

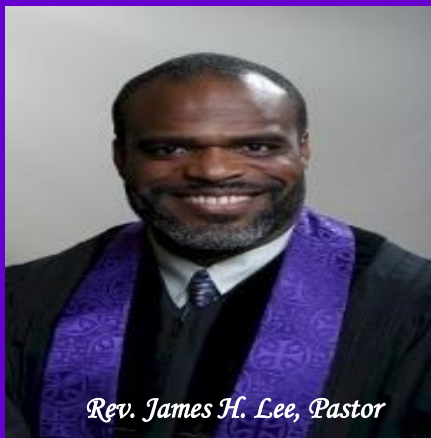
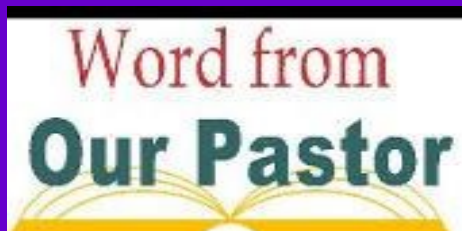
March 3, 2016



NCFA CONNEXION!

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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



Rev. James H. Lee, Pastor

NCFA Family and Friends:

Last week I had the privilege of serving as Moderator for Mission Presbytery's called meeting. There were moments of honor, humor, humility, and outstanding hospitality. The perspective was far different than I ever thought from being a commissioner who had attended numerous presbytery meetings and served on several committees. It was a joy to be reacquainted with John Fife, former Moderator of General Assembly, and then today commissioning our Commissioners for the 222nd General Assembly to be held in Portland, OR in June.

It is amazing to see how much work goes into each of our meetings. I'm grateful for the staff at Mission Presbytery, the leaders on General Council, Covenant Presbyterian of San Antonio, and all host churches and regional churches supporting them.

Thanks to Christine, Jerry, Scott, and Jeff for taking time to help Mobile Loaves & Fishes on tomorrow night's truck run (Friday) to provide food for hungry folks. Give Bonnie or Jeff a heads-up a couple weeks in advance if you can join any first-Friday-of-the-month truck run.

This Saturday let's all remember to move our clocks forward to reflect the beginning of Daylight Savings Time.

On Sunday, the Fourth Sunday of Lent, please welcome Seminarian Christine Wagner to our pulpit at the 8:30am and 10:15am worship services, both held at our Wilshire location. "Honoring the Gifts of Women" will be a focus of the second service, and a special solo will be provided by Tiffany Daniels.

On Monday we welcome administrators and students from Regents School of Austin to our church. Thanks in advance!

Two weeks ago the Reverend Denise Nance Pierce blessed us with her presence; please enjoy her sermon. It's a shoe thing?!?!

Prayers are appreciated as we drive to Atlanta and back; I am honored to preach at John Harrison's ordination service on Sunday.

Please remember Einstein's quote: "You are a genius." *Go and do great things for the glory of God.*

God Bless You All

Pastor James H. Lee

March 3, 2016



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**Thinking with Christ's Mind
Loving with Christ's Heart
Serving with Christ's Hands**

Featured below are just some of the areas within NCF where your time, talents, or treasures are currently encouraged:

*** CHILDREN & YOUTH ***

Mark your calendars:

EASTER EGG HUNT AND PICNIC – March 27th at Noon

Watch for publicity describing ways we can all help!

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL'S "SURF SHACK" – June 13-17

The kickstart Beach Party-themed Picnic is Sunday, June 12th, and the week will culminate with a June 19th VBS/Father's Day celebration during our worship service.

Help is needed NOW and LATER!!

(1) Teachers and helpers are needed in the Nursery and Church School.

(2) Building props and preparing crafts will begin soon.

(3) Volunteers willing to support a fantastic VBS experience are happily encouraged to join the C&Y team.

Contacts:

Elder Danita Nelson, atinad787@gmail.com;

Elder Randy Mojica, mothachozen@gmail.com

CARING AND SHARING

A new NCF member needs weekly rides *to* church, just one way.

Can you help occasionally?

Contacts:

Deacon Scott Phillips, scotteric@gmail.com

Carol Saddington, saddington@gmail.com

WORSHIP TEAM

Extra hands and voices needed at this time:

1. Communion Preparation

Contact: Nancy Harris, mousiemama51@yahoo.com

2. Ushering

Contact: Elder Matthew Aldas, matthewaldas@icloud.com

3. Audio-Visual Assistance

Contact: Elder Robert Booth, rpbooth66@gmail.com

4. Worship Preparation

Contact: Tim Lenz, running4mexfood@aol.com

5. Music

Join our Psalm 150 Praise Team; come rehearse at 9:45am before worship.

Soloists welcome, please speak with Pastor Lee (2 weeks' notice works best).

Contacts:

Rev. Bill Harris, revbill66@gmail.com

Deacon Jimmy Bohn, jimmy_bohn@hotmail.com

5. After-worship - assorted helpful things

Contact Elder Matthew, matthewaldas@icloud.com

6. Early Service - Now at 8:30am - Ask how you can help:

Contact Rev. Trish, geotriholland@yahoo.com

March 3, 2016



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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

THE HISPANIC STUDENT ASSOCIATION &
THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENT GROUP



OF
AUSTIN PRESBYTERIAN
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

WHICH LIVES MATTER? HESED LECTURES 2016



FRIDAY KEYNOTE

DR. JOSÉ ANGEL GUTIÉRREZ

PROFESSOR

POLITICAL SCIENCE

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-ARLINGTON
ARLINGTON, TEXAS



SATURDAY KEYNOTE

REV. WIL GAFNEY, PH.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF

HEBREW BIBLE

BRITE DIVINITY SCHOOL
FORT WORTH, TEXAS.

Friday April 1st - Saturday April 2nd 2016
Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary
100 E.27th Austin, Texas 78705

With Workshops Focusing on

IMMIGRATION

BLACK LIVES MATTER

GENTRIFICATION

ALLYSHIP

To Register Please Visit: www.austinseminary.edu/hesed

For More Info :

Call (512) 404-4868 Email: Hesed@student.austinseminary.edu

March 3, 2016



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- ⇒ “I got struggles. I got problems. I got issues. Thank God I am blessed!”
- ⇒ Praise for the privilege of living in a country where we can choose whom we put into government. Pray for the upcoming elections.
- ⇒ Thank God for babies. Amen!
- ⇒ Lift up Genevieve and her family as they grieve the death of her grandmother. Genevieve shared a sweet story about her grandmother. She was in the process of becoming a nun when she met her brother’s friend—a man studying to be a priest. He wrote three letters to her; in the third one he proposed marriage. She accepted. Together they raised 12 children and were further blessed with 25 grandchildren (of whom Genevieve is one) and 28 great grandchildren (so far!).
- ⇒ Praise for Pastor Lee being Moderator of Presbytery more than just in title. Thanks be to God that Pastor Lee promotes reconciliation.
- ⇒ Praise for Trish’s friend Pat visiting from Tucson. Pat is currently encouraging an Austin church providing sanctuary to an individual.
- ⇒ Praise for Oliver’s 33rd Birthday! Ok, add 30 to that. Praise for spending his special day at Presbytery.
- ⇒ Praise for our NCF children and the people who work with them. Thanksgiving for Connie’s preparations to lead our Youth Choir’s song today. Praise for our family-friendly worship that allows children to be children learning to become adults.
- ⇒ Praise for new housing opening up for Lydia’s brother Daniel. On Monday he will move to a place that can meet his needs. Lift up Daniel as he transitions into this new phase of his life.
- ⇒ Lift up Roxann and her family as they care for Robert. May God ease his fears and give strength and peace to Roxann.
- ⇒ Prayers of healing for one of our members who fell in a dark driveway and sustained facial injuries (and glasses).
- ⇒ Prayers for Vernon and Doris who are grieving losses and dealing with illnesses in their extended family.
- ⇒ Lift up Kimberly for rapid healing and strength.



March 3, 2016



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N C F A SUNDAY MORNINGS

NCFA Sunday Schedule

8:30am - Worship Service
1507 Wilshire Blvd.

10:15am - Worship Service
1507 Wilshire Blvd.
9am Adult Sunday School
10am Fellowship
10:45am - Children's Church



NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 8:30am -- Wilshire Blvd.

Come rise and shine with us
at our 8:30am service
where we glorify God
through the Word, Prayer, Hymns,
and Communion.

1507 Wilshire Blvd.

In the words of Phillips, Craig & Dean,
"Come, just as you are, to worship."

All are welcome to this traditional,
intimate style of worshipping our Lord.

NCFA SUNDAY WORSHIP AT 10:15am

We would love to have you and your family come
share in the CELEBRATION OF
THE GOOD NEWS!

We are worshipping in the Fellowship Hall
of Genesis Presbyterian Church on the Wilshire Campus
starting at 10:15 a.m.

Real Church...
Real People...
Real Simple...

New Covenant Fellowship of Austin PC(U.S.A.) is a
racially diverse community informed by the Bible,
empowered by the Holy Spirit, and motivated to share
God's love with all. In response to God's love, we are
called to equip disciples to faithfully serve, to encour-
age seekers to joyfully commit, and to implore all to
worship our Lord, as we love our neighbors,
grow in grace, and live by faith.

JOIN US IN THE CELEBRATION OF THE GOOD NEWS

March 3, 2016



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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!



- 1st Nancy Tallman
- 5th Matthew Aldas
Kali Christman
Rev. Lydia Hernandez
- 7th Kwasi Agbottah
- 9th Christine Wagner
- 11th Gianna Mojica
- 12th Nhyira Okyere Mireku
- 17th Jason Lee
Christopher Davis
- 19th Hosea J. Lee
- 20th Sam Buford
- 22nd Crystal Unegbu
Jacob Pan Lew
- 23rd Nina Buford
- 29th John Harrison
Jessica Lee
Almari Alvarez
- 31st Jumarcus Daniels

Session Members

- *Rev. James Lee
Pastor/Moderator
- *Elder Kathy Smith
Clerk of Session
- *Rev. Oliver Smith
Administration & Personnel
- *Elder Bill Harris
Buildings & Grounds
- *Elder Randy Mojica
Children and Youth
- *Elder Ben Hooks
Discipleship & Men's/
Women's Ministry
- *Elder Mary Jo Mojica
Finance & Stewardship
- *Elder Robert Booth
Congregational Life/
Lay Ministry
- *Elder Vernon Bailey
Missions/Evangelism
- *Elder Matthew Aldas
Worship & Membership

Deacons

- Kathryn Aldas
- Ashley Phillips
- Scott Phillips
- Carol Saddington, Chair
- Cathy Trifiro
- Roxann Vallejo

March 2016

- 6th 3rd Sunday in Lent
 - 8:30am Early Worship at Wilshire
Deacon Lucy Oglesby, preaching
 - 9-10am Adult Sunday School
 - 9:30am Psalm 150 Praise
Team Rehearsal
 - 10:15am Worship at Wilshire Blvd.
Seminarian Christine Wagner, preaching
 - Sunday School Ages 3-5
(Rm. 1); Grades 1-5 (Rm. 7)
- 8th 6:30pm Men's Ministry Dinner,
7pm Study
- 9th 6:30pm Churchwide Fellowship in
Kitchen
- 13th Daylights Savings Time: Clocks spring
forward
- 13th 5th Sunday in Lent
 - 8:30am Early Worship at Wilshire
Elder Danita Nelson, preaching
 - 9-10am Adult Sunday School
 - 9:30am Psalm 150 Praise
Team Rehearsal
 - 10:15am Worship at Wilshire Blvd.
Pastor James Lee, preaching
 - Sunday School Ages 3-5
(Rm. 1); Grades 1-5 (Rm. 7)
 - 12 noon Deacon Meeting in Kitchen

14th—18th Spring Break

March 3, 2016



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Easter Sunday Family Egg Hunt and Picnic

Please join us after worship!! We will have a joint Easter egg hunt with Genesis and then share in a picnic on the beautiful campus. If you are able, please donate stuffed eggs, minus chocolate, to be hunted.

If you have an extra Easter basket, please share that too with a child that may find themselves with out one.

Please bring your own packed picnic and a nice blanket or lawn chair to sit on as we take a moment to break bread and reflect on the blessing of Resurrection and what is before us. If you have extra, please bring to share with those that may not have prepared a lunch.



Contact Mary Jo Mojica for more details

March 3, 2016



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NEW COVENANT FELLOWSHIP PICTURE DIRECTORY

Please come and be recognized as part of the New Covenant Fellowship Church Family by having your photograph taken any Sunday before or after worship by appointment with Oliver.

Signup sheet on back table each Sunday.

Available Dates: March 6—— before worship only, 13, 20, 27

Free Appointments

Free-Will Offering for Portrait Packages

CHRISTIAN FUN EVENT YOUTH/FAMILY— Spring 2016

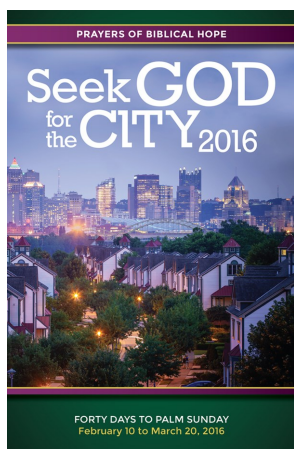
**Elgin CHRISTmas Tree Farm
Sunday, March 20, 2016**

**3:00pm - 7:00pm (come and go)--Worship
4:00 (led by FUMC Elgin Praise Band)**



**Individual Junior High and High School Youth Welcome
All church Youth Groups welcome
Families welcome**

\$6 youth (anyone under 21) / adults free- very welcome (over21) Elgin CHRISTmas Tree Farm is a proud supporter MP ACT missions Elgin 2016



Seek God for the City 2016 - Prayer Guide for Lent Season

Seek God for the City is a prayer guide that will help us pray for others in our community during the forty days to Palm Sunday. The prayers in this prayer guide are biblically grounded and easy to pray.

The forty days to Palm Sunday makes an ideal time to venture into a season of sustained, hope-filled prayer.

The guide is dated February 10 – March 20, 2016.

February 3, 2016



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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

Wednesday Night Fellowship Homework Help 5 – 6 PM and 7 – 8 PM

Bring your homework. Enjoy a family-friendly meal. Finish assignments.

Don't miss out on this wonderful opportunity!

MATH WITH MAŠA!!!!

**2nd / 4th Sundays,
Noon-1:30pm
following Worship**

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial a} \ln f_{a, \sigma^2}(\xi_1) = \frac{(\xi_1 - a)}{\sigma^2} f_{a, \sigma^2}(\xi_1) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} \exp\left(-\frac{(\xi_1 - a)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$$
$$\int T(x) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} f(x, \theta) dx = M\left(T(\xi) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \ln l(\xi, \theta)\right)$$

- ⇒ Do you *love* math, *hate* math, or *need* help with math?
- ⇒ Are you getting ready for a big test or college entrance exam?
- ⇒ Bring your arithmetic, addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, geometry, trigonometry, statistics and calculus math problems.
- ⇒ All school-aged students, elementary through undergraduates
- ⇒ 2nd and 4th Sundays, immediately following worship service
- ⇒ (Noon – 1:30 PM)
- ⇒ Maša Prodanović holds a Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics from the University of Zagreb, Croatia and a PhD in Computational Applied Mathematics from Stony Brook University, New York. She is an Assistant Professor and Chevron Teaching Fellow in the Petroleum and Geosystems Engineering Department at the University of Texas at Austin.



Don't miss out on this wonderful opportunity!

DUH!



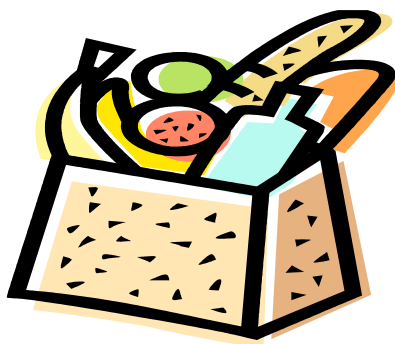
March 3, 2016



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We Care Kits

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3:15

We are currently accepting the following donations

Food/Drink Items:

Granola Bars, Trail mix, or peanut butter and crackers

Vienna sausage – 5 ounce size cans

Water bottles – 8 ounce size

Hygiene/Personal Items:

Travel Size Toothbrush & Toothpaste

Travel size hand sanitizer or hotel size bar soap

Men's size small crew ankle length white or black socks

Quart size freezer bags

Please note: this is a smaller kit with fewer items.

All donated items should be placed in the donations box located on the back table by the AV equipment. If you have any questions, please email me: calyflower2020@yahoo.com or call me at (512) 228-4712.

March 3, 2016



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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Life in the Press”

Philippians 3:14-4:1 (NRSV)

Rev. Denise Nance Pierce

February 21, 2016

Second Sunday in Lent

Philippians 3:14–4:1 ¹⁴*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.* ¹⁵*Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you.* ¹⁶*Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.* ¹⁷*Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.* ¹⁸*For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears.* ¹⁹*Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things.* ²⁰*But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.* ²¹*He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.*

4 ¹*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.*

The Word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Let us now assemble as a people of God, gather around this great text under the leadership of this awesome man of God in the person of your pastor, the Reverend James Lee.

James said that we're old...yet we're not that old. Okay, so it won't surprise you that when I was a young high school girl, in a group of friends, your pastor was always our pastor. He was always cautioning us. What to do and what not to do. What to say, what not to say. How to handle ourselves and not handle ourselves. And so even though he made the very *wrong* choice to come to the University here in Austin....I still beloved him as my friend, so much so, tho' I don't know if you remember this, James, but there was a Texas A&M and UT game played right here in Austin, and I was like on the tenth row, somehow sitting on the Longhorn side, tho' I'm not sure how that happened. But my friend is coming out of the tunnel with all these other guys in burnt orange, and I yell as loud as I can, "*James!*"—and I think you heard me. It was awesome to see him then, and it is awesome to see him now, and I'm so glad that the Lord would put our lives together and knit us together in such a purpose. He didn't tell you this either, but the reason I went to Austin Seminary is because of your pastor, who encouraged me to apply and to go, and even told me that there was such a thing as a scholarship for tuition and encouraged me to apply. And so my journey there is due really to your encouragement and your pushing, and I just thank God that we are friends.

Not only do I give honor to the man of this house but I want to give honor in his absence to the man of my own house, my husband Darrell, who right now is on the soccer field with our daughter. Y'all know that, right, like "What? Ten o'clock on Sunday morning, really, that is the game time?!" And so we just split, and he's doing Daddy duty, which is holy in itself, right? And I am doing this duty which I was graciously invited to do and am so glad to be here.

March 3, 2016



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Second Sunday in Lent

From the scripture that we read today, I want to speak on the subject of ***“Life in the Press.”***

Let us go to God in prayer: *Lord God, we thank you so much for this day; for these moments that you’ve set aside for us to remind ourselves that we are your children; and to remind us through your apostle that we have power, God, through your resurrection. But we also share, Lord, in your sufferings. We are encouraged, Lord, to press toward the high mark of your calling. Teach us today what that means, what it looks like, so that we might be more bold, more powerful, more accepting, more understanding, have a greater perspective on who we are as your children. It’s in Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.*

Running and racing: It’s probably the oldest competition there is. I imagine that the first brothers in this book, our Bible—Cain and Abel—almost certainly as young boys would race from tree to tree and from creek to creek. And I didn’t have a chance to do so before today, but I’m very excited to see the new movie *“Race”* about Jesse Owens, and even the name of it with this double entendre sounds incredible. This race, how we get from one place to another, and can I get there faster than you can get there? Great theologians remind us that Paul’s metaphor of the life of faith as a race is something that he uses over and over again.

And he uses it in our text, but I also want to remind you of some other places where he uses this metaphor. Early in his preaching ministry the Apostle Paul went to double-check his doctrine with the apostles in Jerusalem, and he wanted to be sure, he said, he was running and had not been running his race in vain. The Apostle Paul also asked the Galatians, *“You were running a good race, who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?”* When he wrote to the Corinthians, he described the race of faith as requiring strict discipline and self-control. That we have to keep on the track—we don’t need to get sidetracked—we have to stay focused, we have to run straight toward the prize of the finish line. It’s in the *Corinthians* passage where he says, ***“And these runners, they run for goals that perish, prizes that would be rubbish and fall away; but we run for a crown that will last and last and last.”*** And perhaps my personal favorite, in Paul’s farewell address to Timothy, he says this: ***“I have fought the good fight, my son, and I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.”***

And so today in our *Philippians* text we see our great apostle using that same metaphor again. In this letter he writes from a Roman prison to the Church of Philippi, to thank them for their support of him while he has been in chains, to encourage them in their walk in Christ, and also that we might be encouraged too. He says in *Verse 14*, we should ***“press on toward the goal for the high prize of the heavenly call.”*** We’re in a race, and we should press toward the goal of the high prize of the heavenly calling. To press, he says, to strain for what is ahead; to forget what is behind. It’s a process, he says, it’s progress. We press toward the high calling. What’s the goal, what are we pressing toward? Some translations say we trust we press toward a mark. In other words there is a specific target that we’re pressing towards. But what is it?

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Second Sunday in Lent

What is it? It's a certain place that God is beckoning us. We are pressing to the mark. What is our mark? Paul tells us that our mark is the high prize of the heavenly calling. It's the high prize of the heavenly calling. And for Paul and for us, his high prize is the high prize of Jesus. It is the resurrection of our bodies, the resurrection of our souls. It's new life. Because we are children of the Most High God. Our passage says that ***“²¹ He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, (that being Jesus) by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.”***

So beautiful, so wondrous about our prize is that each one of us gets it. If I get there first, it's not mine to claim; if Pastor Lee gets there first, it's not his to claim. We all have a right to the prize; we all get the gold. And that is good news. Because we're racing as one body, right? One faith and one baptism, we all press together towards that high prize of the heavenly calling. It's what being church is all about. It's about feeding and loving and encouraging and taking care, one for the other.

While the resurrection is our mark, it is our high prize. It's not the only call from heaven that we heed. You know this to be true. God also calls us to serve one another; he calls us to bear witness to his light and his love in the world. He calls us to perform our work every day as unto the Lord. And yet while we run this race, we seek, we heed, we are beckoned to the ultimate high prize. The ultimate reward of the resurrection. And our prize, it's so sweet. It's to be reached and arrived at; it's not to be acquired or achieved. It's nothing we can earn! Our task daily, though, is to press straight toward it, the promise that is before us.

So here's the question: *How is this life to be accomplished, this life in the press?* What does that look like? Paul tells us in *Verse 17*, he says, ***“¹⁷ Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us.”*** In other words he repeats here essentially what he told the Corinthians: ***“Follow me as I follow Christ.”*** So, famously, earlier in this passage Paul explains why he's following Christ, what he is after. And he says, ***“I have a single motivation, and my single motivation is to know him. I want to know him. And I want to know him in the power of His resurrection, and I want to know him by sharing in his suffering.”*** Oh, my goodness. To know both is to know our Christ. That's the game of the press, it's to be in the power of the resurrection and to be sharing in a suffering all at the same time.

Here's what Paul wrote, in *Verses 10-12* he said, ***“I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached that goal, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own.”*** And you know from Paul's passage and from your own life experience that the Christian life is Power and Pain.

March 3, 2016



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February 21, 2016

Second Sunday in Lent

It is the ying and yang; it is sweet and sour. It is both the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. It is the already having been accomplished and the not yet, because the Kingdom of God is not here. And so we have to approach our days, we approach our press, we press toward the high calling in Jesus, with an awareness of and an expectation of both resurrection power and suffering in Jesus.

But here's the deal; can I show you something? I've got on black shoes. We are going to let my black shoes represent our suffering. And if we wear black shoes all the time—two black shoes all the time—we're only walking around in the suffering. And we get discouraged because, oh, we have to bear the cross that Jesus bore. And, oh, there are enemies of the cross. And these folks are gaining their prizes, the Bible says, from the creature comforts of this world. We've got two black shoes on if we are not paying attention to the power of the resurrection.

We can get discouraged with our black shoes on. We can get too comfortable in this life, the creature comforts of this life, with our black shoes on—food and cars and houses and land and promotions and self-promotion and self-gratification—that our sentences start with “I” instead of “We” and “Our.” Paul tells us in our passage that their end is destruction, these people that would wear black shoes. Their god is the belly and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. We can't wear two black shoes.

But now let me flip the script because I've got my white shoes too....I want to show you what it looks like to wear only white shoes. You got your resurrection power shoes on, you got your two white shoes on....It's Easter Sunday all the time, right? Jesus has arisen, and he is “large and in charge,” and we are his children. So in our white shoes we're not too worried about everything else that is happening. We're not worried about people who are hungry and poor and on the outside of society because Jesus is coming soon and it's going to be okay. If we wear our white shoes by themselves, we might get accused of being too holy for having any earthly good. If we wear our white shoes, waiting on the resurrection with our hands folded, isolating ourselves from the muck and mire of the black-shoe people...how dare we wear our white shoes only?

What's the press? The press...you see where I'm going...you've got to wear one white shoe and one black shoe. That's really the bottom line. Give me a minute (changes to one black and one white shoe)....Okay, so now I am prepared for the press because I am walking in the power of the resurrection with my feet planted firmly in the suffering of Christ...because I can see how the world is hurting, and I can understand that we need a savior. And I can understand that social justice is important. I understand that there are some things I have to give up so that my light can shine; and it's okay because I know that he has me right, because I know he has been victorious, and I know in the end we win. So I can endure the black-shoe life because of the power of my white shoe.

March 3, 2016



NCFA CONNEXION!

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Being Real, Relevant, and Racially Diverse!

“Life in the Press”

Philippians 3:14-4-1 (NRSV)

Rev. Denise Nance Pierce

February 21, 2016

Second Sunday in Lent

This week I was so blessed by the happenstance of being entertained. Have you guys heard of Conspirare? Aren't they awesome, a beautiful choral choir in Austin. At a concert last night they were celebrating the life of Matthew Shepard, a young college student who was killed in Wyoming in 1998 by two thugs essentially who were offended, upset, and mad by Matthew's proclamation that he was a homosexual male. They took Matthew from a beer joint, tied him up on a fence in a field in Wyoming, beat him up horribly, and left him there to die. And Conspirare last night did a Celebration of Life based on the Matthew Shepard story, took us through the black-shoe experience of this man being beaten and hanging on the fence, and of course I couldn't help but think about our Jesus who was beaten and hung on a wooden fence, of types.

But the beautiful thing about it is they came back around to share the joy in his life and the joy that Matthew had brought his parents. They were in the press, walking there with a white shoe and a black shoe, and I want to read you what they read us last night, what Matthew's father said at the sentencing hearing for his son's murderers. This is what he said in court: "By the end of the beating, his body was just trying to survive. You left him out there by himself. But he wasn't alone, this man in the middle of his grief. There were his lifelong friends with him, friends that he had grown up with." And you're probably wondering who these friends were. Matthew's father said, "First, he had the beautiful night sky. With the same stars and moon that we used to look at through a telescope. Then he had the daylight and the sun to shine on him one more time. One more cool, wonderful autumn day in Wyoming, the state that he has always proudly called home. And through it all he was breathing in for the last time the smell of the Wyoming sagebrush and the scent of the pine trees from the snowy range. He heard the wind, the ever-present Wyoming wind for the last time." His father said, "He had one more friend with him, one he had grown to know in Sunday school, one he had grown to know as an acolyte at St. Mark's in Casper, as well as through his visits to St Matthew's in Laramie. I feel better," he said, "knowing that my son was not alone." How does a father stand in court declaring "I have a black shoe and I've got a white one; my son was not alone"?!

Another example I was blessed this week was at the seminary, which is just always life-affirming and life-giving. We were at the M.L.K. celebration, and the seminary celebrates M.L.K. late because the semester starts late, so everyone gets back to campus and then we open with a service dedicated to Martin Luther King. And our speaker this year was the Rev. Sharon Risher, a graduate of the seminary, an African-American woman with an M.Div., who was a chaplain in a Dallas hospital. And her sermon to us was impactful, not only because she is an eloquent and awesome preacher of the Word, but more so because her mother was among the Emanuel Nine. Yes, you remember in June of last year, Dylann Roof, a young white male, walked into the Emanuel Church in Charleston, SC, during Bible study and killed nine people.

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And Rev. Risher’s mother was among the nine who were killed. So we are at the M.L.K. celebration, and she has preached gloriously about how the church needs to wake up and be involved in conversations that impact our political life.

But what was more glorious was when we went outside afterwards, the seminary was kind enough to dedicate a plaza in an open courtyard area to the memory of Mrs. Ethel Lance, her mother. And we’re out there, and the whole cloud of witnesses is surrounding this thing, everyone who came to church, and we’re finishing up our worship service out in this courtyard on this glorious day, and we are singing, and there’s a drum beat that’s constant. And we are singing that “we are marching in the light of God.” And there is a formal dedication of this place and an unveiling of Ms. Lance’s name.

And in that moment her daughter, Reverend Risher, and her daughter’s sister collapsed. The grief of it was way too much. The reminder that their mother was gone was way too much; the sweetness and the love of all these people surrounded to dedicate her mother and lift her mother up, it was just too much. And so the tears came, and she couldn’t stand. It won’t surprise you to know that of all people in the audience, your pastor was the one to go over and bend down to help her up. Now how was he supposed to be managing all his equipment and be serving this woman? But his heart wouldn’t let him be still. So they are grieving, these women, in this horrible tragedy; but the drumbeat is still playing and the singing is still happening. And the next thing we knew, Rev. Risher was up off her feet in her pain and sorrow of her mother gone, and she starts dancing around the place. She’s dancing to the beat of the drum. Why? Because she knows she’s got a white shoe. She knows that God is at the end of the story. She knows that she can be victorious and cry; she knows where her mother is. She knows it’s going to be okay. She understands the press.

We will walk always and already with a black shoe and a white shoe. We share in the power of His resurrection, and we share in the pain of his suffering. And we are blessed among people to be able to call ourselves Children of the Most High God. And the grace that we can do that with? It is incredibly unfathomable! But we are so delighted to be united in the mystery of our great God and the grace, love, and mercy of his son Jesus. The blood that holds us all together. So I just commend us all to that blood, to a black-shoe, and a white-shoe life that we might, while we are here, have an impact on this world for the cause of our Christ. And the good news, my friends, is that we will wear two white shoes forever and ever and ever.

I bid you adieu; God bless you and keep you.

Let us pray: *God, we thank you so much for the assurances that our pain is not in vain, and that your power doesn’t give us an excuse to check out. Thank you, God, for this apostle who writes so beautifully to encourage us even now. And have us stand, God, wherever we are and whatever our circumstances are, have us stand boldly and powerfully in the power of your resurrection and in the sharing of your suffering. It’s in Jesus’ name that we pray and ask it all Amen*