

This Week @ First

Healing Racism Task Force

This Sunday, January 21, we will dedicate a plaque placed on the outside of the sanctuary building by the Healing Racism Task Force.

The plaque reads:

THE SIN OF RACISM:

ACKNOWLEDGING, REPENTING, AND REPAIRING

WE REGRET THAT OUR CHURCH EMBRACED RACISM FROM ITS FOUNDING INTO THE MID-20TH CENTURY. ENSLAVED PEOPLE OWNED BY OUR EARLIEST MEMBERS HELPED BUILD THE SANCTUARY IN WHICH WE NOW WORSHIP, AND AFTER THE CIVIL WAR UNTIL THE 1950S WE TURNED AWAY PERSONS OF COLOR. BUT OUR HOLY SCRIPTURES REMIND US OF GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL HUMANKIND, CALLING US TO LOVE ONE ANOTHER. WE CONFESS THAT WE HAVE FALLEN SHORT. WE SEEK FORGIVENESS FOR OURSELVES, OUR CHURCH, AND ITS ANCESTORS.

WE COMMIT OURSELVES TO REPAIRING RACISM'S BREACH, THAT GOD'S BELOVED COMMUNITY MIGHT TAKE FORM IN AND AROUND US. MAY GOD GUIDE US ON OUR WAY.

The dedication will take place at the end of the worship service, when the congregation will follow worship leaders from the sanctuary onto the sidewalk in front of the church. Please dress warmly and plan to join us for light refreshments after the dedication.

UKirk Meals

Every Thursday at 6 PM, UKirk Tallahassee Students gather for dinner and evening worship. UKirk invites church groups, families, or individuals to sign up to bring dinner for 20-25 people.

You don't have to make the meal. People in the past have also ordered food, donated money, or had a Food Truck come to UKirk. Food can be delivered to the Great Room at UKirk, 548 West Park Avenue. For more information and to see available dates, visit the sign-up genius [here](#).

Breeze Update

A "test group" has begun to use our new church management software, Breeze, to help us anticipate any issues that might arise when we roll it out to the entire congregation. Initial reports have included high marks for being able to track our own financial giving, along with having the ability to update our own contact information. A few kinks are still being worked out, such as whether we really need to designate one person as the "Head of Household" in each home and, in homes with more than two adults, how to get more than one phone listed. But these will be resolved. Please watch for more information and remember that the church office will be available to help during the transition!

Worship & Music

To watch our Sunday worship at 11 AM, connect with us on [YouTube](#) (find the bulletin [here](#))!

Spiritual Formation

Church School: the combined adult class will meet in the Westminster Room, with a [Zoom](#) option. The children's class will meet in Room 306. Classes begin at 9:30 AM.

Worship Ministry Team

Please email Carolyn Bradley to set up or serve communion (carolynbradley@gmail.com), or Martha Kutter (mkutter@maclay.org) to volunteer for ushering.

Compassion & Social Justice

Capital Area Justice Ministry House Meetings: Sue Hightower and Carol Weissert will host a meeting at Carol's home on Monday, January 22, 3-5 PM. Also, Capital City Youth Services (CCYS) sends thanks for the generosity of the church members for their contributions to unsheltered children during the month of December.



A CAJM "house meeting" was hosted by Glenn Hodges and Bill Weissert in the Westminster Room on January 17.

First Presbyterian Church

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Pastor's Note

This week I walked into the courtyard and the light fell beautifully upon the church steeple. I was taken by the beauty and the thought about how this church has stood and served through time — truly bringing the light of the gospel to the greater Tallahassee community. As I read through the daily lectionary, I came across Psalm 130, which ends with an imperative of hope:

O Israel, hope in the Lord! For with the Lord there is steadfast love, and with the Lord is great power to redeem. It is the Lord who will redeem Israel from all its iniquities.

On Sunday, we will end worship outside under that steeple, on the porch and sidewalks around church as we dedicate a plaque long researched and prayed over by the Healing Racism Task Force.

This sign, and dedication, is an intentional act of repentance. We seek repentance for our iniquities. We desire to return. By return, I mean to describe a process. A process in which we come back, in humility, and with intention to behave as the people we might like to believe we can be.

In her book, *On Repentance and Repair, Making Amends in an Unapologetic World*, Danya Ruttenberg uses the five steps of philosopher Maimonides to come to this “return.” We name and own harm; we start to change/transform; we offer restitution and accept consequences; we apologize; and make different choices. The placement of this sign is a start — of naming and acknowledging the harm we, as the church, have caused harm by overt racism. We are starting to change, to be transformed by God.



This week I met with a young adult who said, “I’m just not religious. I was confirmed in the Presbyterian Church, married an Episcopalian, and together, we can’t do church.”

I looked at him with raised eyebrows and asked, “Can you tell me more?” He continued, “Yes. There’s a higher power at play and No. No, because what we see is that the church is so broken, and full of people who don’t even care about the faith they purport to profess. The church is a bunch of people who want to gather with people who think alike about social, political, and economic issues but don’t really buy into the whole Jesus narrative. Our Jewish friends know and talk about their faith in God more than those who supposedly say they are Christian. It drives us crazy and we’re not willing to be part of that hypocrisy.”

His stern critique of the church was hard to hear. As the church we are the body of Christ. And Psalm 130 harkened back to me. Hope in the Lord, because only the good Lord has the power to redeem. I am grateful for the Healing Racism Task Force for their prayerful study and reflection that brings us to Sunday. I am also hopeful for God’s work among us as we intentionally begin this work of reparation, of return. Trusting in Christ’s binding us together for this work of return.

God’s peace,
God’s presence.
Anne

To submit an announcement for an upcoming issue of *This Week @ First*, please use [this updated link](#).