



COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

The temperature is cooling. Leaves will soon change color and begin to fall. Autumn has arrived. All are reminders that soon Halloween will be here followed by Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. The shorter days and certainly the festivities draw us all closer together, giving us the ability to take a look around and give thanks for our blessings.

The world around us looks vastly different than one year ago. Holiday festivities won't be the same. Perhaps there will be fewer parties and adjustments to holiday traditions. But take a minute or two to look around you. You will find even in the midst of this pandemic, which has caused much tension and hardship for many people, that you can still find reasons to give thanks for God's favor.

The IPC Stewardship Team started Counting Our Blessings over the summer as part of the 2021 campaign. It all began with the numerous ways we as a church family are ministering to our neighbors through Community Ministries, to our families through Christian Education, to our seniors through Congregational Care and our Deacons, and to all our neighbors



THE BILL SHANKS' FRIDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY BLESSING BIRMINGHAM'S HOMELESS WIHT HYGIENE KITS

through virtual worship and Music & Fine Arts events. Our list of blessings continues to grow.

We are continuing to bless our neighbors in need. Recently, the Bill Shanks'

Friday Morning Bible Study worked with Community Ministries to assemble 150 hygiene kits for Birmingham's homeless

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FEATURING

What happened to Jeff? A radio mystery show **PG 4**

FEATURING

Honoring Rev. Lucy Turner's 16 years of service **PG 5**

LEARN

PC(USA)'s call to do the work of justice **PG 8- 11**

MISSION

Ways to be a blessing to others this fall **PG 6**

UPCOMING events

See complete calendar online
including details and updates:
ipc-usa.org > [connect](#) > [calendar](#)

OCT

- 1-31 **Th-Sa** Socktober Donation Drive ♦
- 4 **Sun** The Table 5 PM Outdoor Service ❖
- 11 **Sun** Grace Groups begin ♦
- 16 **Fri** Stewardship campaign kicks off ❖
- 18 **Sun** Stewardship Moment for Mission, 11 am online worship ❖
Harvest for Hunger Drive begins ♦
- 25 **Sun** Fall Festival, CFAF, 1 pm ❖

NOV

- 1 **Sun** November Organ Recital, 4 pm ♦
- 2 **Mon** Youth Grant Team presentation, 5pm❖
- 8 **Sun** November Organ Recital, 4 pm ♦
- 13 **Fri** Advent Flower Deadline ❖
- 16 **Sun** November Organ Recital, 4 pm ♦
- 18 **Wed** Presbyterian Women Online Holiday Event, 6 pm ❖❖
- 22 **Sun** November Organ Recital, 4 pm ♦
- 26-27 **Th-Fri** Thanksgiving Holiday. Offices closed. ❖
- 30 **Mon** IPC Fruit Sales end ♦

DEC

- 5 **Sat** Advent Workshop ❖
- 11-13 **Fr-Su** Virtual Holiday House Tour ❖
- 13 **Sun** Online IPC Choir Christmas Concert, 4 pm♦
- 20 **Sun** Storyteller Dolores Hydock, 10 am ❖♦
- 24 **Thu** Christmas Eve Services ❖

Sunday worship is offering in-person by reservation at 8:30 am and at 11 am via livestream. Sanctuary also open for prayer on Wednesdays 11:30 am- 1 pm.

NOTE: Most services are livestream only. Seating for outdoor worship services at 8:30 am and November Organ Recitals is limited by reservation. Events could change. Please make sure to check online calendar and eUpdates for the latest news and events.

- ❖ Major Events
- ♦ Learning/Education
- ❖ Children/Youth
- ♦ Service Opportunity
- ❖ Adults/Seniors
- ♦ Music Ministry

CONSIDER THIS

Managing the "COVID Crawl"



As we continue the church's "crazy COVID crawl" going into our fall and winter time together, how wonderful it would be for me to be able to tell you we are almost ready to stand up and start dancing normally again. But... you know as well as I that we've got some more crawling to do, probably until next spring at least.

In the meantime, we must call on the strength of God to inspire us to find and practice ways of being in this seemingly "40 year wilderness" together.

This means that the traditional ways IPC has celebrated the holidays, like the Holiday House Tour and the much loved Christmas Eve services

will be affected, as will programming, normal worship, fellowship, and outreach. Inside this Window, you will find stories about how we have managed this crazy COVID crawl together so far, as well as the programs and plans to manage it through Christmas. While it will be remarkably different, with eyes to see and ears to hear, we can find much to be grateful for during these upcoming days of seasonal change.

It is also "Stewardship" season with this year's reminder to find ways of "Counting Our Blessings." I understand that for some of you, these times have brought great emotional and/or financial hardship and counting your blessings sounds Pollyanna-like. Please let us help you by letting us know what your dealing with. But for many others, you have discovered surprising blessings along the way. Being the community of Christ, we are called to help each other and step up when others can't. As you prayerfully consider your commitment to IPC this year, please consider "stepping up" if you are able to help cover those who can't. While the budget has changed in emphasis, we don't foresee it changing in amount needed to meet the needs ahead. Dig deep into those many blessings you have to count and then respond accordingly. Not only will the whole of IPC be grateful, you will all find yourselves grateful for the opportunity to give back. With all of the gifts of the Spirit, the more grateful we act, the more grateful we feel.

Gratefully,

Steve!

Interim Senior Pastor



SUMMER LEARNING PROGRAM STUDENTS ARE ENJOYING A FEW FUN FRIDAYS AT THE CHILDREN'S FRESH AIR FARM THIS FALL.

population. We are collecting new men's, women's and children's socks for people living in shelters in October. The Harvest for Hunger Food Drive is getting underway to continue to collect food for our Blessings Boxes and IPC Food Pantry. Our Summer Learning Program students are being welcomed to play and relax at the Children's Fresh Air Farm for Fun Days. These same families are also receiving additional food assistance through our partnership with City Meats.

Our Deacons and Love Thy Neighbor Team are being a blessing to our older members by continuing to serve as a lifeline during a time when communication and contact can be difficult. They're continuing to call and check on our adults in their 80s and 90s regularly. They are also sending them bags filled with reading materials and baked bread from Kim Martin and the IPC Kitchen Staff along with a host of other treats.

Our biggest blessing is of course, you our members. You continue to find new ways to help us carry out our mission of Joining God in the World, Welcoming Our Neighbors. You provide not just the brain power but also the volunteer time necessary to enable us to carry out Christ's ministry within our church, the Birmingham community and the world. In addition to all of the ministries listed above, teams of volunteers are willingly and generously giving their time to plan for the Fall Festival, the Advent workshop, and the virtual Holiday House Tour. Others are regularly meeting and shaping the future of our church family as members of the Re-Opening Task Force, the Session, the Pastor Nominating Committee, the Representative Nominating Committee, and IPC ministry teams.

As a church family, we have so much to give thanks for. The IPC Stewardship Ministry Team has lost count of all of our blessings. Perhaps there are too many to count. But in order for this ministry to happen, we need your continued financial support. Please prayerfully consider how your gift can make an impact on your church home. Look for an email from the IPC Stewardship Team on Friday, October 16 with more information about how you and your gifts from prior years are blessing IPC.

Learn more about how we are Counting Our Blessings or make your 2021 pledge online: ipc-usa.org > give > 2021 annual giving

welcome TO IPC



Sissy and David Austin and their children Kate, Lucy, and William
New Members



Rev. Jay Wilkins
New Staff
Director of Congregational Care

The Window is a quarterly publication of Independent Presbyterian Church 3100 Highland Avenue South. The Window is published for church members and friends.



This amazing group has been volunteering with our youth for over three years now. Not only have they opened their backyards to our youth group, they have chaperoned trips to Gulf Shores, Gatlinburg and Montreat and coached church league basketball. They have done this while pursuing their own full time careers. Please join us in thanking this wonderful group!

PICTURED TOP LEFT TO RIGHT: ANNA FIKES, VIRGINIA GRISHAM, NICHOLAS AND HELEN SAAB (AND NOLA). NOT: PICTURED HATCH MARBURY

RADIO MYSTERY THEATRE TO DEBUT

BY DR. JEFF MCLELLAND, MUSIC & FINE ARTS DIRECTOR

Are you missing the whole choir during our Sunday morning live streamed services? Do you fear that they may have left IPC?

Well, they're back. Be on the lookout for the IPC Choir Mystery Radio Theatre that will be made available to the public on YouTube in November. Featuring various singers from the IPC Choir, some brave IPC staff, and loving members of the congregation, this "Guy Noir Private Eye" type radio play will be presented in four cliff-hanging episodes. You will hear a drama that is mind-bogglingly mired with intrigue, sumptuously sonorous with sound effects, wittily riffled with dazzling dialogue, and gob-stopped with a gobbledygook "who-dun-it" plot to discover what happened in the mysterious disappearance of the most esteemed Organist/Choirmaster Jeff McLelland. Only the most attentively arduous and sturdily studious listener will be able to solve this confounded conundrum!

Follow the exploits of two intrepid detectives, Les Intelligent and Fred Knott, as they attempt to solve the crime of the century (or at least the crime of the week). Les and Fred mine popular culture, drawing from popular movies, stand-up comedians, and especially the writings of author Mark Schweizer. Many IPC congregants may remember Mark from the mystery theatre at IPC during the Religious Arts Festival of 2013. Mark was known for his sumptuous similes and magnificent metaphors, both in the manner of Raymond Chandler.

Here is a sample of the deliriously dazzling dialogue:

"It was a dark and stormy night; dark, because the sun had just set like a giant flaming hen squatting upon her unkempt nest that was the gritty suburban streets of Birmingham; stormy, because the weather had rolled in like an angry fat man driving his Rascal into a Ryan's Steak House and then finding out that the 'all you can eat' dessert bar had an out-of-order frozen yogurt machine."



THE SHOW WILL BE TAPED LIVE IN HIGHLAND HALL AND RELEASED AS A PODCAST



Written by IPC member Bud Keller and directed by IPC member Jeff Johnson, the main characters in the play are:

- **Detective Les Intelligent:** Bud Keller
- **Church Members:** George Taylor, Bill Horton, Terry Hamilton, Sonny Williams, and Jim Walker
- **Clergy:** Dr. Steve Goyer and Rev. Susan Clayton
- Members of the IPC Choir

There is likely no better way to self-quarantine than to listen to maddening perplexity that is the IPC Choir Radio Mystery Theatre. You know it's fancy because we spelled theatre with an "re" rather than an "er".

Face masks are optional as you listen to this dubious drama with awesome alliteration.

Be sure to watch your email and the IPC website for upcoming details.



A NEW CALL

Rev. Lucy Turner's Special Gift to IPC

BY KAREN CHAPMAN, IPC MEMBER

Those who have the “right touch” in any given situation are blessed with a special gift. Lucy Turner has touched many lives with her intuitive ability to dig deep into the real meaning of an issue whether it be a baptism, homily, Bible lesson, counseling session, or sermon.

She has an uncanny understanding of herself and God’s call on her life. Calling herself an introvert, she has the ability to step back and listen intently and lovingly to others. The response is always appropriate whether to intense pain and suffering or discovering an unexpected joy. It is consistently the “right touch.” I think Lucy exemplifies the verse found in Hebrews 4:16, “Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

In a particularly sad time, I was struck with how she related to my critically ill husband, Lee. She had the “right touch” and he sensed it. Toward the end when he was bedridden here at home, she sat on the side of the bed, held his hand as they together discussed what he wanted for his funeral service, which she beautifully officiated.

Another time, I recall, our family had a dear, dear friend, a retired Presbyterian pastor who was in the ICU on life support. I called Lucy who knew him and she raced to the hospital. My daughter and I were awed as she prayed with him toward the end and laid her hand on his forehead --- again the “right touch.”

I am sure all at IPC have similar stories as she has ministered as a consummate Pastor and God’s true servant. The quiet sensitivity and small gestures she has shown have been evidence of God’s providence.

Over the years, our friendship has grown through many happy times -- fly fishing for trout in a cold mountain stream (lots of funny stories), car trips, quail hunting, and wonderful meals together with my immediate family, including three grandsons. They all admit that they have kidnapped Lucy!

We will all miss her as part of our spiritual lives here at IPC but she will not be too far away as she assumes her new ministry as a part time chaplain at Kirkwood by the River. As she said in her retirement letter, “We have been together in the worst of times and the best of times.” To me, she has had the right touch in all things and it has truly been a joy and privilege to have Lucy at IPC.

BRIEFS

Fund Honoring Lucy

Rev. Lucy Turner dedicated most of her more than 16 years at IPC to caring for our members when they need it the most. In honor of Lucy’s retirement, we are establishing a Pastor Care and Counseling Assistance Fund in the IPC Foundation to provide pastoral care and counseling for those in need. To donate, click on the Give link our website ipc-usa.org and select “Lucy Turner Foundation Fund.”

Congregational Care Continues

“Lucy has retired. Who can I call?”

I tell folks to call me or call Connie Logan. My office (G37) and telephone (205) 933-3706 are the same as Lucy’s. My cell phone is (610) 247-5413 and my email is jwilkins@ipc-usa.org.

Who am I? I am Jay Wilkins, the new Interim Associate Pastor for Congregational Care. I retired in January from being the General Presbyterian for Sheppards & Lapsley Presbytery, and serve part-time as an interim pastor. My role is to help connect the pastors, staff, and members in caring for this part of Christ’s church. Please feel free to introduce yourself to me, and call when you need someone to listen. I look forward to serving Christ with you in this time of transition.



REV. JAY WILKINS LEADING PRAYER IN HIS FIRST SERVICE ON OCT. 4

IPC FOUNDATION

Youth Grant Team

BY CATHERINE GOUDREAU

Possibly one of the greatest treasures of IPC is our Youth Grant Team. Every fall, a team of IPC juniors and seniors apply to be a part of this special 10-week experience. This year, the team reviewed all 98 grants submitted to the IPC Foundation. The requests fall into three categories: education, mission, and general charitable. Students are encouraged to look at both local and global grants in all categories. After reviewing all grant requests, the students spend weeks narrowing the list to ones they are particularly interested in and feel have strong requests. From the narrowed list, they select several site visits. The site visits provide students with additional information, an opportunity to ask questions, and a chance to see many important organizations in action. Students then decide how to allocate \$20,000. The process is an incredible time commitment and demonstration of leadership from our youth. The process culminates with a presentation to the IPC Foundation, which will take place on November 2.

Look for more information about the presentation in upcoming eUpdates.



MEMBERS OF 2020 YOUTH GRANT TEAM GATHERED FOR A MEETING



IPC MEMBERS, STAFF AND STAIR VOLUNTEERS HAVE DONATED JACKETS AND HATS TO STAIR STUDENTS OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS.

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Be a Blessing to Others

The Christ-child is coming! Instead of waiting until Advent, let's start following in his footsteps now by ministering to others. Here are some ways to help:

- Donate new socks for homeless women, men and children during Socktober. Drop off socks in bins outside the church. *More information on next page.*
- Collect some non-perishable food items for the IPC Food Pantry during the Harvest for Hunger Drive Oct. 18- Nov. 22. *More information on next page.*
- Give the gift of warmth for a STAIR student. Donate a coat.
- Honor a loved one by making an Advent flower contribution. by November 13. We will include their name(s) in the Christmas bulletin. An envelope is included in this Window.
- Show our IPC Choir appreciation by purchasing fruit online at ipc-usa.org or from your favorite choir member. Deadline to order is November 30. Fruit will be available for pick up at IPC December 19- 20. All sales support the IPC Choir's mission.
- Take a virtual tour of this year's Holiday Houses Dec. 11- 13. The money from the \$20 tickets go to organizations supported by our Presbyterian Women.
- Going on the tour? Or need a hostess gift? Purchase a Holiday House Tea in a Bag, which includes Kim's cheese straws, assorted Holiday House cookies, Kim's ham biscuits, and a Holiday House ticket for \$50. Only 100 available and will go on sale with Holiday House tickets.

Find more information about on-going service opportunities by going to ipc-usa.org >connect > links



HELP KEEP OUR NEIGHBORS FED AND WARM THIS WINTER

JOINING GOD IN THE WORLD

Fighting Hunger, Cold

With the arrival of cooler temperatures, our annual Harvest for Hunger Food Drive is as important as ever, if not more important, to make sure we are able to support our neighbors experiencing food insecurity during the pandemic. Because of your generosity, our Social Service Fund has allowed us to continue our partnership with City Meats while our physical Food Pantry remains closed. Each week, we have sent as many as 75 people to City Meats with a \$45 virtual voucher. This voucher provides non-perishable food items, as well as fresh and frozen vegetables, meat, dairy and fruit. In addition, your continued donations of non-perishable food items allow us to stock the Blessing Boxes, which are accessible to anyone in need of food as well as some hygiene and paper products. We ask you to participate in the Harvest for Hunger Drive Oct. 18- Nov. 22 by bringing non-perishable food donations to keep our Blessing Boxes stocked or making a financial contribution to IPC Social Services.

As weather gets colder, we also think about the increasing number of homeless men, women and children in our local shelters and on the streets. The numbers of street homeless have increased during the pandemic because of the stricter measures required for entry into homeless shelters. Did you know that socks are one of the most-requested but least-donated items at homeless shelters across the country? In order to help meet this basic need, we are engaging in Socktober. Please bring donations of new socks for men, women or children to IPC to be distributed to local shelters and those serving the homeless on the street Oct. 1-31.

All donations of food or socks can be dropped off at the church Monday-Friday, 8:30-4:30 by ringing the bell at the Parlor door for entry to the building. Thank you for your generosity!

PRESBYTERY NEWS

Project Empathy

The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley is working to pay off \$13 million of medical debt in ten Black Belt counties. This project is reducing the debt one dollar at a time. By working with RIP Medical Debt, each dollar donated to the Presbytery's Project Empathy can eliminate \$100 in debt.

The IPC Foundation has contributed \$7,500 through a grant- a large part of the \$12,000 contributed already.

All donations are tax deductible. Contributions are being accepted now through December. Learn more at <https://secure.qgiv.com/event/projectempathy/>

Familiar Face, New Role

IPC member and former IPC Interim Director of Youth Ministries Emily Frandsen is now the part-time ministry coordinator for UKirk Birmingham. Join us in congratulating her.



EMILY FRANDSEN
COURTESY: KIRKWOOD BY THE RIVER

FROM LAMENT TO ACTION

BY LESLIE SCANLON, "OUTLOOK" NATIONAL REPORTER

From lamentation to action – the 2020 General Assembly called the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to do the work of justice, working to respond to what some referred to as the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racial injustice.

WORSHIP

The worship service June 26 used the power of the digital platform to weave together music, art and voices from around the PC(USA) – including a Zoom choir for one of the closing hymns.

Wearing stoles that were a gift from the Committee on Local Arrangements in Baltimore, made by Jeff Wunrow Designs and featuring a Black fist raised in a symbol of power, Vilmarie Cintron-Olivieri and Cindy Kohlmann, the co-moderators of the 2019 General Assembly, called the commissioners to journey in faith from lamentation to confession to hope to action.

“Surrounded as we are by the sounds of respirators and the cries of the grieving and the raised voices of protesters, help us, oh Lord, to hear your voice, and give us the courage to hear that voice,” Kohlmann said.

God provides abundantly “far more than we could have asked for or imagined,” Cintron-Olivieri said, drawing on a passage from Ephesians. And she recited a poem from Antonia Machado, “Caminante, no hay camino” – telling the commissioners “you make the path by walking” and giving them responsibility to find the way forward as they walk in faith.

VIRTUAL GA

Because of COVID-19, this became the PC(USA)'s first virtual General Assembly meeting via Zoom – with technology that had more hiccups than hard bumps. (“Can you hear me?” was the first thing many commissioners said.) That format also meant the assembly considered “core and critical” business – referring many other reports to the next assembly in 2022. Some business that did make it through:



REVEREND GREGORY BENTLEY, CO-MODERATOR OF THE 224TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY CONDUCTS THE CLOSING PRAYER OF THE ASSEMBLY. PHOTO: RICK JONES



THE REVEREND GREGORY BENTLEY, CO-MODERATOR OF THE 224TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2020), MODERATES PLENARY 4. PHOTO: RANDY HOBSON.

offering the church's presence and advocacy for those affected by the COVID-10 pandemic and support for the work of the Native American Coordinating Council and for repairing Native American church properties.



CO-MODERATORS

Because the opening plenary on June 19 ran late – in part with commissioners debating what business to defer to 2022, and in a dispute over whether San Francisco Theological Seminary remains as a PC(USA) seminary– the assembly added an extra plenary session June 20 in order to elect co-moderators.

The decision didn't take long, as the assembly elected Elona Street-Stewart, an Indigenous ruling elder, and Gregory Bentley, a Black minister, on the first

ballot – with 304 commissioners voting for them, three times as many votes as for the next-closest team. Street-Stewart is synod executive of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies and, as a member of the Delaware Nanticoke tribe, an assembly’s first Native American co-moderator. Bentley is pastor of Fellowship Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama.

Their election was emotional, as Oscar J. McCloud prayed during their installation that their paths had been watered with the tears and blood of their ancestors. Bentley pronounced himself to be “hippopotamus happy and dinosaur delighted.”

Bentley and Street-Stewart have chosen as their symbol the Sankofa bird: standing in the Mississippi River, representing flying forward while looking backward, a hope, Bentley said, of bringing “the best of our cultures to make the church better.”

RACISM

On June 26, the assembly approved a resolution called “Responding to the Sin of Racism and a Call to Action” – declaring that Black lives matter; confessing that the church has been complicit in perpetuating injustice and pledging to “confront and dismantle systemic racism” in the church and in society. That resolution was a substitute for another option that commissioners determined was not strong enough – as Milo Browne, a young adult advisory delegate from the Presbytery of Scioto Valley put it: “It is inexcusable for us to stand in silence as people are being killed.”

STATED CLERK

The assembly re-elected J. Herbert Nelson, 61, to a second four-year term as the PC(USA)’s stated clerk – the denomination’s chief ecclesial officer and its voice in the public square. Nelson was the only candidate – no one else applied – and was installed with a prayer from his wife, Gail Porter Nelson, also a PC(USA) pastor.

Nelson expressed thanks, saying “I’m still a pastor” at heart – and said “there is a Savior who reminds us you can go to the poor, to the broken, to the windows, and make a difference,” to get out of the church building. “I don’t ever remember Jesus having a church house. Every one he went into, he got thrown out of.”



THE SYMBOL SELECTED BY THE CO-MODERATORS OF THE 224TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2020) IS THE SANKOFA BIRD STANDING IN THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER.

SAN FRANCISCO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Bentley and Street-Stewart avoided a floor fight on this dispute by announcing June 27 that they would bring representatives from the seminary and the Committee on the Office of Theological Education together shortly after the assemble concludes to try to resolve the issues, using a moderator if necessary.

BUDGET

The assemble approved a unified PC(USA) budget of \$80.1 million for 2021 and \$83.4 million for 2022 built on the assumption that COVID-19 will cause income to decline by roughly 25% this year and next. The assembly also approved a General Assembly per capita rate of \$8.95 per member rate for 2019 and 2020.

REPENTANCE AND ACTION

The assembly concluded with controversy and repentance. The controversy: a failed attempt to introduce a statement on the ways “that Black women and girls are disproportionately affected

by the systems of white supremacy and misogynoir in communities, the church and society at large.” A vote to suspend the rules to allow that motion to be heard needed 326 vote (2/3 of the enrolled commissioners), but got only 306, with 144 voting against, despite a social media push for the PC(USA) to #TrustBlackWomen.

Asked to address these concerns with prayer, Nelson started with silence, then prayed for Black girls whose “bodies and their minds and their spirits would be broken down in so many ways,” and for their mothers who “fall on their knees and pray for their daughters and cry for them.”

The assembly then spent 8 minutes and 26 seconds in silent corporate lament – the time that Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin knelt pressing on the neck of George Floyd.

“Guide our feet,” Street-Stewart prayed, asking God to lead Presbyterians as they find their paths, to “live out the church’s Great ends into the street.”

DIVING INTO THE MATTHEW 25 VISION

BY LESLIE SCANLON, "OUTLOOK" NATIONAL REPORTER

Leaders of the Presbyterian Mission Agency are trying to look ahead to what the vision of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) should be once the COVID-19 pandemic has ended — and how the PC(USA) can live into the realities of being a Matthew 25 church.

"Where is it we want to be two years down the road?" asked Warren Lesane, chair of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, during a Zoom meeting that the board's coordinating committee held Sept. 17 in preparation for a full online meeting of the board Oct. 7-9.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency has claimed Matthew 25 as a vision, so "let's live into it," Lesane said. "If I had a pulpit, I'd be preaching right now."

In part, that work involves collaboration with three work groups the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly has convened that are digging into specific issues — including what the shape of the 2022 General Assembly might look like; what changes in policies and procedures are needed; and issues of church unity, including developing a unified budget and considering the possibility of some kind of merger or realignment of the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) and the Office of the General Assembly (OGA).

The seeds of those conversations were planted last spring — in part through the work of the Moving Forward Implementation Commission. That commission took administrative action June 18 — the day before the 2020 General Assembly convened — to direct that a coordinating table convene to begin the process of developing a truly unified budget in the future for PMA, OGA and the PC(USA), A Corporation, which is the corporate expression of the church.

That action also stated that in a time of fiscal challenges the agencies should be "boldly and broadly collaborative," and that PMA and OGA should "continue to explore the possibility of merger" and of having the Mission Engagement and Support office raise funds for both agencies,



WARREN LESANE ENCOURAGED THE CHURCH TO LIVE INTO THE MATTHEW 25 VISION. SCREENSHOT: LESLIE SCANLON



not just for PMA.

Shannan Vance-Ocampo, who is vice chair of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, and Diane Moffett, president and executive director of PMA, have been participating in some of the discussions the Committee on the Office of the General Assembly work teams have been having in recent weeks.

"It's so important to have a clear vision for the future to guide us," Moffett told the coordinating committee. For PMA, that's a focus on making disciples; on

churches growing spiritually, numerically and in impact; and dealing with the intersectionality of economics, racism, injustice and gender bias. "That is what is compelling us, driving us," Moffett said.

Another focus of the work: a resolution that the 2020 General Assembly passed affirming that Black lives matter, calling on the church to "confront and dismantle systemic racism," and directing PMA and OGA to review all items of business that this shortened online assembly referred to the next assembly in 2022, to consider whether the recommendations in those business items could be acted on through the PC(USA)'s current social witness policy.

As a Reformed denomination, the PC(USA) also needs to think about what needs to change post-pandemic, Moffett said, saying that the PMA staff is working to organize its own leadership retreat and that "all of these conversations are part of a whole," to determine how to best be a Matthew 25 church moving forward.

"Mission should drive what we do and who we are," she said. "Not money, not politics, not power. It should be the mission that is driving us to reinvent," to live into

that vision.

There also were some discussions of specifics for the board's upcoming meeting in October, which will focus on the theme of anti-racism, including discussion of economic justice, the racial wealth gap and reparations, Moffett said.

Vance-Ocampo said one of the challenges of anti-racism training across the PC(USA) is that "the demographics of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) nationally do not look like the staff in Louisville and do not look like this board" — some PC(USA) congregations are essentially all white. "This is a deep theological issue, it's a deep soul issue," she said of the anti-racism work — work that's needed to move the church in the direction of justice.

Some items expected to come up at the October meeting:

A report on the financial future of Stony Point Center outside New York. In June, Stony Point laid off most of its staff because of the economic impact of the pandemic.

- The findings from Marian Vasser, a consultant from the University of Louisville who's been providing feedback on power and privilege issues in how the board itself operates, including matters of how information is shared and who gets to voice their opinions.
- Budget updates. Projections given to the A Corporation board in August showed that the PC(USA) is likely to experience a budget shortfall of about \$9.1 million at the national level by the end of 2020.

"We had a pretty decent August," Moffett said. But she said the PC(USA) will encourage all those who can to give to the church on Giving Tuesday (Dec. 1) — trying to put the PC(USA) in as strong a financial position as possible by year's end.

WHAT IS A MATTHEW 25 CHURCH?

Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed,



DIANE MOFFETT, PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY; WARREN LESANE, CHAIR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD; AND SHANNAN VANCE-OCAMPO, THE BOARD'S VICE CHAIR. SCREENSHOT: LESLIE SCANLON

imprisoned or poor.

HOW THE VISION UNITES ALL PRESBYTERIANS

By accepting the Matthew 25 invitation, you can help our denomination become a more relevant presence in the world. We recognize Christ's urgent call to be a church of action, where God's love, justice and mercy shine forth and are contagious. And we rejoice how our re-energized faith can unite all Presbyterians for a common and holy purpose: our common identity to do mission.

PRESBYTERY OF SHEPPARDS AND LAPSLEY BECOMES MATTHEW 25 PRESBYTERY

In May, our presbytery voted to become a Matthew 25 presbytery.

"We pledge to encourage 20% or more of our congregations to become Matthew 25 churches and embrace these areas of focus:

Building congregational vitality
Dismantling structural racism
Eradicating systemic poverty

We promise to keep track of the impact of our ministry and share our stories with the PC(USA) from time to time," states the presbytery's website.

ABOUT THE MATTHEW 25 MARK *Pictured on previous page.*

The circular shape represents unity and equality. Like God, a circle has no beginning and no end, and it symbolizes our continuing effort to help one another. The shape also suggests a globe that points to our engagement with the world.

The three interlocking figures represent the equality of all people without gender or race bias. They have their arms around each other, symbolizing friendship, protection and service. The number three suggests the three focus areas of congregational vitality, structural racism and systemic poverty, as well as the Trinity.

The color palette is bright, lively, friendly and energetic — suggestive of our active commitment.

Finally, the legend "Matthew 25" below the symbol is the literal identification of the mark. We use a handwritten font to make the point that active engagement in the world requires human effort.

Learn more about this bold vision and invitation online:
[presbyterianmission > ministries > matthew-25](#)



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WINDOW (USPS255-220)
Published Monthly
Office of Publication
Independent Presbyterian Church
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Birmingham, AL 35205-1408
Periodical Postage Paid at
Birmingham, Alabama
POSTMASTER: Send address
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Organ Recitals

NOVEMBER 1-22, 2020

AN IPC TRADITION
SINCE 1965

Sunday, November 1 • 4 p.m. • Sanctuary & Livestream
Monica Czausz
King of Glory Lutheran Church in Dallas, Texas

Sunday, November 8 • 4 p.m. • Sanctuary & Livestream
Stefan Engels
Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas

Sunday, November 15 • 4 p.m. • Sanctuary & Livestream
Isabelle Demers
Baylor University in Waco, Texas

Sunday, November 22 • 4 p.m. • Sanctuary & Livestream
David Enlow
New York, New York

Due to COVID-19, 50 people will be able to attend the recital in the Sanctuary by reservation only. The capacity could increase or decrease depending on recommendations from the IPC Re-Opening Task Force, as well as local and state health officials. Online Reservation form coming soon.

All recitals will be livestreamed on IPC's YouTube Channel and on IPC's Facebook page. You can find IPC on YouTube and social media @ipcbirmingham.

Details: ipc-usa.org > connect