



Stephen Ministry

Pat Bartee – Leader

How does one move out of our perpetual pajama world of the past year into purposeful living again? Quite a task, really, for we have slowed down physically, emotionally, and mentally. We are vaccinated but still filled with hesitancy about taking those first steps. What will "rev" us up again and how much do we truly want to replicate of our pre-pandemic lives? Here are a few thoughts:

The Thinking Part:

- Do some personal evaluation.
- Did you find that quietness "became" you and nourished you? Then, now, some quiet time needs to be planned each day in your future days.
- Did you enjoy being less hurried and busy? Then say no to excessive activity in your life that eventually becomes a burden. Give up groups that take up your time but are no longer meaningful.
- Did you really miss and learn to appreciate social connection? Plan to spend more time with family. Make a monthly lunch date with a good friend. Go out to dinner more. Support the arts and invite a friend.
- Did your body suffer during the pandemic? Get walking, get gardening, swim, bike, and take a new exercise class. Find a free class online.
- Did you become more acutely aware of social issues that need addressing and you want to be a part of the solution? Figure out a way by asking questions and reading so that you can contribute to improved relations and conditions.

The Action Part:

- List two things you want to do differently.
- Plan how you will implement in concrete terms.
- Add (or subtract) them from your calendar.
- Make a timeframe for these things to happen.

The Gratitude Part:

- Thank God for this extra year you have been given to stop and reflect upon how you can do things better.
- Who gets an intermission in the midst of life to retool and regroup?!!

Change occurs by doing.

To keep from hesitating at any given step, count backward from 10 to 1. Counting backwards retrains the brain and resets it for a new action. Read more in Mel Robbins' "The 5-Second Rule".

Let's make the most of it.

Stephen Ministry International, like all others, has had to adapt and is offering their leadership training online during Covid. In order to take advantage of a reduced financial cost for training for our church and to secure leadership continuity of this essential ministry at Mount Vernon Presbyterian, we are happy to welcome Catie O'Hare to our Stephen Ministry team. She will train to be a Co-leader with Pat Bartee. Catie starts a 10-session, cohort, and online program in June.

Charlie Gray
Finance/Administration Elder

My Christian principle about investing and all aspects of life is, "God's in charge", meaning there is no reason to panic because no matter what happens, who is elected or whatever the circumstance, God knows how to guide us through uncertain times. Basically Romans 8:28 – And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.

**The End of the World – "Again"
and Other Lessons from Investing in a COVID World**

Lesson II – "You can't time the Market" "Many people incorrectly believe they can time the market. Meaning they can tell when to get in and when to get out. Moreover, they believe their Investment Advisor should know when to get them in and out of the market. To be able to do this, you either need a crystal ball allowing you to accurately predict the future or otherwise know what will happen tomorrow and beyond. I would suggest that we are blessed in that none of us knows what the future holds, and this seems to be part of God's plan. Simply put, the future is unknowable. Furthermore, timing the market doesn't work largely because you must be right twice, as to when to get out of the market as well as when to get back in. You might get the first part right from time to time but it's unrealistic to get both right with any degree of regularity.

Lesson III – "Who gets elected dictates how the market performs"

During my career I have had clients who sit on both sides of the proverbial aisle. As such, depending on who the winner is in any given election year, there has always been a corresponding reaction by the losing side. As an example, when President Obama was first elected in 2008, the sentiment from the rightwing clients was that our bad situation from the Great Recession was destined to get worse. Of course, 2009 represented one of the greatest recoveries the market has ever seen. I heard similar comments when he was reelected in 2012. In 2016 when President Trump was elected, the remarks and predictions were just as strong, but this time they came from my clients on the left. In 2020, then President elect Biden, the comments from the right leading up to the election were very pessimistic. Interestingly enough, the day Biden was declared the winner, the DOW had its largest one day increase in history. As a coincidence it just so happened, the reports of a successful vaccine also came out the day Biden was declared the winner. History has shown there is not a direct correlation between how the stock market behaves and who is in the Oval Office.

(To be continued with Lesson IV and Conclusion, Fall Issue, September 2021)



Reading List for Learning about Race and White Privilege in American Society

Introduction by David Hill, Clerk of Session

My "Golden Rule:" Christ summed up the law in two simple rules we must follow; one is to love God with all my heart, the other to love my neighbor just as much as I love myself. Imagine what a wonderful world if we all would strive to follow these rules in every interaction we have with others. This would make God visible to the world through our actions. What a wonderful way to witness to the world!

We can start our journey by being informed. Here are those materials I have used over the past fifty plus years to examine race. I began reading as an undergraduate at Georgia State University majoring in political science and minoring in history. Fortunately, I took courses that opened my eyes about race and white privilege, and I never stopped reading on the subject. I am certain there are those people who will want to say simply that I feel guilty and am compensating by reading and putting out this list. No, it is not an issue of feeling guilty; feeling does little to improve our world. Instead, I want to take action and as a start, I have produced this bibliography in hopes it might create some interest followed by action.

Our country began with a massive compromise between the new southern states where slavery flourished and the northern states where slavery had been abandoned. This compromise made sense at the time as a way to kick start the young country. In retrospect it set America up for hundreds of years of suffering for black people, suffering that included a system of slavery that resulted in unspeakable acts of cruelty followed by a post-slavery period that was probably even more horrible. White southerners created a mythology about black people that help proliferate these horrors; northerners simply turned their backs too busy with westward expansion and burgeoning industrialization and commerce.

Many older Americans, including me, believed the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s through the 1970s broke down the barriers our country had put in front of black Americans. Great progress was made, but in no way did racism suddenly end. People in the streets today are attempting to help us see that police violence against minorities resulting in the deaths of so many people is a proxy for racial policy – formal and informal - that exists in our country that deprives brown and black people of what whites enjoy and take for granted. Racism hurts everyone, black, brown, and white. The strongest, most powerful, and probably the best country in the world cannot continue to be so when so many Americans are not given a chance at success. Racism weakens America. Let us join together to change what should have been changed a long time ago.

Change will not be easy or comfortable. Many people benefit from the present conditions and do not want to change. Those people will think of many excuses to justify the status quo. Others may want to change but do not know where to start. Starting will be the hard part. Once we begin the journey to an equitable world, we will all gain confidence and momentum and more and more support. This annotated bibliography is designed to help us start.

Along the way just remember, God made us all in HIS image. His plan is for a kingdom – the Kingdom of God – to be built according to His plan, not ours. Racism, classism, and all the other isms have no place in God's kingdom. Every person who calls themselves devout Christians, Jews, Muslims, or who affiliate with one of the many other religions represented in our great country cannot ignore the present movement in our country. The body of religious writings in all the world's major religions simply do not support racism. Common sense does not support racism. It would be absurd for me to believe I am any better than the next person that I deserve more than the next person. So, let's get started on this journey.

(To be continued with Annotated Bibliography, Fall Issue, September 2021)

Spring-Summer 2021 MVPC Quarterly PW
Moderator Report – Ann Williams
<http://www.atlpcusa.org/pw.html>

Save the date! Presbyterian Women will host a “Picnic on the Patio” on Saturday, May 15 at 12:00 noon. All women of the church are invited. Please RSVP to Ann Williams at as97williams@gmail.com by May 11. Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt will also install new officers.



The Earth Is Your Neighbor, Too

Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt
Associate Pastor for Faith Formation

God established a relationship between the first human and the environment they inhabited in chapters one and two of Genesis, using words like *subdue...have dominion over... till and keep* the land. God brought animals to be named by them and produced plants to nourish them. God even made a human partner for them, forever imbedding relationships in the fabric of human life. From the very beginning we have been called by God to relate to the world around us. And, unfortunately, we have not often established healthy relationships.

The facts of climate change are staggering and, frankly, uncomfortable to read about. We can, and do, measure the Earth’s rising temperature. We can, and do, measure the shrinking ice caps and the rising oceans. We can, and do, measure the green-house gases released into the atmosphere. And lately we can, and do, measure the disproportionate impact of climate pollution on the forgotten and marginalized in our communities. Any one of these painful symptoms should cause us to wonder if there are problems bubbling under the surface.

Our relationship with the Earth is painfully one-sided. The damage to our environment is measurable, but what about the damage to our spiritual lives? What do we lose when we fail to see our Creator’s touch in the world around us? What do we idolize when we lift our ways of life above the Earth’s patterns of life? Who do we silence when we ignore the Earth’s clear, albeit different, forms of communication? As with any struggling relationship, we can only ignore Earth’s cries for so long.

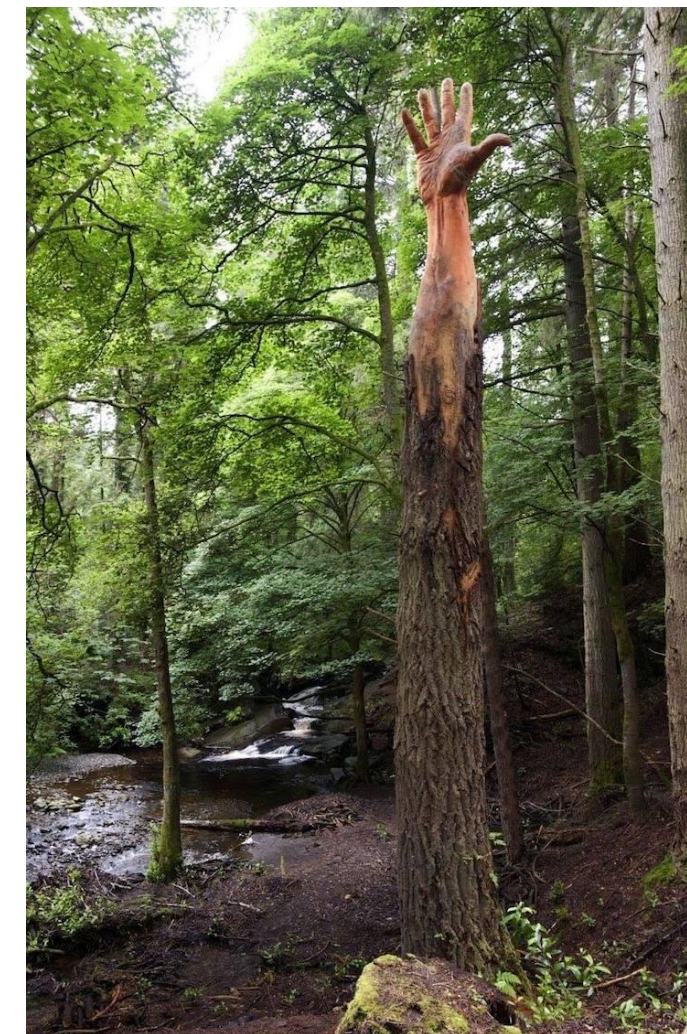
As our annual Earth Day comes and goes, let us pray for a thriving “more-than-human-world.” Rather than emphasize a separation between humans and Earth, prayers for the more-than-human-world acknowledge that humans are one piece of an inter-connected reality. Our health, physically and spiritually, depends on the way we treat everyone and everything in our community. Once we recognize the Earth as a neighbor in need, we will be well on our way to restoring a vital relationship that God established in the beginning.

The Science of Climate Change Explained: Facts, Evidence and Proof Definitive answers to the big questions.

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/climate-change-global-warming-faq.html>

SPRING-SUMMER ISSUE 2021

THE MVPC MEMBERS’ GIFT OF WISDOM



“Let us love in truth and action” *
By Applying our Christian Principles
in Changing Times

***1 John 3:18b**

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Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church
471 Mt. Vernon Hwy, NE
Sandy Springs, GA 30328
404.255.2211

- Mount Vernon Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team, Day Circle, Book Circle and Sunday Circle continue to meet monthly virtually via Zoom.
- The Presbyterian Women’s annual Mission Program this year was a video tour of the Community Assistance Center and a video discussion of the years of involvement and service by Tamara Carrera. Ms. Carrera began working with CAC in 1997 and under her leadership, it has become widely recognized as the cornerstone emergency human services agency preventing homelessness and hunger in the Sandy Springs and Dunwoody communities. Ms. Carrera and Marguerite Nelson talked about the important work that CAC does. Beppie Lever conducted a tour of the food pantry and the boutique. Matthias Young filmed and prepared the video so it could be viewed at the end of the February 7 church service.
- In March, our Coordinating Team delivered lunch for Clifton. We will deliver additional meals, as needed, in future months.
- For our Spring project, Presbyterian Women filled and delivered Easter baskets to church members that are not able to attend in person church services.
- 2021-2022 Coordinating Team officers will be installed on Saturday, May 15 by Rev. Isaac Toney-Schmitt. Our meeting will include a program about the 2021 Birthday Offering of Presbyterian Women and some of the mission projects that is funded by this offering. The meeting will be held in the church garden. We invite all women of the church to attend.