to be exploited for our own use.”

While there are plenty of books and other resources Presbyterians can use to educate themselves about this era, “the emphasis today is how do we do that with regards to

relationships,” Nelson said, wrapping up the hour-long conversation. The “powerful message” he learned while helping to deliver the apology “is that a way to break down barriers is through personal engagement.”

“People do things we don’t understand,” he said. “There is something in their story that makes a difference” in beginning to understand their thinking, “and that only happens through relationships.”

“I’m glad we’re moving in that direction as a denomination,” he said, including becoming “better neighbors” with more and more Native Americans.

“Continue to keep us in your prayers,” he asked.

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*Indigenous Peoples Day, continued from page 3*

In one presentation of the blanket exercise Irv Porter, associate for Native American Intercultural Congregational Support, told participants, “If you’ve never heard this before, you’re not alone. This is the kind of history nobody cares about.” The mission, he said, is to “wake us up that this happened. We as a denomination are trying to blunt this racism.”

It is not known exactly how many communities celebrated Monday as

Indigenous Peoples Day, but at least 10 states, many college campuses, and more than 100 cities no longer celebrate Columbus Day but celebrate some version of Indigenous Peoples Day on the second Monday in October.

For many Native Americans, Columbus Day is viewed as hurtful and misleading. It’s reminiscent of centuries of violent history and colonial oppression at the hands of European explorers and the Church.

For many the hurt and ramifications of those actions and wounds still run deep today.

However, as Porter said during a blanket exercise, quoting Rio Ramirez, a Tohono O’odham educator in Tucson: “No one here today made these things happen. But we are the ones who are living now, and we need to understand that we are all in this together.”

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*Emerging Leaders, continued from page 9*

The church should be more intentional, she said, about reaching out to younger women “to inspire and help them to know they can do anything they want to do.”

Rev. McKinney said she believes that Native American culture impacts the advancement of women

in the church. “There are elements of our culture that are parallel to what we see in Christianity,” she said. “Traditionally, people believe that the culture didn’t have women in leadership, but there was equality in the leadership of the men and the women. Their roles may have

been separate, but there were still leadership qualities they had to maintain. So, yes, the culture does impact the leadership — especially now, because today Native women are given more of a voice than they have ever had.”

## FEATURED RESOURCES

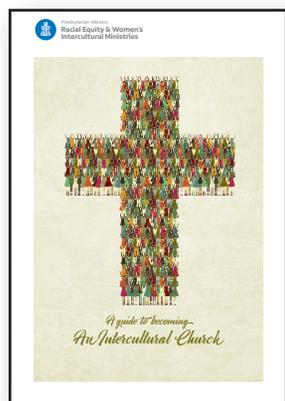


### RE&WIM brochure

Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries (RE&WIM) engages with Presbyterians and partners across the U.S. to:

- end racism
- empower women
- build intercultural communities

God's Spirit created the intercultural church at Pentecost, leaving cultural and linguistic identities in place. In RE&WIM, we are blessed to see a vision of Pentecost every day. Staff in RE&WIM speak nine languages, including English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Taiwanese, Mandarin, Arabic, Hausa and Igbo. New immigrant constituents in our ministries represent 22 nationalities speaking 18 languages and dialects. Request a copy of this resource.



### A Guide to Becoming an Intercultural Church

An intercultural church:

- respects, embraces and values different cultures and cultural identities:
- offers a positive vision of the whole community
- values the give and take of respectful relationships
- takes steps to become a multilingual community.

For more information please visit the Intercultural Ministries and Support for Congregations of Color page at [pcusa.org/intercultural](http://pcusa.org/intercultural).

## Who We are

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- 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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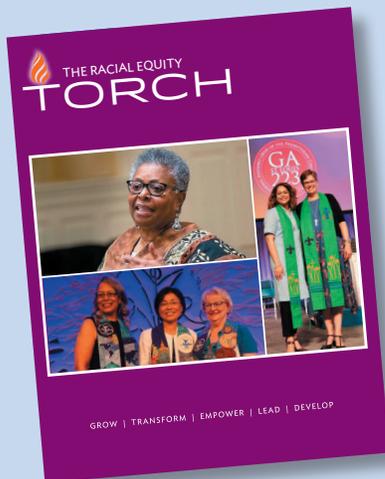


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