



September 15, 2015

Pope Francis is coming to America. It is his first visit to the United States in his 78 years. He actually pulled out a map and asked a visiting American Bishop to point out the places he would be visiting. Maybe he chose Washington, Philadelphia, and New York City so he wouldn't be tempted to make a second visit. The Pope's visit has inspired news stories about the changes his leadership is bringing to the Catholic Church. From the onset of his election, the Pope is attempting to make the church more welcoming, more forgiving, and more open to people who have felt cut off from the church.

The Pope has proclaimed 2015 as the "Year of Mercy." His signature act of mercy is a modification in the process for divorced Catholics to get a marriage annulled so they can receive communion again. It took 300 years to change the process but in Catholic circles that is fast. He is also seeking to devise a process by which women who have had an abortion can be formally forgiven.

You might think that as the Supreme leader in a hierarchical, all male system, Pope Francis would have more influence on church policy. But the Pope is facing strong and very open dissent among priests in the church hierarchy. The problem is his predecessor, Pope Benedict, appointed very orthodox and socially conservative bishops. One priest told me getting changes past the current group of Bishops is like getting a 20th century idea approved by a US Supreme Court consisting of nine Anthony Scalia's. Good luck with that. Change is hard, especially in the church.

Jesus also faced a lot of resistance from the religious establishment of his day. They didn't like the company he kept, the stories he told, or his welcoming attitude towards people who had been hurt. Jesus offered God's forgiveness and told those forgiven to go and sin no more. He also said that those that don't forgive others cannot receive the forgiveness God offers them. Like the current Pope, Jesus wanted to reach the whole world with the message of God's love and mercy: "The harvest is great; however the workers are few."

For three Sunday's (September 20th, 27th, and October 4th), CCPC will offer an adult education seminar on Same Sex Marriage. Our Director of Christian Education, Justin Devine, and Wayne Smith, chair of the Adult Education Committee, have designed a very informative review of the history of the acceptance and inclusion of homosexuals in American society. Justin has found some powerful films clips from movies and television shows. When I reviewed some of the clips, I found myself agreeing with what the Rev. Peter Gomes of Harvard's Memorial Chapel said in his 1996 bestseller, "The Good Book," that homosexuality's the last prejudice in America.

The second week will detail the Presbyterian Church's long struggle to reconcile the many biblical and theological issues homosexuality presents. The final week will look at what same-sex marriage ceremonies look like and the freedom pastors have to perform or refuse to perform these services.

Since the early 1990's, the ordination of homosexuals has been a hot topic in seminary communities. There are strong positions on both sides of the discussion. But, there is an important difference from what happens in healthy communities and what we saw this week in Kentucky. In healthy Christian communities, we don't draw a line in the sand and demand that everyone in our community stands on one side of the line or the other. A spiritually healthy community is a place where all sides of a given issue can be discussed openly.

I know CCPC is a place where there are many voices and opinions, but we share one heart and commitment to serve one Lord, Jesus Christ. We must always remember that our unity lies not in ourselves, and certainly not in forcing others to agree with us, but in the God who calls us. This is good news.

Grace and peace,

James Brassard

P.S. Since I am not part of the design of the Same-Sex Marriage discussion, I will be preaching on the topic "Christian Marriage in the Age of Confusion" on September 27th.

Worship Notes

September 20th: The Second week of my sermon series on *Diligent Discipleship* will address the question “How does something so small produce such huge results?” The text is the *Parable of the Mustard Seed*. The title is *Mustard Plants and Nesting Birds*.

September 27th: Rev. Brassard will talk about the essential gift that Christian marriage offers in our highly individualistic world. The title is *Christian Marriage in the Age of Confusion*. Following the service, we will have our annual dedication of Memorial Bricks in the Memorial Garden.



Peacemaking Offering

The lasting value in a gift of peace

The Peacemaking Offering, Sunday, October 4th, is one of four church wide Special Offerings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that play an important role in defining what it means to be a connectional church in the twenty-first century, bringing together the diversity of the PC(USA) to focus and take faith-based action on shared concerns. The offering is an opportunity for partnership, learning, and witness and profoundly affects the life of the church as a collective witness to Jesus Christ's love for the whole church.

During this Season of Peace, our thoughts turn to the meaning of peace and how, through Christ, we can nurture it inside ourselves and out in the world. Yet, to understand the value of peace, we must also understand the cost of conflict, and the many forms it can take:

- ◆ Conflict can be individual: 1 in 4 U.S. students report being bullied at school.
- ◆ Conflict can be collective: Up to 70% of women experience violence in their lifetimes.
- ◆ Conflict can be domestic: 1 in 3 women has been the victim of violence at the hands of an intimate partner. 1 in 4 children has been physically abused.
- ◆ Conflict can be international: Conflict and political violence are on the rise in 48 countries.
- ◆ Conflict can be historical: Structural racism creates long-term deficits of opportunity.
- ◆ Conflict can be contemporary: Human trafficking and forced labor affect 3 of every 1,000 people in the world today.

To help address these diverse challenges, the Peacemaking Offering supports a range of ministries devoted to peacemaking and reconciliation. This includes bearing witness in communities of conflict around the world, hosting education programs to raise awareness, driving local peacemaking efforts, offering catalyst support to our mission co-workers, and much more.

Imagine what a gift it is to those who have been hurt, in both their spirit and their community, to find a lasting peace and resolve conflict in its many forms. When you give to the Peacemaking Offering, your true gift is the peace of Christ, for all of God's children. With each gift, we can begin to create a world of peace—together.

Please give generously:

Through our congregation on October 4th
Text PEACE to 20222 to give \$10
presbyterianmission.org/give/peace-global

Learn more about issues of conflict:

Bullying: www.stopbullying.gov
Violence against women: www.endviolence.un.org
World conflict: www.visionofhumanity.org
Structural racism: www.boysandmenofcolor.org
trafficking: www.unodc.org

Take Them A Meal



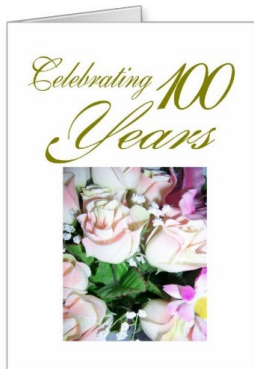
Take Them A Meal is a website for people to coordinate taking meals for people they care about.

Bob Schrott is at home recovering from colon surgery. We're using this online website to coordinate meals to take to him. Interested in taking him a meal? Please do the following:

1. Go to www.takethemameal.com
2. In the "Find" section on the homepage type in "Schrott" for the recipient last name
3. Type in "8411" for the password,
4. Click "Find"

you would like to sign up for a meal, just choose a date that is open, click in that section, fill in the information, then click Sign Up, and that's all there is to it!

Please remember **no spicy foods** and **no cheese**. If you have any questions, please contact Dodji Komlan at djidjizone@aol.com or 301-512-8735.



Happy 100th Birthday!

Bea Uehling's mother is turning 100 years old on October 1st. Wouldn't it be great if she received 100 cards? If you would like to send her one, please send to:

Alice Olson
Bethany Towers 2 #430
201 University Drive South
Fargo, North Dakota 58103



New Member Seminar

Are you interesting in joining CCPC?

There will be a one-day membership seminar on Saturday, October 24th from 9 AM to Noon. The class will meet in the Adult Education Conference room. Rev. Brassard will give a survey of Presbyterian beliefs and our form of Church governance ("doing things decently and in order") and a brief overview of our mission and ministry. Cameo appearance of other CCPC staff will be included. At noon the Session is invited to join New Comers for a light lunch.

For those who desire to join CCPC, they will be introduced on the next two Sundays. Please let Rev. Brassard know of your interest at ccpcpastor@verizon.net or by calling the church at 301-262-6008.

Adult Education

Adult Education Classes begin on September 20th

To get us started with our Adult Education classes for the fall, we have put together a 3 week series on the topic of Same-Sex Marriage. Our desire is to create an open dialogue on the topic with participation from as many members of the congregation as possible. We will be answering questions, having a panel of clergy, and looking at the history of the topic in culture, media, and the church.

Same-Sex Marriage Series

Week 1 on September 20th: What changes have we witnessed in our lifetime about same-sex marriage in culture, the media, and public attitudes? Did *Seinfeld* think there was anything wrong with that? What impact did Ellen DeGeneres have on same-sex couples in the media? How are same-sex couples viewed in the media today?

Week 2 on September 27th: How has the church evolved in its practices in issues on same-sex marriage? What are the vows being made in a same-sex marriage? What does the scripture say about this topic? What does the scripture not say? How did the PCUSA come to its decision on inclusion of gay and lesbian clergy? On Same Sex Marriage? How has our session wrestled with this issue?

Week 3 on October 4th: What are the next steps we need to take in process and relationships of handling same-sex marriages? How would a same-sex couple be received at CCPC? What are some experiences that clergy have had with same-sex weddings? What are some fears and anxieties our members have about this topic? How do we create a safe space for people who have different views on this topic?

The Christmas Market

How do I have a favorite project of mine considered for the Christmas market?

Come to the September 24th Mission Council meeting at 7:00 PM in the Adult Education Conference room and share your project with them.

Currently, calls are being made to verify how many of the past participants will once again be a part of the market. New additions will be heard and discussed at the September 24th Mission Council meeting with final decisions being made at that

time. Watch for articles in the Caller to find out about final decisions or plan to be there on November 1st to see for yourself.



Sandi and Brian Thompson-Royer, the CCPC supported missionaries for Guatemala who visited our church earlier this year, sent a link for the below article to Reverend Brassard. And, Reverend Brassard thought he would share it with you.

People-power and the 'Guatemalan Spring'

Nina Lakhani | 03 Sep 2015 09:34 GMT | Corruption, Politics, Guatemala, Latin America

Guatemala City, Guatemala - An extraordinary groundswell of people-power driving historic political and social changes in Guatemala is making the "Guatemalan Spring" look increasingly irresistible.

The audacious theft of millions of dollars of public money by politicians and businessmen while poor patients died in public hospitals has triggered an unprecedented collective political awakening among Guatemala's historically divided society.

Communities have united for the first time in the country's 194-year modern history to demand sweeping reforms amid a wave of jaw-dropping corruption scandals implicating the country's political elites.

In a few short months, President Otto Perez Molina resigned after being stripped of his immunity and an arrest warrant issued. The vice president is among dozens jailed, and the widespread infiltration of organised crime in party politics and election campaigns has been exposed.

The once impossible has become possible, and people want more. The decades of rampant impunity and political status quo appear to be over.

Gabriel Wer, 33, is one of five young men with no experience in activism, who inadvertently initiated this heady new popular movement, which has seen record numbers of Guatemalans partake in peaceful protests since the corruption scandal first broke on April 16.

'Dreams for the future'

Wer told Al Jazeera: "We started off angry, demanding resignations, but have become part of a social movement where there is a hunger for information, change, and a new Guatemalan identity. This is now about our dreams for the future."

The group connected on social networks and were so incensed by the brazen corruption that they promoted a get-together with the hashtag #renunciaya, hoping a few hundred like-minded people might turn up to demand the resignations of the corrupt officials.

About 30,000 people gathered in the historic main square on April 25. Tens of thousands of ordinary citizens from every social class, age, and political persuasion have gathered every Saturday since calling for political heads to roll.

Demands have also been made for the cancellation of this Sunday's elections, and sweeping reforms to clean-up the country's beleaguered political system.

It's been a rollercoaster ride in which politically inexperienced young people are trying to keep up with the cascade of damning revelations and arrests by the increasingly bold public ministry and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) - the UN-sanctioned, independent investigative body that has helped prosecute corruption and organised crime in the country since 2007.

On Tuesday, thousands of people holding white roses and placards gathered in the pouring rain outside Congress to pressure parliamentarians voting for the second time

in four weeks to remove Molina's immunity. Prosecutors had already presented damning wiretap evidence suggesting he led the customs ring that allegedly pocketed millions of dollars in kickbacks.

Popular pressure was strengthened by an unlikely ally. The influential Chamber of Commerce (CACIF) - which has supported Guatemala's right-wing political elites for 60 years and helped bring Otto Perez to power in 2011 - turned against him.

The president's congressional allies caved-in and voted to remove immunity. The attorney general quickly invoked a travel ban to prevent him fleeing justice. There was a mix of utter disbelief and unparalleled joy on the streets, where ear-splitting celebrations continued for hours despite thunderstorms.

Injustice and struggle

"This is an historic moment when the government finally realised that the people won't tolerate any more corruption," Wer said. "But the struggle is just beginning... We're young, we're connected, we're angry - and we're going to be watching."

The movement has galvanised young people from diverse backgrounds across the country who are connecting through social media in spite of limited electricity and internet access in some areas.

There's a hunger to learn from each other about current events, but also past injustices and struggles - which are largely omitted from school curricula.

It is astonishing how many people are unaware that the CIA helped orchestrate the coup d'état in 1954 to install a right-wing military dictator that plunged the country into a devastating 36-year civil war. About 200,000 people were killed or forcibly disappeared, with 93 percent of atrocities carried out by government forces, according to the UN Historical Clarification Commission.

In 2013, former dictator Efraín Ríos Montt was found guilty of genocide and crimes against humanity against Ixil Mayan people in an historic trial. The controversial Constitutional Court ruling that overturned the verdict triggered international condemnation, but failed to inspire mass protests within Guatemala. "My dad told me that Ríos Montt was a good president and in school we had just one class on the civil war, so I didn't believe there was genocide," said Rafael Mora, a 23-year-old banker and designer of the online logos that helped the protest movement go viral. "Politics used to turn me off and I had no desire to know about anything, but now I've woken up and I want information. I'm questioning everything and everyone."

'Serve not steal'

This new hunger and determination is inspiring people of all ages and political persuasions. Gabriel Yela, a 72-year-old pianist, has attended every weekly protest in the capital. Immaculately dressed in a pinstripe suit adorned with a paper brooch that read: "I don't have a president," he contributed to the deafening noise with his plastic yellow horn.

"I'm so angry at the disrespect and dishonesty shown by our politicians. The whole system is corrupt, enough is enough," Yela told Al Jazeera.

"It's beautiful to see so many on the streets for the first time. I am excited by these young people who have some good ideas. I'm here to support them create a better future in which the politicians understand they're here to serve not steal."

The first wave of oppression during the civil war in the 1960s and 1970s targeted the intellectual and middle classes, and largely succeeded in creating a climate of terror

that crushed hope and mainstream dissent.

Now there are oodles of both.

For the first time ever, students from private universities have united with their public university counterparts to debate, share ideas, and protest under collective banners that deride and criticise authorities.

Protest chants are intermingled with the national anthem and banging drum beats, while jovial protesters insist a new Guatemala is emerging to break the old cycle of corruption and impunity.

Luis Rojas, 32, a systems engineer and his wife Alejandra Hernandez, 26, a child nutritionist, are expecting their first baby any day now. They attended their first-ever protest this week.

"Children are dying because their mothers cannot afford food and there's not enough money in the hospitals. I feel sick at what's gone on," said Hernandez

"I want our daughter to know she came to her first march with us today, and that the whole country is united in making a better future."

Follow Nina Lakhani on Twitter: [@ninalakhani](https://twitter.com/ninalakhani)

Source: Al Jazeera



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CCPC, the first Protestant church in Levitt Bowie, was born from a passion for Christian mission in the local community, and this focus continues.

*Our Mission: To worship God, to grow in faith and community,
and to place our gifts in the service of Jesus Christ.*



Belair Cooperative Nursery School

The school is a non-profit, non-sectarian, and non-partisan organization. It's located in the CE Building of Christian Community Presbyterian Church.

Call 301-464-5782 or Email info@belaircoop.org

www.belaircoop.org



Imagine - Yoga & Wellness Center



Located in the CE building, offers yoga and a variety of wellness programs to CCPC members and the community. For more information, visit www.ImagineThePlace.com, call 443-510-6308, or e-mail Ann@ImagineThePlace.com. Scholarships available.

