



A NEW LIFE FOR IPC'S WILLOW OAK

BY BILL MCKELVEY, IPC DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS AND ADMINISTRATION

Trees—everywhere you look there are a multitude of them. As one travels through Birmingham, it would be easy to drive by them without giving a second glance or thought unless it happens to be a tree with a special memory attached to it. Like your favorite climbing tree as a child, or the one that held a rope swing, or one that provided shade as a relief from the summer heat; trees like these often hold a very special place in our hearts.

IPC had a special tree like the ones described above. Until recently, in the center of the property stood an ancient Willow Oak located in a garden at the Labyrinth. Like all things living eventually do, our Oak tree reached the end of its life span and was removed on Friday, January 15.

Why was this a special tree? Because it stood on the church property for possibly a century, maybe longer; it provided shade for those who walked the Labyrinth or for those who visited to the garden area to pray; it also provided relief from the sun during church picnics; and it served as a landmark for the church.



"THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FADES, BUT THE WORD OF OUR GOD STANDS FOREVER." ~ ISAIAH 40:7

Since the drought of 2016 a Board Certified Arborist has been inspecting and treating the tree with the hope of prolonging its life. A few weeks ago the tree was removed, however, its legacy will carry

forward.

I have been in contact with Cliff Spencer of Alabama Sawyer. He will mill the massive trunk into sizable lumber that will

CONTINUED ON PG 5

FEATURING

Experience art and music for comfort and healing **PG 4**

CELEBRATE

Marsha Harbin is retiring on March 31 **PG 6**

LEARN

An update from the PNC **PG 8**

MISSION

Be a blessing to others during Covid-19 **PG 9**

UPCOMING events

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

JANUARY

- Jan 1** Happy New Year! Church offices closed.
- Jan 6** Epiphany begins
- Jan 13** Children's musical rehearsals begin, Virtual
- Jan 24** Ask the Pastor Series begins, Virtual
- Jan 27** IPC RoundTable hosted by IPC Deacons, Virtual
- Jan 31-Feb.7** Religious Arts Festival, Virtual,
See page 4

FEBRUARY

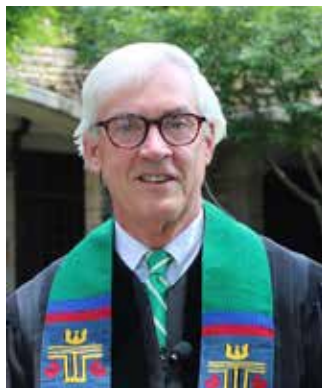
- Feb 14** Annual Congregational Meeting
- Feb 14-Mar 27** Lenten Grace Groups, Virtual
- Feb 17** Ash Wednesday
- Feb 21** First Sunday of Lent

MARCH

- Mar 10** Deadline for Easter Lily Memorials,
Envelope enclosed
- Mar 14** Daylight saving time begins
- Mar 21** Officer ordination/installation
- Mar 28** Palm Sunday

CONSIDER THIS

Why Faith Formation and Not Christian Education?



Dear friends,

If you haven't already, you will be hearing much about the term "Faith Formation." There are several theories about cognitive, emotional, and faith formation and how we grow throughout life (hopefully) in all these ways. The point is that we continue to form new and more complex ways to understand God, the world, and our sense of self as we grow.

Our goal, as Ephesians 3:17-19 reminds us, "is that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with the fullness of God."

Yes, it takes a lifetime of being formed and reformed until we are "filled with the fullness of God" through the love of Christ. It is worth the journey.

When I look back at my own faith formation I can say that it fits the classic "**belong, believe, behave**" model. Each verb focuses on an important part of faith development. Turns out different churches or denominations tend to emphasize one more than others. Some push "**belief**" and often they are more evangelical, but not always. Mainline Presbyterians do the belief thing too. Some push "**belonging**" and often they are more contemporary (seeker) churches. Some push "**behaving**" and they can be either more conservative (no drinking, dancing, etc.) or more liberal (outreach and social justice).

My own formation started in the Methodist church for baptism as an infant through confirmation in 4th grade. Our parents were responsible for taking us, and as I remember my sense of church was that I "**belonged.**"

Then we moved, and for practical reasons joined a Presbyterian church in 7th grade. Later I joined my own church (Presbyterian) as a young adult at 24 and grew in faith through Bible study, theology and worship as I learned what I "believed."

This led to teaching youth and young adults until I decided I was "called" (whatever that means), then seminary, ordination and ministry at 34. As I look back on that time I have to say that the emphasis on "**believing**" through good study, and theological thought moved me the most.

This emphasis on doctrine and dogma "belief" lasted a while but life being life, I was forced to adapt to new beliefs along the way if I wanted to keep my faith. I figured out that faith is not something that we learn and know so much as it is relational. Our faith is formed through trust, hope, and love, which continue to evolve. I'm aware that the older I become, the less I "know" of God's mystery and magnificence and the more I must simply "trust."

Now it seems I am more in the place, of "**behaving.**" While learning how to behave begins in pre-kindergarten, for some of us it takes longer. I've discovered in my life at least that when I "try" to behave according to the way Jesus taught (love of God and neighbor, forgiveness, reconciliation, gratitude, gentleness, kindness, compassion, care of the least, etc.) the more faith I seem to have. The more I try to behave like Jesus the more like Jesus I feel. Don't get me wrong, I'm a million miles from behaving like Jesus, but remember he said, "If you had faith as much as a mustard seed..."

For me, at least, my faith formation has moved through the avenue of **belonging... believing... and behaving...** But not cleanly. I go back and forth. The point is that it moves, it changes, it continues to form and reform. Such is faith.

Our goal for “Faith Formation” is really the same as our goal for life: to be “formed” in the way of Christ so that we are moving toward not just “**belonging, believing, and behaving,**” but “being.” Just “being”—still, aware, and responsible to the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Maybe this is why the early Christians were called “the people of the Way.”

Gratefully,



Steve Goyer
Interim Pastor

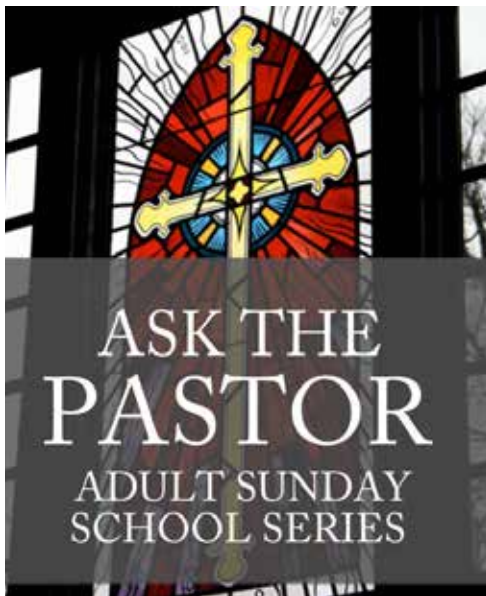
welcome TO IPC



Lindsay Jones
New Staff
Director of Communications



Nick Mathes
New Staff
Media Production Intern

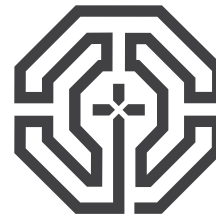


NEW ADULT CLASS

Virtually connect with your community of faith each Sunday at 10 am.

A new Sunday School opportunity to reacquaint, the new class began Jan. 24 and will continue each Sunday during the Lenten season as a place where we can gather to catch up and support one another.

Sign up online at ipc-usa.org > connect



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

JOINING IPC

If you are new to IPC or considering a new church home, we would be delighted for you to contact us.

Stacy Pulliam
Engagement and Assimilation Coordinator
205 933-3690
spulliam@ipc-usa.org

Cindy Shaw
Assistant Engagement and Assimilation Coordinator
205 933-3696
cshaw@ipc-usa.org

2021 RELIGIOUS ARTS FESTIVAL

BY DR. JEFF MCLELLAND, DIRECTOR OF MUSIC & FINE ARTS

The 50th Annual Religious Arts Festival takes place January 31-February 7, 2021. This year's Festival, "Comfort, Connections, and Healing," is offered in a virtual format with all programs and services linked online at ipc-usa.org.

On Sunday, January 31, a **Service of Comfort and Healing** will be offered from the beautiful setting of our sanctuary. You will be afforded the opportunity of feasting in the music sounds of many timbres, including bells, chimes, organ, vocal chant, and other instruments of the orchestra. The visual aura of the stained glass at that time of twilight is a rare feast for the eyes. The comforting prayers, readings, and poetry offered will be a balm to your soul.

Monday and Tuesday, February 1-2, features video presentations **Sacred Spaces of Birmingham** that are filmed and produced by Zachary Simon. Interviews featuring various religious traditions and important connections with the history of Birmingham, as well as a visual feast of many architectural treasures of our city highlight 16th Street Baptist Church, the Cathedral of St. Paul, St. Symeon Orthodox Church, and Temple Emanu-El.

Thursday, February 4, is the usual night



PHOTO: TEMPLE EMANU-EL



for the annual Festival Banquet. This year features an elegant array of comfort food in the form of a **Banquet-in-a-Box** (\$15) prepared by Kim Martin for purchase and pick up at the church. Participants are invited to serve their meals at home and to join together via Zoom for fellowship and toasts. The program for the evening will be featured on YouTube. **Anne and Emmett** is a William Carey University Theatre production about Anne Frank and Emmett Till. The play is partially supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the

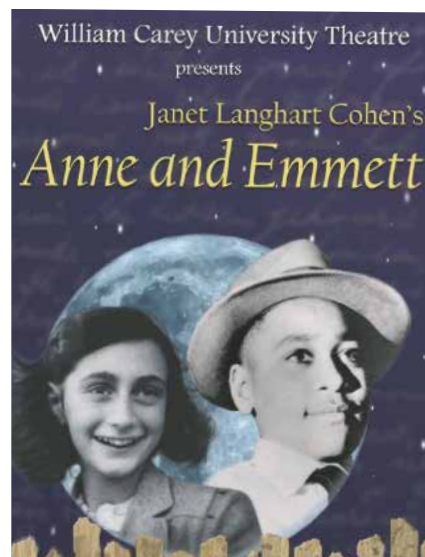


PHOTO: ANNE AND EMMETT

Mississippi Humanities Council, and is nominated for national awards. It is a very serious, powerful, and poignant look at the atrocities against the Jews during WWII as juxtaposed with the lynching of Emmett Till in Money, Mississippi, in 1955.

Friday, February 5, features duo classical guitarists Miroslav Lončar and Natasha Klasinc-Lončar. Originally from Croatia, this husband and wife team reside in Washington D.C. and perform nationally to great acclaim.

Sunday, February 7, original music for piano, strings, voices, poetry and multimedia closes the gala. **Glimpses of Grief and Glee** will be a concert of original chamber music composed by Amy Aberg McLelland. A musical journey through many common experiences many of us our experiencing during these challenging times from cabin fever and a desire to travel, to fear, grief, hope, faith the program will also feature the debut of a commissioned poem by Elinor Ann Walker. Additionally, the concert will afford employment to professional musicians and members of the Alabama Symphony Orchestra during the pandemic shutdowns.

EVENTS

Events will stream and be archived on YouTube, Facebook and IPC's website. Search @IPC Birmingham.

be repurposed at a later date. Some possible uses for the wood could be for future furniture needs or to make wooden items for ministry fundraisers.

With the removal of the tree, there are already conversations about planting a suitable tree in that area to replace it. In December of 2020 Session approved a proposal to study the costs and design for future columbarium needs. The location for the new columbarium is proposed to be in the area of the former tree.

The grand Willow Oak at IPC reminds me of the cycle of life we all face at some point in time. Isaiah 40:7 tells us that “the grass withers, and the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.”

Our hope is in the unchanging, unfailing love of the Father and His word that we cling to in uncertain times, which gives us confidence to face the future.

IPC GARDEN COMMITTEE

Garden Fund

Independent Presbyterian Church has a long, rich history of beautifully landscaped green spaces and gardens.

To support these lovely spaces the IPC Garden Fund was created in the Foundation in 2018 for the purpose of creating and enhancing the gardens of IPC. The Garden Committee, a sub-committee of the House and Properties Ministry team, is responsible for the care of the gardens. This committee is made up of landscape designers, landscape architects and others with a gift for horticulture.

In consultation with landscape service providers, these men and women work to improve the look, the feel and the use of the gardens at 3100 and 3116 Highland Avenue.

The next time you admire a particular area of the church landscape, know that the Garden Committee is working behind the scenes to keep the look fresh and appropriate.

The Garden Fund is open to financial contributions. You can contact the finance department to make a gift.



ON IPC'S CAMPUS, A STONE ENTRANCE TO THE PATIO BEHIND THE GARAGE OF HIGHLAND HALL.



IPC'S LABYRINTH AND PRAYER GARDEN AREA IS A PLACE TO BEHOLD THE BEAUTY OF GOD AND SEEK GOD'S COMPANIONSHIP.



THE LABYRINTH AND PRAYER GARDEN ARE NOT ONLY A SPACE FOR IPC MEMBERS TO WALK AND PRAY, BUT ALSO A WAY TO REACH OUT TO THE COMMUNITY AROUND US AS WE EXTEND AN INVITATION TO ANYONE WHO MAY WISH TO COME AND PRAY.

IN APPRECIATION

Hear from IPC Members

“ I think all of our lives have been brighter by knowing Marsha. She has been a steadfast presence at our Church, and she gets things done with grace, positivity, and humility. We all love Marsha. Job well done!”

Beth Adams, IPC Foundation

“ Every good organization needs one person who 'makes the trains run on time.'”

For IPC, that person is Marsha! She juggles so many things at once and never gets flustered or irritated. Can we please clone her?

Seriously, what a true blessing she has been to us at IPC, and we thank the Lord for her and wish her many happy years of retirement!”

Beth Hillhouse, IPC Stewardship

“ Marsha always tries to help and does so with a smile. I think it will be difficult, if not impossible, to replace her.”

Donna Smith, IPC Foundation Grants

SERVICE RECOGNITION

Marsha Harbin Is Retiring

BY DENISE MOORE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & IPC FOUNDATION



After 35 years of continuous dedicated service, Marsha Harbin is retiring.

To say that we are going to miss Marsha is an understatement.

She is the backbone of the IPC Foundation, and everyone knows that she’s the custodian of our membership data and knows everything about all of us.

How can we possibly survive without her?

Many of us have tried to reason with her and convince her that

she’s too young to retire but to no avail. So we have until March 31 to say our goodbyes, as she has graciously given us until then to find her replacement.

Replacing Marsha is no easy task. Think about it — she was barely past her teens when she first started with IPC as the Membership Secretary in 1985. Shortly thereafter, she added Systems Operator to her title.

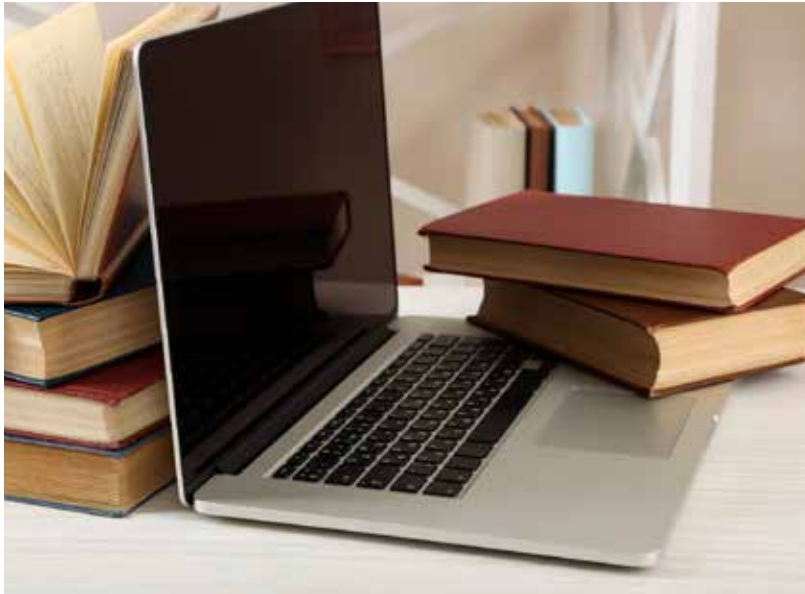
Marsha was essentially IPC’s first “help desk” assistant, as computer maintenance fell to her. She also maintained IPC’s membership database, which continues today.

She currently serves as the administrator for our membership system (ShelbyNext) and is responsible for ensuring all 2,000+ member records are accurate, including name, address, spouse, phone numbers, emails, committee information, etc., etc.

She manages our pledge campaign and all giving for both the Church and the Foundation. She is very involved with the grant-making process for the Foundation, including keeping track of approximately 150 grant requests received throughout the year and distributions totaling \$2.7 million.

Needless to say, there’s probably not one member at IPC who hasn’t had contact with Marsha Harbin.

So please be sure to give her a call or reach out when you get a chance to let her know how much she is loved and will be missed.



CONNECTING WITH IPC VIRTUALLY

Worship, Learn, Serve With Us Online

We're continuing to offer 11 am Sunday worship, classes and other fellowship opportunities online. Here's how you can easily engage in the life and ministry of IPC through our livestream and other online offerings:

Subscribe to our YouTube channel

Go to youtube.com/ipcbirmingham. Log into your account or create a new one. Click the "subscribe" button, then the bell icon. You will want "all" selected to ensure you receive email alerts whenever new videos, including classes and devotionals, are posted. If you don't wish to subscribe, you can go straight to our livestream at youtube.com/user/ipcbirmingham/live. Please stay on that page. The video will automatically start once the 11 am Sunday service or one of our other services begins.

Engage with us on social media

Like or follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn. Find us @IPCbirmingham.

Subscribe to IPC emails using the link on our website

Every Monday at 8 am, separate emails go out to our youth and our families. On Thursdays at 5 pm, look for the congregational eUpdate. We also send out an email at 7 am every Sunday with all the information you need for Sunday morning worship and class, including blue links to click to take you directly to the livestream and classes. Not receiving the emails? Check your junk/spam folders and contact Director of Communications Lindsay Jones at ljones@ipc-usa.org for further support.

As a reminder

11 am Sunday worship services, funerals and many other events are livestreamed on YouTube and Facebook. Our bulletin, attendance form and online gift form are posted to YouTube and online at ipc-usa.org/worship.

BRIEFS

Easter Lilies

Remember and honor loved ones by making an Easter Lily Contribution by March 10. We'll include the names of loved ones being honored by your gift in the Easter worship bulletin.

Envelopes are enclosed in this mailing. They will also be available at the receptionist desk. Mail donations to the church or return to the receptionist desk.

Contact: Sandra Putman, sputman@ipc-usa.org, 205 933-1830. To ensure names of loved ones are included in the bulletin, please make sure your contribution is received at the church by the deadline.

Re-Opening Task Force

IPC's House & Properties Re-opening Task Force continues to regularly meet to evaluate current trends in Covid-19 and monitor data and information.

We remain hopeful that the numbers will improve to levels that permit us to gather again for in-person worship services soon.

You can always find the latest updates and response to Covid-19 at ipc-usa.org > Covid-19.



IPC'S PRAYER SHAWL KNITTING GROUP KNITTED AND PACKED UP SCARVES FOR FIRST LIGHT IN DECEMBER.

**FROM THE PASTOR NOMINATING
COMMITTEE (PNC)**

PNC Update to the Congregation

**Blessings for the new year from the Pastor Nominating
Committee**

Despite the uptick in Covid-19 cases in Jefferson County and beyond, we have been meeting weekly as a committee both in person and via Zoom. We have been meeting with our ministers and staff, listening to their needs and assessments of the needs of IPC.

We have also been meeting with candidates by Zoom and have been traveling for personal conversation as well. We are excited for where we are in our search. We trust God is leading us forward, always.

We would like to thank the congregation for the wonderful responses and participation in the survey we sent to everyone. We had a 40% response rate. Our expert at New South Research, who compiled IPC's results and has analyzed many other church surveys, tells us this is an impressive response percentage.

The results have been so helpful to the Committee in our discussions with candidates, and in identifying the strengths in ministry that our congregation, overall, is looking for. New South has agreed to make the presentation of the survey results to the Session when it can be safely done in person.

We look forward to sharing it with the congregation as a whole, as well, and are working with New South in preparation of a synopsis report of the results in the meantime.

We understand that this has been an uncertain and sometimes challenging time for all of us at IPC, but it has also been an inspirational time for the PNC. We have come together and grown as a committee, working on behalf of our wonderful church family.

We appreciate all the prayers and help we have received from so many during this process. We thank Steve Goyer for his leadership and support as our Interim Pastor. We are dedicated to each other and to IPC moving forward faithfully in this spiritual journey, and in the direction God is leading us.

Faithfully yours,

Teresa T. Pulliam, Chair PNC
Beth Adams
Sandy Bean Jr.
Susan Dulin
Robert Posey
Oliver Williams III
Wendell Allen
Betsy Holloway
George Taylor III
Emily Wykle

CHILDREN MINISTRY

Spring Musical

Open to all K-6th graders, More Power to You! is a 30-40 minute virtual play practice with Miss Beth and a Bible lesson with Miss Beth and Miss Catherine. We will meet by Zoom on Wednesday afternoons at 5 pm through March 10, so make sure to sign up.

We will present our play to the IPC Congregation on our YouTube channel later this spring.

**Questions? Contact Beth Middleton,
bmiddleton@ipc-usa.org.**



IPC FAMILIES CELEBRATED ADVENT ON DEC. 5 AT OUR ANNUAL ADVENT WORKSHOP AT HIGHLAND HALL.

Bible Blast

As we find new ways to connect with IPC families in safe ways, we invite our 3rd and 4th graders to attend Bible Blast—a virtual Bible skills-building lesson series.

This new virtual offering will meet via zoom for three consecutive Sundays from 4-4:45 pm starting Jan. 24.

**Questions? Contact Kay Roller,
kroller@ipc-usa.org, or Catherine
Goudreau, cgoudreau@ipc-usa.org.**



BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS

Volunteer opportunities

Help Feed the Homeless. We're helping Highland UMC provide 50 sack lunches every Tuesday for the homeless.

Buy a Meal, Share a Meal. We're partnering with Bogue's and Rojo to help feed people who are suffering from food insecurity due to Covid-19. You are encouraged to purchase a meal from Bogue's or Rojo for your family and pay it forward by purchasing another for a family in need.

Fill Our Blessing Boxes. Help us continue refilling our Blessing Boxes and Food Pantry. Although the Food Pantry is closed to visitors due to Covid-19, please consider making a monetary gift or donating food items and hygiene supplies.

Provide and Serve Dinner at First Light. Participate by preparing the meal at home and delivering for the staff to serve; ordering a meal from a restaurant, delivering and serving or arranging for delivery for First Light staff to serve; or preparing a meal in the shelter kitchen and staying as a group to serve. 2021 dates: Jan. 31-Feb. 6, April 18-24, and June 20-26.

IPC Social Services

Please consider making a gift to assist IPC Social Services. Here are some examples of how we are using these funds during the Covid-19 crisis:

- **A gift of \$45** to IPC Social Services will purchase a voucher to feed a family of four for a week to ten days, providing them with canned, boxed and dry goods and a box of frozen meat, vegetables, and fresh dairy, eggs and bread.
- **A gift of \$20** will help families purchase essential items they are not allowed to buy using their food stamps, such as diapers, wipes, toilet paper, paper towels and cleaning supplies.
- **A gift of \$30** will buy a gasoline card to help those still working during this crisis get to their employment.
- **A gift of any size**, pooled with other gifts, can assist people in paying utility bills, rent, and in purchasing prescription medications and other needed medical equipment.

Explore these opportunities and find additional ways to support our neighbors in need online at ipc-usa.org/serve/missions.

EARTH CARE

Eco Tips from IPC's Earth Care Team



As Christians, we are called to be good stewards of God's creation. IPC is continuing to put new eco-friendly practices in place and to educate you about ways to protect the Earth.

To help our congregation learn about being good stewards, tips from our Earth Care Team are below and you can watch for new tips in future communications.

1. The #5 plastic recycling at the Homewood Recreation Center is no longer available. Please do not take your #5s there. At this time, there is no place to take #5s.
2. Kinetic Recycling is a business offering curbside recycling for glass. Find their website at kineticrecycling.com to subscribe.

If you wish for further information, contact Susan Haskell, snhaskell@bellsouth.net.

PRESBYTERIAN WILL BE THE FIRST WOMAN TO SERVE AS U.S. HOUSE CHAPLAIN

BY MIKE FERGUSON, PRESBYTERIAN NEWS SERVICE

❗❗ (PNS) Retired Rear Admiral Margaret Grun Kibben, a Presbyterian who served as chief of chaplains in the U.S. Navy and chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps, was named by Speaker Nancy Pelosi as Chaplain of the U.S. House of Representatives.

According to a news release from Pelosi's office, Kibben is the first woman to be named House Chaplain in the 231-year history of the position. She succeeds Father Pat Conroy, who is retiring.

Pelosi said Kibben's "integrity, experience and patriotism will serve the Congress and the country well as she ministers to the needs of Members."

Kibben entered active duty through the Navy's Theological Student Program. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Goucher College in Towson, Maryland; Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Princeton Theological Seminary; and a Master's in National Security and Strategic Studies from the U.S. Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island.

In her final active duty assignment in the Navy, Kibben was the Navy's 26th Chief of Chaplains. Before that, she was the 18th Chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps. She also served as the senior chaplain in Afghanistan.

Her assignments have included the U.S. Naval Academy and Fleet Chaplain of the U.S. Third Fleet as well as chaplain positions at Marine bases at Quantico, Virginia, and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Her personal awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit (two awards), Bronze Star, Meritorious Service Medal (three awards) and Navy Commendation Medal (three awards).

In 2018, she addressed the 223rd General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) on the day she celebrated her 35th anniversary as a Navy chaplain.



REAR ADMIRAL MARGARET GRUN KIBBEN ADDRESSES COMMISSIONERS TO THE 223RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN 2018. PHOTO BY: DANNY BOLIN

Military chaplains, she told commissioners that day, serve not only people from diverse religious traditions but also have many people in their charge who have no religious background. "Many men and women we deal with have never darkened the door of a church, a mosque or a synagogue," she said.

Nevertheless, Kibben said, chaplains are called to "care for each soul in our command and our service." She said chaplains have a unique opportunity to provide a listening ear to military personnel in need. "We have access to every space, every place and every office where people serve, and can come alongside them," Kibben said.

Chaplains, she said, are expected to provide spiritual nurture for people of all ranks, including senior leadership. In addition to serving as a "moral compass" for senior officers, chaplains, she said, are the only people in whom they can confide when they feel

lonely or afraid.

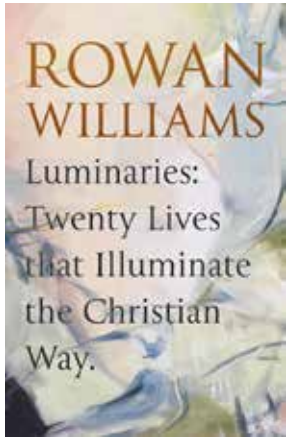
Kibben told commissioners that when young people leave their congregations to serve in the military, they can count on chaplains to help with their spiritual needs. She encouraged those present to suggest military chaplaincy as a vocational option for people who believe they are called to ministry.

"If there is any dissonance there, forgive me, but think about it very deeply," she said. "Christ calls us to serve the people who need it most."

PCUSA BOOK REVIEWS

Luminaries: Twenty Lives that Illuminate the Christian Way by Rowan Williams

REVIEWED BY ROY HOWARD, PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK



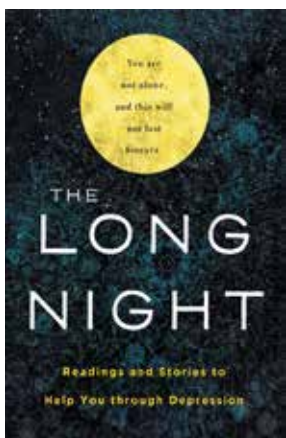
This is a book about stories. Rowan Williams has chosen 20 people from across the centuries who have proven to be beacons of illumination for the rest of us. He is candid about the daunting task of choosing these rather than others: “a book at least ten times the length of this one could be put together and still be incomplete.”

Yet in these figures, we see glimpses of how the story of God is enacted in human beings, some with glaring faults who are nevertheless demonstrations of the light of Christ. Williams writes, “The Christian faith is the practice of making sense of lives that make sense of the world.” All of these stories in some way reveal Jesus’ story among us. They also compel us to think about our own stories and how they are making sense – or not – of our lives. This is a book of history spanning 20 centuries with Williams providing comments drawn from sermons, lectures and pastoral talks on each figure, beginning with St. Paul and concluding with Archbishop Oscar Romero.

“These are people whose lives seem to me to be ‘theological’ lives, lives worth thinking about because they make sense in often critical, disparate or unusual situations.” In his academic writings Williams can be maddeningly dense. In his pastoral writings, like this collection, he is winsome and clear, providing wise encouragement for those wanting to know the Christian way and walk in it with faith and courage.

The Long Night: Readings and Stories to Help You through Depression by Jessica Kantrowitz

REVIEWED BY JENN ZATOPEK, PRESBYTERIAN OUTLOOK



Pastor and first-time author Jessica Kantrowitz has written a soulful manual for surviving depression and chronic illness. I wish this were required reading for all to help dispel the terrible myths about depression that poison our beloved community. Her artful memoir “The Long Night” tackles a difficult subject with warmth and deep compassion, filling a great need for the lost and despairing among us.

In the grand tradition of spiritual writers like Henri Nouwen and Barbara Brown Taylor, Kantrowitz’s nonfiction volume reads more like an insightful collection of letters from a cherished friend. She pulls no punches about the devastating effects of depression, but first, she calls out to us through poetry: “Come for a walk with me, my friend, I know you are tired. I know the sorrow has settled into your bones like the ache from an old wound.” We are invited into Kantrowitz’s reassuring hands as she aptly identifies what it is like to go through the hell of depression and survive.

Her earnest wrestling to make sense of her despair is dearly appreciated for she serves as a beacon of hope for the curveballs life throws. Kantrowitz deftly explores a childhood filled with emotional upheaval and wonderings on where God resides in the midst of so much loss. We peer into her heartfelt reckoning when we read that God gave her empathy in the pain, rather than a quick fix to soothe her sorrows. While this acknowledgment is no stranger to us through popular writers like Anne Lamott and Glennon Doyle, reading a Christian pastor validate the pain of so many is breathtaking in its welcome.



INDEPENDENT
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

3100 Highland Avenue
Birmingham, AL 35205

WINDOW (USPS255-220)
Published Monthly
Office of Publication
Independent Presbyterian Church
3100 Highland Avenue South
Birmingham, AL 35205-1408
Periodical Postage Paid at
Birmingham, Alabama
POSTMASTER: Send address
change to the WINDOW,
3100 Highland Avenue
Birmingham, AL 35205-1408

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Holy Week

MARCH 28 - APRIL 4, 2021



Sunday, March 28
Palm Sunday

Thursday, April 1
Maundy Thursday

Friday, April 2
Good Friday

Sunday, April 4
Easter
Christ the Lord is risen!
Celebrate the good news with us.

**Watch for more information about this
year's services.**

ipc-usa.org > [worship](#) > [services](#)