A Letter From Our Pastors of the Executive Office

January 15, 2015

A Pastoral Letter On Racism: A New Awakening

Dear Sisters and Brothers in the United Church of Christ,

As the liturgical season turns to Epiphany and our national calendar turns to Martin Luther King Jr. Day, we are aware of our profound need for a new awakening of understanding about race and racism in our midst. As a church of Jesus Christ, we pray that the Holy Spirit will illuminate our hearts and minds and stir us into faithful response to the ongoing manifestation of racism which is evident in tragic and painful ways in our communities.

Born in the midst of the Civil Rights Movement and having deep roots in the 19th century struggle to abolish slavery, the United Church of Christ has a lasting engagement in the struggle for racial justice. The 1991 Pastoral Letter on Contemporary Racism emphasized the Seventeenth General Synod declaration that “[r]acism is a sin and an evil that stands as an affront to the Christian faith.” The 2008 Pastoral Letter that accompanies Sacred Conversations on Race pointed out, “Racism remains a wound at the heart of our nation that cannot be wished away or treated carelessly.” These writings from our leaders during those years remind us that acknowledging and challenging racism is not new for the United Church of Christ. They also remind us that we are theologically and spiritually compelled to seek the elimination of racism within ourselves, in the church and in society.

The extrajudicial killing of black and brown men and women by police officers is in and of itself reason to cry out against injustice. But the targeted shooting of police officers is also reason to mourn and lament the use of violence. We cannot conflate and equate one kind of tragedy with another or simplify complex realities that cannot be “fixed” overnight. We should not be creating more strife by participating in attempts to make this an “us against them” conflict, nor should we allow ourselves to look away from the harsh realities of this historic moment pretending that racism is not at the core of the injustice.

The roots of the issues go far deeper than we would want to admit. Therefore, it is important to revisit American history in an effort to understand our current reality in an appropriate context. Our history is that of enslavement of people of African descent and the annihilation of the native peoples of the land. It includes decades of state-sanctioned segregation and lynching. These are among the realities that shape our present. Although slavery, genocide against Native Americans, mob-initiated lynching, and segregation have ended, we cannot ignore their lasting impact on present attitudes and
behaviors regarding race. Nor can we ignore the disproportionally high rates of incarceration of men and women of color. Epiphany reminds us that a new understanding is possible because God has come to us in human form and dwells among us. Like the Magi who travelled from a distance, we, too, need to find our way to understanding. Our paths might need to be on roads less travelled so that we are able to arrive at a truly new place when it comes to gaining insight into the depth of systemic racism. Getting to that new place of understanding will take time, courage and continued commitment on the part of all. Then and only then can true healing and reconciliation happen.

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound... let us not speak of reconciliation without speaking of...how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss...

These words are from a litany prepared by Dr. Yolanda Pierce in response to recent events in Ferguson, Missouri, and elsewhere. As people of faith, following that Star to Bethlehem, we are called to lament and abide in humility with those who mourn, rage, and pour out their pain and grief from all communities.

We lament and abide with the communities of Aiyana Jones in Detroit, Michigan; Eric Garner in Staten Island, New York; Yvette Smith in Bastrop, Texas; Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri; Kathryn Johnson in Atlanta, Georgia; Tamir Rice in Cleveland, Ohio--those who died at the hands of police. We lament and abide with the communities of slain police officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu in New York. We lament the reality that Black and Latino police officers on their off-duty time are susceptible to the same over-policing and discrimination that communities of color suffer. We seek healing, too, but recognize that wounds not fully cleansed will not heal properly.

Efforts to hold individual police officers and police departments accountable must not be misconstrued to be anti-police. Law enforcement officers have every right to expect respect from community members when they are performing their jobs with integrity and accountability. However, communities, and especially communities that have a long experience of racial injustice at the hands of police and within the justice system, have every right to expect government to hold law enforcement and public safety departments accountable for their actions when individual officers abuse the power entrusted to them and when there is clear evidence of racial bias and profiling.

Accountability and responsibility do not simply rest with the police. As members of the Christian faith, as residents in our communities, as law enforcement officers or family members of law enforcement officers, as elected officials, as clergy and lay leaders, as mothers and fathers of those who might be at risk, and as individuals seeking to be guided by the Good News that all of us are created in God’s holy image, we, too, must confess that we fall short of who we are called to be as followers of Christ. We also confess as a denomination that is majority white in membership that we have not lived into our commitments to be an anti-racist church and an intercultural, multiracial church to the extent that God has called us to be. On matters of race and racism we have lapsed into complacency in part because racism seems intractable. It won’t go away. Or because we want to believe that we are living in a “post-racial era.” If we are able to embrace this confession as our own, our calling as Jesus’ disciples then inspires and even compels us to be accountable and responsible in pursuit of the end of racism, however long it takes.

It is important to understand that the racism we face today, while daunting and seemingly intractable, is not the racism Americans of all races faced decades ago. Today, we are more keenly aware that racism is more than an individual sin and it involves more than a private injury. Our understanding of racism as more than a black/white issue has deepened and now we are able to see that racism is also institutional and systemic. We have been re-awakened to the disturbing differences in perception among us about how law enforcement functions in our various communities. Thus the need for white Americans to continue work on understanding how institutional and systemic racism benefits them has been heightened.

The role of younger Americans from all our diverse communities in leading protests in cities throughout the country and developing new initiatives for creating justice within our communities is a powerful testimony to the legacy...
of the Civil Rights Movement, while at the same time offering constructive challenges to those who led the movement in the 1960s. We are proud of the clergy and lay leaders within the United Church of Christ who are actively engaged today in these efforts to establish “justice within the gates” of their communities. It is important that we understand them and the protest they lead as a living continuum of a historic effort to transform American society from being a racially stratified and divided society to a community firmly grounded in racial equality. Indeed, these young Americans are a sign of hope.

Eradicating racism will happen only as we take action to produce conditions that will allow for the fullness of life for those who have suffered its destructive impact, as we work to reorient institutions that perpetuate racist practices, and as we dismantle systems that coalesce to produce racial injustice. We believe that the United Church in all of its settings can and must engage this kind of action as an act of faith and faithfulness to God. To that end we invite you as sisters and brothers in Christ to prayerfully consider these actions and others that emerge out of your particular thought and context:

* Engage in initiating local church partnerships that bring churches of different racial, ethnic, class, linguistic and cultural backgrounds together to engage in relationship building, racism awareness learning, advocacy, and mission.

* Initiate or continue engagement in Sacred Conversations on Race.

* Form partnerships to launch and promote literacy initiatives in communities throughout the nation as a necessary means of empowerment in the struggle against racial injustice.

* Work with other local churches and ecumenical partners to intentionally engage police agencies in constructive dialogue focused on developing appropriate and just policing in communities of color.

* Form intentional partnerships with other secular and religious organizations that share a commitment to working to eliminate racism, such as the YWCA, the Southern Poverty Law Center, the NAACP, the Samuel Proctor Conference and other emerging organizations.

In the 2015 season of Epiphany and beyond, may the Spirit of God embolden us to recognize and resist the evolving virus of racism in our social body, encourage us through our hope in Jesus the Christ to repair the breach, and embrace us all as we move into the brave spaces of interracial church relationships, more just communities, and active engagement to put an end to the evil of racism.

Let not our inaction be an affront to God. Let our actions be a sign of the healing love of Christ through the Holy Spirit.

The Rev. Geoffrey A. Black, General Minister and President
The Rev. M. Linda Jaramillo, Executive Minister, Justice and Witness Ministries
The Rev. J. Bennett Guess, Executive Minister, Local Church Ministries
The Rev. James Moos, Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries
The Rev. Elizabeth Leung, Minister for Racial Justice
Thank you for Daily Devotional, delivered each day to your email inbox.

http://www.ucc.org/feed-your-spirit/daily-devotional/

Annual Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, February 8, 2015. We will be discussing and approving the 2015 Budget, and discuss some other upcoming renovations. Please plan to attend! This is YOUR church – your opinions matter and YOU are an important part of the decisions the church needs to make.

Newsletter is available electronically and hard copy. If you prefer electronic please supply your email address.

This newsletter welcomes others to write and/or submit articles that inspire and give us all something to dream about.

Weekly Announcements

Joyce Houston types the Announcements for our Sunday bulletins. If you have something to include, or you have a change to the Worship Assistants, please contact Joyce at houston585@ptd.net or 610-346-6788 by Tuesday of each week.

There is now a calendar in the school house for all activities scheduled for that building.

Check out the bulletin board in the hallway!

Greeters, lay readers, nursery and acolytes needed.

Fellowship Hour—need people to host a Sunday. You don’t have to bake, just bring some refreshments. Or just bring the food and Linda Boss will host.

Donations are always welcome.

Paper products, coffee, sugar, half and half and ice tea provided

Please see Linda Boss
We keep in our prayers...

Randy Marks (brother of Jane Degen)
Amber & Sandy (friends of Jim Haney)
Jason Tomchak (friend of Cindy Lentz)
Joe Jordan (husband of Jane Degen’s co-worker)
Samantha Storms (friend of Kathy Bahnck)
Roger Bahnck, Sr. (Carl Bahnck’s brother)
Bill Rhoads (Connie Bahnck’s brother)
Jace Bahnck (Connie Bahnck’s baby grandson)
George Morrall (long time friend of Carl Bahnck)
Lori Liskowacki (Dawn & Dave Blessing’s sister)
Linda Schook (friend of Linda Boss)

Our St. Luke’s family: Kitty Barndt, Barbara Funke, Betty Griffaton, Dori Milnor, Betz Schwalm, Howard Shive & Walter Wolfinger
Our shut-ins: Marion Boyd, Darwin Gruver & Jane Rinker

All of our men & women serving in the military

DO YOU KNOW OF SOMEONE YOU WOULD LIKE TO PLACE ON OUR PRAYER LIST? IS SOMEONE READY TO COME OFF THE LIST? PLEASE LET JOYCE HOUSTON KNOW.

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A Memorial Service for Alex (Babe) Zheltonoga is planned for Saturday, April 11, at 1:00 p.m. at St. Luke’s, Ottsville

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An Open House Celebration for Walter Wolfinger’s 85th birthday
March 15 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Walter’s farm, 16 Park Drive East, Ottsville.
No gifts, please, but you can write a memory about Walter on a 3 x 5 card to be presented to him that day.

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EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE
NOCKAMIXON LAKE

6AM
Invitation to Lenten Awakenings

During Lent, the PSEC Spiritual Life Mission Team sponsors the Lenten Awakenings series at various locations throughout the Conference giving folks opportunities to deepen their spiritual journeys. Our focus book is: Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard J. Foster. It is a true spiritual classic, and remains timely in a world yearning to connect with the holy.

St. Luke’s is one of the host churches. We will offer this time of discussion during four Tuesdays in March (3, 10, 17 & 24). We will meet from 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm in the schoolhouse. Though there is no fee, please register online at psec.org to help leaders in preparation. Each participant is invited to purchase their own book (possible resources include: Hearts and Minds Bookstore or Amazon.com).

Rummage Sale

Time to start gathering rummage for our Spring Rummage Sale which will be held April 30th, May 1st and May 2nd at the same location as last year which is at the corner of Rts. 611 and 412. We will begin moving and setting up in the middle of April. A complete schedule will be out closer to the time of the sale. Come join in the fun and fellowship of working together for our church.

The Rummage Committee

Trustees

Light on school house porch has been fixed.
Thank you to Jim K for changing spot light bulbs for us.
Lock on small shed door has been fixed.
Hangers from rummage sale covered and put in small shed.

Trustee, Elsie Heaney

MARRIAGE SEMINAR

While attending a Marriage Seminar dealing with communication,

Tom and his wife Grace listened to the instructor,

'It is essential that husbands and wives know each other's likes and dislikes.'

He addressed the man, Can you name your wife's favorite flower?

Tom leaned over, touched his wife's arm gently and whispered, 'It's Pillsbury, isn't it'

Contributed by Connie Bahnck
MEALS ON WHEELS

SOUP SUNDAY

Sunday, March 1st

Hopefully, March will come in like a lamb or a tame lion and help us celebrate our first MEALS ON WHEELS SOUP SUNDAY for the new year. We will gather in the schoolhouse after the worship service for a homemade bowl of soup, including crackers, a variety of breads/rolls and desserts!

Remember all proceeds go to our local “Meals on wheels!”

Adults (all you can eat) $5.00
Ages 6—12 $3.00
Children under 6 Free!
Soup take outs $5.00 a quart

So let’s chat over a bowl of soup
Susan

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF ST. LUKE’S

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH WE ENJOYED OUR SEMI-ANNUAL SOUP LUNCHEON OF GOOD FOOD, FUN AND FELLOWSHIP! A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR “SOUP MAKERS” AND THOSE WHO PROVIDED THE DESSERTS, CRACKERS, BREAD AND CHEESE.

WE WERE ABLE TO PRESENT OUR LOCAL “MEALS ON WHEELS” WITH A CHECK FOR $140.00! THIS YEAR WE HAVE GIVEN MEALS ON WHEELS OVER $200.00 TO CONTINUE THEIR IMPORTANT MISSION, INCLUDING SERVING MANY OF OUR SHUT-INS. A SPECIAL THANKS TO LINDA BOSS FOR DISTRIBUTING EXTRA SOUP TO OUR SHUT-INS.
SUNDAY SCHOOL

The kids are having fun in Sunday School so far this year. We have five teachers and five helpers and we mostly switch teachers on a weekly basis. The following is the schedule of the remainder of the school year:

Teachers:
Month of February – Don & Joyce Houston
March 1 – Dawn Ramsden
March 8 & 15 – Faith Williams
March 22 – Linda Schaefer
March 29 – Easter Egg Hunt
April 5 – Easter – NO SUNDAY SCHOOL
Apr. 12 – Linda Schaefer
Apr. 19 & 26 – Faith Williams
May 3 – Dawn Ramsden
May 10 – Faith Williams
May 17 – Don & Joyce Houston
May 24 – Memorial Day – NO SUNDAY SCHOOL
May 31 – LAST DAY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL

On MARCH 22, 2015 – we will be assembling Easter Baskets for the Lord’s Pantry. Anyone who would like to donate a bag of candy or a toy to place in the basket can give their donation to Linda Schaefer.

MARCH 29, 2015 - There will be an Easter Egg Hunt for ALL children interested in attending. Come at 9:15 and we will begin with the Egg Hunt and then have some games, treats and singing to follow.

A BIG Thank you to Claudette for coming and teaching the kids new songs while playing the piano. We appreciate your dedication and love for the children and teaching them the Lord’s Prayer. We enjoy the talents you share with us. We will be trying something new for the 2nd half of the year – teaching songs at the beginning of class with CD’s. We plan for the children to sing in church on Palm Sunday (March 29) & the Last Day of Sunday School (May 31) for sure.

If anyone has any questions, please let me know.

Thanks,

Linda Schaefer
The Situation

In Washington, DC, at a Metro Station, on a cold January morning in 2007, this man with a violin played six Bach pieces for about 45 minutes. During that time approximately 2,000 people went through the station, most of them on their way to work. After about 3 minutes a middle-aged man noticed that there was a musician playing. He slowed his pace and stopped for a few seconds, and then he hurried on to meet his schedule.

> About 4 minutes later: The violinist received his first dollar. A woman threw money in the hat and without stopping continued to walk.

> At 6 minutes: A young man leaned against the wall to listen to him then looked at his watch and started to walk again.

> At 10 minutes: A 3-year old boy stopped but his mother tugged him along hurriedly. The kid stopped to look at the violinist again but the mother pushed hard and the child continued to walk, turning his head the whole time. This action was repeated by several other children but every parent – without exception – forced their children to move on quickly.

> At 45 minutes: The musician played continuously. Only 6 people stopped and listened for a short while. About 20 gave money but continued to walk at their normal pace. The man collected a total of $32.

> After 1 hour: He finished playing and silence took over. No one noticed and no one applauded. There was no recognition at all.

No one knew this but the violinist was Joshua Bell, one of the greatest musicians in the world. He played one of the most intricate pieces ever written, with a violin worth $3.5 million dollars. Two days before, Joshua Bell sold out a theater in Boston where the seats averaged $100 each to sit and listen to him play the same music.

This is a true story. Joshua Bell playing incognito in the D.C. Metro Station was organized by the Washington Post as part of a social experiment about perception, taste, and people’s priorities.

This experiment raised several questions: *In a common-place environment at an inappropriate hour, do we perceive beauty? *If so, do we stop to appreciate it? *Do we recognize talent in an unexpected context?

One possible conclusion reached from this experiment could be this: If we do not have a moment to stop and listen to one of the finest musicians in the world playing some of the greatest music ever written with one of the most beautiful instruments ever made… How many other things are we missing as we rush through life?

Enjoy life NOW… it has an expiration date!

from a newsletter at Phoebe; no author or source given.
CALLING: ALL UCC WOMEN AND FRIENDS!

Yes! We have a name! The DIVINE SISTERHOOD was decided by a small group of women who braved the January wintry weather on a Sunday night and met in St. Luke’s schoolhouse for a pot-luck dinner. Rev. Faith has agreed to present the next program at St. Solomon’s. The women of St. Solomon’s will provide beverages and desserts. Come share in the joy of fellowship of other “sisters!” And bring a friend!

SATURDAY, MARCH 21ST
ST. SOLOMON’S UCC
9AM—NOON

Angel Memorial Committee News

The Angel Memorial Committee continues to sell Giant Gift Certificates each Sunday. This is what enables us to help the children and the church. We earn 5% from the sale of our certificates, which means when we sell $1,000 worth of certificates, we earn $50. So, when you are doing your shopping, remember the “Angel Committee” and support them by purchasing Gift Cards. They make great gifts too! You can purchase $20 or $50 cards.

We are no longer collecting Redners receipts. If you continue to collect Redner’s, you can give them to Betty Martin for the Eastern Upper Bucks Senior Center.

If you have any questions, concerns or ideas, please see one of the Angel Committee members: Linda Schaefer, Kelly Roberts, Betty Martin, Kathryn Shive, Edie Rapp, Kathy Babb, Dawn Ramsden, Elsie Heaney and Heather Wentz.

We want to thank our continuing customers for your support. Without you we cannot support the future of our church – the children!!

CHIMES

CALLING ALL CHIMERS – We are looking for chimers to play for the Easter season. If you ever thought about playing the chimes, now is a great time to try it. You do not need to read music in order to play the chimes. **We really need some volunteers.** If you are interested, please see Dawn Ramsden.
Serving our Community:
Items for the Lord’s pantry collected weekly.
Meals prepared and delivered to those in need.
See Kathy Bahnck to share a need.

Serving our Region:
Trips to serve breakfast at Old First 3rd Saturday of each month.
Signup sheet on bulletin board

Serving our Nation:
Anyone interested in joining disaster relief mission trip please see Pastor Suzanne.

Serving our World:
Samaritan Purse—Christmas Child
Swaziland relief

URBAN MISSION 2015 - - - FEBRUARY 7TH

St. Luke’s will be preparing the annual meal for approx. 30 men at the homeless shelter located at 4th and Race Street in Philadelphia.

The MEAL: Under the direction of Kathy Bahnck, cooks are invited to beginning at 12:30 p.m. at the Ottsville Firehouse.

Anyone who is signed up for dessert items can bring them to church before time or to the Firehouse the day of the meal if you will be helping to prepare the meal.

If anyone would like to make cookies, plan on six (6) cookies to a bag. Nut bread and pound cake donations can be sliced and placed in baggies. Please let Kathy Bahnck know what you will bring.

The ROLL MAKING: The children will gather in the schoolhouse at 10am. With the help of grandmas, rolls will be made. It is a wonderful opportunity of service for our children. During the rising time there will be pizza, craft time led by ‘Team Houston’ and activities. Even the smallest children mix and knead the dough and they make THE BEST ROLLS while everyone learns about homelessness and hope.

The GIFT BAGS: The children will decorate and fill brown lunch bags for each man at the shelter this year. Stuffings have been supplied by Dawn Ramsden and include a warm pair of socks.

The TRANSPORT: At 4pm the meal will be loaded into two cars and transported to the shelter where it will be kept warm until meal time and served family style.

After the meal, a simple picture is taken of a circle of hands—we call it GOD’S HANDS.

We are blessed to have this service opportunity. If you have any questions please contact Pastor Suzanne or Betz Schwalm.
Dates to Remember

Urban Mission—February 7th
Congregational Meeting—February 8th
Ash Wednesday Service at Solomon’s—Feb 18th
Soup Sunday—March 1st
Lenten Awakenings—March 3,10,17,24th
Birthday Celebration for Walter Wolfinger—March 15th
Divine Sisterhood—March 21st
Easter Egg Hunt—March 29th
Memorial for Alex Zheltonoga—April 11th
Easter Sunrise Service at Nockamixon Lake—6am
Rummage Sale— April 30, May 1, May 2
Last day of Sunday School—May 31st

Re-occurring Events

2nd Wednesday—Vera’s breakfast
3rd Wednesday—Vera’s lunch
2nd Thursday—Consistory
3rd Saturday—Breakfast at Old First
1st weekend in February—meal at Old First homeless shelter

Contact List

Flowers—Edie Rapp
Meals—Kathy Bahnck
Sunday School—Linda Schaefer
Trustee—Elsie Heaney
Rummage Sale—Dawn Ramsden, Kathy Bahnck
Candy Sale—Anne Diehl
Medical Supplies—Susan French
Angel Committee— Linda Schaefer
Cross Sales—Dawn Ramsden
Mission Work—Vacant

Bullet points from each consistory meeting are posted on the bulletin board in the hallway.

Current Consistory

Becky Oglialoro, President
Don Houston—Vice President
Linda Boss, Secretary
Kathy Babb, Financial Secretary

Peggy Cook
Susan French
Jim Haney
Linda Schaefer

Consistory meetings are open to all members and friends.
Vision Statement of St. Luke’s UCC, Ottsville

We are called into compassionate community, following Christ.
We celebrate God’s loving embrace of all creation.
No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.

Newsletter

- To submit articles and/or comments:
  - mark FOR NEWSLETTER
  - Drop in office basket
  - email or give to me
  - email or give to Pastor Suzanne.

Next publication—watch your consistory minutes.

Betz Schwalm Schw9999@hotmail.com

Phone: 610 847-2633
Email: saintlukesottsville@gmail.com

Sunday School
Sunday 9:15
Worship Service
Sunday 10:30 am

Website:
http://www.saintlukesucc.org
Webmaster: Steve Houston