

THE WINDOW



INDEPENDENT
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WINTER 2020 | VOL 72 | ISSUE 1

EXPLORING PCUSA

BY REV. BRIAN LAYS, ASSOCIATE PASTOR AND DIRECTOR OF CONGREGATIONAL CARE

At its meeting on September 8, the Session tasked the Christian Education Ministry Team with putting together a class about our denomination, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). The objective of the class is to address a range of questions that have been posed about the denomination over the past year. Some questions are simply a matter of structure: How is the PCUSA governed? Who makes the decisions and how? Other questions relate to theology: What does it mean to be “Reformed?” How do Presbyterians in our denomination read and interpret scripture? Still, other questions relate to various concerns about political positions and policies the denomination has pursued, especially over the last decade.

The CE Ministry Team presented an outline for this course that was approved at the November 19 Session meeting. A variety of clergy and speakers will lead the various classes over 12 weeks on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights this Winter/Spring. We will cover as many of the subjects that have been brought to our attention as possible. Generally speaking,



we will cover the history and theology of the denomination, the website, governing structure, finances, and the denomination's political engagement and upcoming overtures to the General Assembly. In addition, some time has been allocated to address other questions that arise along the way. We don't want to overlook any

questions.

This class is just one of many steps our leaders and staff will take to keep everyone more informed about denominational matters. The Window will have four additional pages starting with this issue,

CONTINUED ON PG 3

FEATURING

Experience the art, music, and food of Scotland **PG 4**

FEATURING

Witness how PW are spreading joy **PG 6-7**

LEARN

Delve into our faith, the PCUSA **PG 9- 11**

MISSION

How the IPC Foundation is changing the world **PG 6-7**

UPCOMING events

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

JANUARY

- 1 Wed** Happy New Year! Church offices closed. No chapel. ❖
- 8 Wed** Wednesday nights resume ❖ ❖
Children's musical rehearsals begin ❖ ❖
- 12 Sun** Officer ordination/installation ❖
- 18-20 Sa-M** Youth Winter Retreat, Gatlinburg ❖
(Jan. 19: No Youth Group)
- 24-25 F-Sa** PW Retreat at IPC with the Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan ❖
- 26 Sun** Organ recital with Dr. Jeff McLelland, 4 pm ❖❖

FEBRUARY

- 2 Sun** Annual Congregational Meeting ❖
- 3-9 M-Su** Religious Arts Festival ❖ ❖
- 16 Sun** Mercedes Marathon. No morning worship or Sunday School. ❖
Valentine's Party at Kirkwood ❖
- 23 Sun** Focus on Faith speaker Tom Are, Jr. of Village Priarie Presbyterian Church will preach during 8:45/11 am worship and lecture at 10 am. ❖ ❖
- 26 Wed** Ash Wednesday Service, 12/6:30 pm ❖

MARCH

- 1 Sun** Evensong, 4 pm ❖
- 7 Sat** PW Spring Gathering with the Rev. Eugenia Gamble ❖
- 15 Sun** Children's musical, 10 am ❖
Confirmation, 11 am ❖
- 16 Mon** Deadline for Easter lilies ❖
- 18 Wed** Final Wednesday night ❖ ❖
- 20-28 F-Sa** IPC Choir Tour in France ❖
- 21-29 Sa-Sun** Chiapas Mission Trip ❖
- 29 Sun** Guest preacher the Rev. Dr. Alton Pollard III, president of Louisville Theological Seminary ❖

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

CONSIDER THIS

Together We Can Do So Much



Welcome to 2020! In years past, I've asked you to use this new beginning to resolve to find ways to use your talents at Independent Presbyterian Church. But my request is a bit different this year: let's resolve to work together.

Helen Keller once said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

Over the Christmas season, we witnessed how people can come together for a mutual goal and make a difference. Members and friends of IPC came together giving more and making campaigns, like the Harvest for Hunger Food Drive, the Holiday House Tour and STAIR coat drive, even more successful. You can see a bigger

snapshot of your holiday giving on page 6 of this Window.

The quote from Helen Keller came to mind as I read recent IPC Foundation reports about grant recipients and how that money is helping the Presbyterian Home for Children and the Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind build safer, more affordable homes for hearing and visually impaired adults in our area. Read more about the Foundation's impact on our community on pages 6 and 7.

We are all here together because of a common faith. In 2020, we plan to provide more opportunities to learn more about the PCUSA. Rev. Brian Lays is planning a new Sunday school class. You can read a letter from him on the cover. We also have included resources to help you navigate PCUSA's website, download the prayer app, learn more about PCUSA's mission work in Iraq and see how our Presbyterian Women are providing more opportunities for our women to explore their faith. You'll find these stories throughout this issue. From now on, the Window will be four pages longer to include more stories and information about PCUSA. We hope you will enjoy the content!

All the Best,

Bill

William J. Carl II, *Senior Pastor*



IPC KNITTING MINISTRY PACKING HOMEMADE SCARVES FOR FIRST LIGHT

mostly devoted to coverage of the PCUSA. The Session will more thoroughly engage with General Assembly decisions and report back to the congregation about significant changes. Some of our denomination's publications, including The Presbyterian Mission Outlook and Presbyterians Today are available in the Parlor and in Highland Hall, as well as our daily devotional, These Days. And, if you want to start engaging the theology of our denomination right away, check out the book, "Presbyterian Questions, Presbyterian Answers" by Donald K McKim!

Whatever your view of our denomination, we hope you will take the time to engage with the class, and we hope to answer your questions in due time! As always, the clergy are happy to speak with anyone individually who would like to discuss matters right away.

PCUSA DAILY PRAYER APP

This app from the Office of Theology and Worship provides simple, yet rich devotional resources for morning, midday, evening, and close of day. Each service includes psalms and readings from the confessions. Other elements include opening and closing words, biblical canticles, a thanksgiving for light and a prayer of confession. An advanced features menu allows users to customize which elements appear.

The app is available through the Google Play and Apple app store.

PCUSA DAILY LECTIONARY LIST

The two-year lectionary comes from the Book of Common Worship for personal study and reflection, as well as daily prayer in individual or small group settings. In a two-year period, this lectionary allows users to read through the Old Testament once and the New Testament twice. Two morning psalms and two evening psalms are provided for each day.

The printable list is available at presbyterianmission.org > ministries > worship > lectionary.

FEATURED PCUSA CONTENT

- Presbyterian Women at IPC PG 8
- Navigating the PCUSA website PG 9
- PCUSA Missions in Iraq PG 10- 11
- Presbytery News PG 11

welcome MEMBERS



Elizabeth Anderson
New Member



Isaiah Cruz
New Member



Bob McKenna
New Member



James Walker
New Member



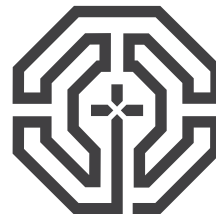
Matt and Sarah Moody
New Members



Elizabeth, Charles and Luci Smith
New Members



Bubba, Ginny and Emma Willings
New Members



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

RELIGIOUS ARTS FESTIVAL

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

The 49th Annual Religious Arts Festival will be presented February 3-9 and will bring us to the sights, sounds, and tastes of Scotland!

On Monday, February 3, the Rev. Susan Clayton will present a lecture on "Thin Places: An Iona Experience." The term "thin places" comes from the mystical world of the Celtic Christians who were deeply connected to the natural world and considered every aspect of life to be infused with the presence of the Divine.

On Tuesday, February 4, dancers and pipers from the Glencoe School of Scottish Highland Dance will be here to present a demonstration on the art of Highland Dance. Scottish dances, ancient in origin dating back to the 11th century, were expressions of both personal and social emotions - joy, victory in battle or the hunt, courtship, or perhaps symbolic of one's work.

On Thursday, February 6, the annual Festival Banquet will be a Burns Supper - a celebration of the life and poetry of the poet Robert Burns, the author of many Scottish poems. Scottish folk singer Ed Miller will be leading the festivities. Ed has been hailed as "one of the finest singers to come out of the Scottish Folksong Revival." Originally from Edinburgh, he is now based in Austin, Texas. The Great Hall will be a festive atmosphere with fancy decorations, luscious food, toasts, poetry, bagpipes and singing all in the Scottish tradition. There may even be a special appearance from Ye Olde Haggis! So, don your tartans and come ye laddies and lassies to join us for a merry celebration!

The Festival will culminate on Sunday, February 9 with a Kirkin' o' the Tartans at 11:00 am worship. Complete with pipers, drums and singing, everyone is invited to bring an item of their clan tartan for a blessing on your family.

A special concert on Sunday afternoon will feature The Orlando Consort from England. This will be the fourth appearance



DANCERS AND MUSICIANS FROM GLENCOE SCHOOL OF SCOTTISH HIGHLAND DANCE



IONA ABBEY, SCOTLAND WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF REV. CLAYTON'S LECTURE

at IPC of this male quartet who will perform Scottish music of the 14th century and the choral work Scattered Rhymes by Tarik O'Regan with the IPC Camerata. The Orlando Consort has made an international reputation in the field of medieval and renaissance vocal music. The Consort regularly tours throughout the UK, Europe and the USA, including BBC Proms, Carnegie Hall, Edinburgh & Lucerne Festivals and has recorded for Deutsche Grammophon and Harmonia Mundi USA, winning two Gramophone Awards.



PHOTO: THE ORLANDO CONSORT

RAF TICKETS

All of the Religious Arts Festival events are free and open to the public, except for the Religious Arts Festival Banquet. Reservations are required for the Burns Supper. Tickets are \$25 per person. They can be purchased by Sunday, Jan. 26 online or by sending a check to the Music & Fine Arts office.



GREENERY AND FLOWERS ARRANGED BY THE GUILD FOR THE 70TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY HOUSE TOUR

GLORIFYING GOD

How to Join the Guild

IPC's Guild was authorized by the Session in 1940 to perform duties associated with the care of the Sanctuary and its worship and sacred services. Guild members work behind the scenes to arrange sanctuary flowers, polish brass, bake bread and set up for Holy Communion, schedule acolytes, serve as hostesses for weddings, funerals and baptisms, make palm crosses for Palm Sunday, decorate the Christmas tree and serve as Holiday House hostesses. This dedicated group of 70 elected women are expected to make their Guild duties a priority.

Meetings are at 10 am on second Mondays, excluding summers. Members must attend four meetings a year. Each member also serves on at least two Guild committees. Many duties are performed on weekends and holidays. New members agree to a five-year commitment, which can be renewed for a total service of 10 years. If you would like to serve through the Guild, look for more information in upcoming eUpdates.

BRIEFS

Children's Musical

We're forecasting 100% Chance of Rain in Highland Hall on Sunday, March 15. The children's spring musical is a wildly rhythmic musical about why God chose Noah to build an ark, why God had to flood Earth and the wonderful promise that came from it all!

All K-6th Graders are encouraged to participate. Rehearsals will be on Wednesdays from 5:45- 7:15 pm beginning January 8, 2020. Dinner for the children following drop off will now be an option. We are also forecasting fun, so make sure to sign up online.

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

Easter Lilies

Remember and honor loved ones by making an Easter Lily Contribution by March 16. We'll include the names of loved ones being honored by your gift in the Easter worship bulletin. Envelopes will be included in a special March calendar 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, 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.

2020 Mission Trips

Applications are now being accepted for the Youth Chiapas, Mexico Mission Trip May 20- June 7 and the Mwandu Mission Trip August 1- 14. The deadline to fill out an application for the Mwandu trip is January 15. Youth have until February 15 to fill out one. Typically, mission teams from IPC perform some light construction work. To learn more about the trips or to get an application, go to ipc-usa.org > serve > missions > mission trips

SAVE THE
dates

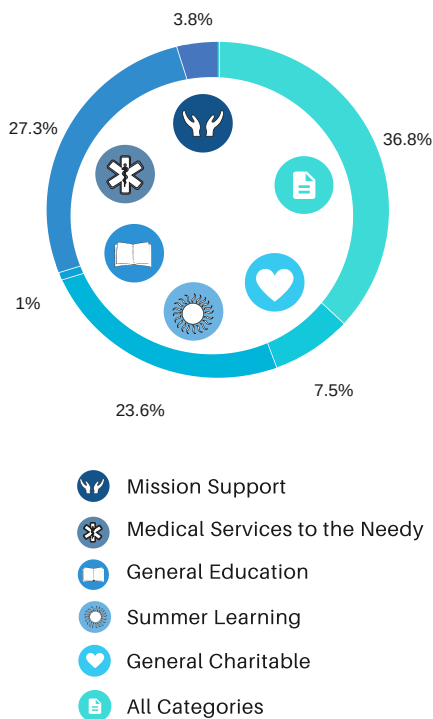
- April 5** Palm Sunday
- April 9** Maundy Thursday Service, 6:30 pm
- April 10** Good Friday Service, 12 pm
- April 12** Easter Sunday Services, 8/9:30/11 am
- April 17** IPC Day School HERO Party
- April 26** Youth & STAIR Sunday
- June 1-5** VBS & BTMP

IPC FOUNDATION

Grants by the Numbers

In overseeing the distribution of IPC Foundation grants, the Grantmaking Committee, chaired by Donna Smith, completed its annual grant cycle in November. The Committee reviewed more than \$3.2 million of requests and decided to do the following:

- Award 102 grants totalling \$1,939,800
- Of that amount, the Youth Grant Team awarded six organizations with grants totalling \$20,000
- 62% of the amount awarded directly impacts the Birmingham area
- 30% helps developing nations
- 6% provides assistance to other parts of Alabama and the U.S.
- Grants provide support for mission support, medical services for the needy, general education, summer learning, and other general charitable assistance.



For a list of grant recipients, go to ipc-usa.org > IPC FDN



IPC DAY SCHOOL STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN HARVEST FOR HUNGER FOOD DRIVE BY BRINGING ITEMS TO CHAPEL

JOINING GOD IN THE WORLD

A Look at Holiday Giving

In preparing for the arrival of the Christ-child, we asked you to be a blessing to others by giving to IPC ministries and other community partners. Thank you for your continued generosity.

- 84 coats were donated to STAIR and LIFT OFF to Learning students. That's 33 more than last year plus the addition of hats and gloves for each child.
- Approximately 200 people volunteered at Holiday House by baking cookies, decorating, driving the shuttle, pouring tea, selling tickets, and serving as hosts in the three homes.
- More than \$26,000 was raised for Children's Fresh Air Farm, STAIR and First Light thanks to the approximately 1,000 people who attended the 70th Holiday House Tour.
- 59 books were given to STAIR students (one book from each tutor)
- 59 stockings were filled and given to STAIR students. Every family also received one food voucher.
- More than \$11,400 was raised for local and international charities through the Giving Tree. (Amount raised as of Dec. 18 publication)
- Ornaments were sold bringing in more than \$1,200 for youth missions.
- Ladies from our Knitting Group and one at First Presbyterian made 102 scarves for First Light.
- Thousands of items were donated during the Harvest for Hunger Food Drive, exceeding the amount raised in 2018 and filling the IPC Food Pantry.
- 50 gift baskets were made for Hayes K-8 teachers and staff.

SAFE HOMES FOR DEAF, BLIND ADULTS

Often, all it takes is one voice to spur change. For former Presbyterian Home for Children executive director Mark Howard, it was the voice of God telling him to take note of available farm land at the back of the campus and the neighboring Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB). President of AIDB Dr. John Mascia heard another voice- that of Helen Keller saying, "One can never consent to creep when one feels the impulse to soar."

Soar is what they did. The two organizations came together to build Union Village, a safe, affordable housing development for blind and deaf adults that gives them freedom to live independently. Right now, the village off Chaffee Street in Talladega has two tiny homes and five group homes. More than 20 adults already call it home. Eventually, Union Village will include 42 tiny homes with gardens, walkways and picnic areas. Each tiny home will be 495 square feet and fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"We want to make it possible to soar for everyone we serve, for them to be independent and achieve personal success, whether they are climbing a mountain or living in their own home," said Mascia.

In January, seven more adults will move into Northington Cottage, a semi-independent living space with seven bedrooms. Two additional tiny homes plan to be built in 2020. One will be named in



RENDERING OF UNION VILLAGE, A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PRESBYTERIAN HOME FOR CHILDREN AND AIDB. PROJECT IS SUPPORTED BY THE IPC FOUNDATION.

honor of the Independent Presbyterian Church Foundation and the Daniel Project for making the homes possible.

"Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing need the opportunity to live in a safe, comfortable and nurturing

environment in the community of their choice," said Donte Little, director of AIDB's Talladega Regional Center.

Union Village residents also receive assistance with employment, advocacy, transportation, and meal delivery.

MAKE A LASTING GIFT TO THE IPC FOUNDATION



Explore giving options online at plannedgiving.ipc-usa.org



Try the new online gift calculator at plannedgiving.ipc-usa.org >resources

MORE THAN FELLOWSHIP

BY PAIGE ALBRIGHT, MODERATOR OF IPC PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

When the Rev. Lucy Turner asked me to serve as moderator of Presbyterian Women, I immediately started planning luncheons, retreats and events. I had no idea that there was so much more. Presbyterian Women work in unexpected ways to build faith and community. The purpose of Presbyterian Women is more than fellowship. We are:

Forgiven and freed by God in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study, to support the mission of the church worldwide, to work for justice and peace and to build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (USA) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom.

Many people have asked, "Who are Presbyterian Women?" YOU! Yes, all of the women of IPC are Presbyterian Women. "What do we do?" Presbyterian Women support ministry through teaching, study, baking, knitting, praying, yoga, centering prayer, grace groups, lectures, luncheons, book swaps, polishing silver and brass, singing, arranging flowers, greeting, and sending notes.

This year, PW hosted a Christmas in July party to kick off our Season of the 70th, celebrating 70 years of the Holiday House Tour. Ladies enjoyed Christmas music and fellowship. PW also started a Free Little Library outside the Lukens Library. Anyone is welcome to take or leave a book. PW started two new Circles groups following the national PW study of Rev. Eugenia Gamble's "Love Carved in Stone" to connect all PW through one study. We are ALL connected. Circle I meets on the second Tuesday morning of each month Sept – May. Circle II meets on the second Sunday of each month following 5 pm worship. The annual Womens' Holiday Luncheon with architect Bobby McAlpine sold out. We ended our 70th annual Holiday House Tour with record attendance



LYDIA CHENEY, JANE CARL, PAIGE ALBRIGHT, PENNEY HARTLINE AT SUMMER PW REGIONAL MEETING IN TUPELO, MS



PW RETREAT WILL BE JAN. 24- 25 WITH THE REV. MARY BEA SULLIVAN

and revenue for The Children's Fresh Air Farm, STAIR, and First Light.

In 2020, we have the Women's Retreat January 24-25 with the Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan speaking on Lent. We are also excited to host the Rev. Gamble for our Spring Gathering with our entire Presbytery and the Presbytery of South Alabama on Saturday, March 7. We will have a morning lecture and luncheon. I attended the Fall Gathering at Westminster Presbyterian and their hospitality moved me to offer to host this event at IPC. If their church can host an amazing gathering why can't we? IPC is the largest church in our Presbytery. It is

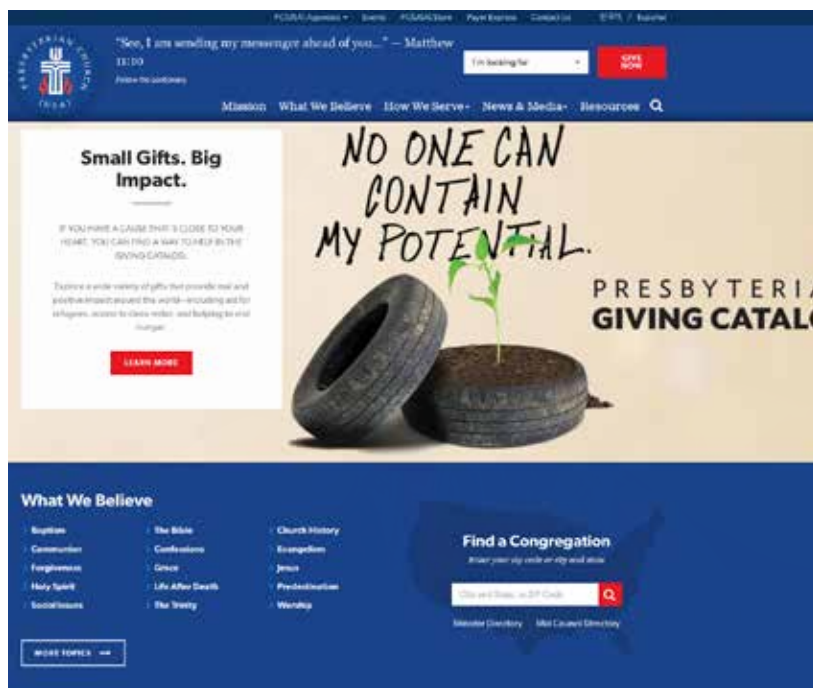


SPRING GATHERING WILL BE MARCH 7 WITH THE REV. EUGENIA GAMBLE

important to be a part of more community gatherings.

"Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality." Romans 12: 10-13.

It's the little things that make a great impact. Why not be kind and spread more joy?



PCUSA WEBSITE

Navigating PCUSA.org

Our denomination has a wealth of online resources available for you whether you are wanting to learn more about our faith, ministries, disaster response, curriculum or recent General Assembly decision. Here's a quick look at how to navigate the site using the main menu bar:

- **MISSIONS:** Click here to learn more about recent PCUSA mission work, view devotions, make a donation to a ministry or project, or sign up for a newsletter.
- **WHAT WE BELIEVE:** This section looks at our church history, theology, social issues, and what makes our faith unique.
- **HOW WE SERVE:** There is so much content to explore in this section including curriculum, worship, interfaith relations, social justice, the Presbyterian Historical Society, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance. In all, there are 18 areas to explore.
- **NEWS & MEDIA:** Looking for an annual report, news or recent blogs? This is where to find it. You can also sign up for newsletters here as well.
- **RESOURCES:** Pre-produced brochures, bulletin inserts, worship aids and videos are available in this section for church use.
- Information about the upcoming 224th General Assembly in Baltimore June 20-27, 2020 can be found at oga.pcusa.org > section > ga > ga
- Learn more about the Presbyterian Panel, including recent studies and how to become involved at presbyterianmission.org > ministries > research-services > presbyterian-panel
- Looking for something else? Click on the magnifying glass at the top right of any page to search for content.

PRESBYTERY NEWS

Highlights from 2019

- Rev. Susan Clayton (pictured below) will end her term as moderator this upcoming February. Ruling elder Bill Stribling from South Highland Presbytery will succeed her.
- General Presbyter the Rev. Jay Wilkins retired and a search is underway to find someone to serve for one year to help with strategic planning and staffing.
- Rev. Greg Goodwiller of St. Andrews in Mississippi is our new Synod of Living Waters Executive Presbyter. In his new position, he will oversee presbyteries in AL, TN, MI, and KY, as well as Living Waters of the World and campus ministries, like UKirk Birmingham.
- Living River is working hard to pay down its debt on the camp and conference center. Efforts are now being focused on strategic planning.
- Two ruling elders, two teaching elders and one young adult advisor have already been selected to serve as commissioners at the upcoming General Assembly this summer in Baltimore.
- Mark your calendars for Feb. 28-29, 2020. The theme of the the Main Event is "Practicing Hope." Look for registration information soon.



FAITHFUL TO MATTHEW 25 CALL IN IRAQ

BY ELMARIE PARKER, PCUSA MISSION CONNECTIONS

Presbyterian Church (USA) partners from the Assembly of Evangelical (Presbyterian) Churches in Iraq are sharing, in their own words, about the Matthew 25 ministries to which they have been called.

Ministries bringing hope to incarcerated women and children in Kirkuk, housing to Muslim and Christian families displaced from their homes in the Nineveh Plain and Mosul, and clean, drinkable water to people in southern Iraq — all are ministries supported by U.S. Presbyterians.

MINISTRY TO INCARCERATED WOMEN, CHILDREN IN KIRKUK

“I write to you today to provide an update on a recent visit to the Kirkuk women’s jail,” explained Mayada Jazrawi, who oversees the prison visitation ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Kirkuk.

“There were 52 women and 15 children. As has been the case in our recent visits, the majority of the women in jail were widows of suspected ISIS terrorists. Many of them were familiar with us, including the newer ones who hadn’t met us before — the rest of the women had told them about us.

“Initially, we couldn’t speak with them very much because of the large number of women and children. Additionally, the new cells had large columns that made seeing all of them at once difficult. So, we divided among them and started to speak with them and write down their prayer requests:

One of the Muslim women said she had gotten in the habit of wearing a cross because the feeling of the cross around her neck made her feel safe.

One of the women told me that we were a ‘crown atop their heads’ (this is an extremely honorific thing to tell someone in Iraq).

Another woman thanked us — she had never seen people who wanted to plant peace and who exemplified the love of God more than us.

Yet another woman said she wishes to go back to the detention camps because there they had some sort of academic



SOME OF THE CHILDREN WHO ARE IMPRISONED WITH THEIR MOTHERS BECAUSE NO OTHER FAMILY IS AVAILABLE TO CARE FOR THEM. PHOTO: ELMARIE PARKER



CHILDREN BENEFITING FROM DESALINATION EQUIPMENT INSTALLED AT THE CHURCH. PHOTO: PARKER

schooling available for the children (schooling isn’t available in jail).”

Jazrawi requests prayers that these women might know the Lord Jesus Christ as the God of peace and mercy.

MINISTRY OF HOUSING FOR DISPLACED FAMILIES

The National Evangelical (Presbyterian) Churches in Kirkuk, Iraq, are ministering to Muslim and Christian families displaced from their homes in the Nineveh Plain and Mosul since 2014.

“It’s entirely too easy and incredibly tempting for many of us in Iraq to fall prey to despair, having been in a near-constant state of war since 1980,” said the Rev. Haitham Jazrawi, pastor of the National Evangelical (Presbyterian) Church in Iraq. “An entire generation of men and women under 40 have seen nothing but war.”

“For the past few years, especially under ISIS,” he said, “far too many have been displaced from their homes, watched their children die and witnessed their livelihood crushed.”

“It’s borderline arrogant to expect them [Iraqi families] to find hope in the face of their adversities,” Jazrawi said. “As I consider the pains of my fellow Iraqis, I’m reminded of the Lord’s word in Ezekiel 37, in what might be one of the strangest stories told in the Bible. The prophet Ezekiel has a vision in which he sees a valley full of dry bones. The Lord commands him to prophesy that the bones gather together, grow flesh, blood and skin, and then to breathe and be brought to life. It’s one of the most beautiful displays of the Lord’s infinite sovereignty: He doesn’t simply raise people from the dead; no, he commanded bones, dry bones,

to coalesce and grow life.

“Like Ezekiel, who answered the Lord’s call to do the unlikely and seemingly absurd task of speaking to bones, so have you, our friends at PC(USA), answered the Lord’s call to speak life into your Iraqi brothers and sisters halfway across the world. I cannot overstate just how much your love, prayer, and support have continued to breathe life into the valley of death that previous wars and ISIS left behind. It is a testament to our Lord’s infinite grace that he has not forgotten his people; on the contrary, every single day he breathes life through his church in Iraq. This is most especially seen through his blessing of our outreach to prisoners and refugees, Christian and otherwise.

“We have continued to see more Christian internally displaced families returning to their homes that were previously occupied by ISIS. Though we of course miss having our brothers and sisters nearby worshiping with us, we are beyond delighted that they are able to return to their homes and rebuild their lives. Your gift was used as a part of the internally displaced resettlement programs that our church has continued to support. These projects include financing home repairs (most homes were burned by ISIS, and several were razed to the ground), purchasing new appliances, and ensuring that water and electricity are once again connected to the re-inhabited homes.”

MINISTRY OF CLEAN WATER IN BASRA

The National Evangelical (Presbyterian) Church in Basra, Iraq, serves the most economically vulnerable in the city by providing ministries of drinkable water and reliable, safe housing. This work addresses frequent droughts and structures of injustice that oppress, especially the most vulnerable.

The south of Iraq has been facing increasingly severe water shortages and contamination of public water supplies over the past many years. This is due to a combination of impacts from more frequent droughts, water policies in Turkey and Syria that restrict water flow through their respective dams on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers, lowering water levels in Iraq, which is on the downstream side of both rivers (with the ripple effect of causing salinated water from the Gulf to back up into the fresh water of the river), water misuse by Iraqi industry and farmers, and the heavy metal contaminants left behind from uranium-depleted weaponry used by coalition forces during both Gulf Wars.

During the summer of 2018, this water contamination and shortage reached a peak, leading to several thousand citizens in Basra becoming dangerously ill, even to the point of death for several hundred. The water was so contaminated that to shower in it caused severe chemical skin burns.

The Presbyterian Church in Basra responded, supported by their Presbyterian friends in Kirkuk and Baghdad, who were sending shipments of bottled water for them to distribute to those in need, especially the most impoverished families in Basra, who could ill afford to buy bottled water. Bottled water is expensive, especially as those families who have a corner on the bottled-water industry in Iraq chose to increase their profit margins rather than address the root causes of water contamination and shortage.

So, the Presbyterian Church in Basra began to research desalination equipment so that they could process larger quantities of water for those in need. The project cost nearly \$16,000. Through Presbyterian World Mission, the Iraq Partnership Network and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, the funds were sent to meet this need.

“With the funds received from Presbyterian World Mission and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, we were able to purchase the desalination unit at a 10% discount, two water tanks (holding 3 and 5 metric tons of water respectively), two electrical pumps, all the necessary electrical supplies, and the materials needed to install a concrete pad and sun-shield shed,” said Dr. Zuhair Fathallah, elder at the church. “The desalination equipment requires monthly filter changes and continuing maintenance, which costs a little more than \$1,000 a year. This will be a continuing funding need.

“After the installation of this equipment, we have now been able to provide the children of the kindergarten and the nursery schools (over 250 children, 98% of whom are from non-Christian families) with clean potable water while they are at school with us, and to the schools’ staff and the children’s families. Members of the congregation can use this water supply, along with anybody from the community who is in need, for no cost to the beneficiaries. There is a water tap near the church gate anyone may use who needs water. We also installed a line to the apartment of the pastor and his family and to the principal of our schools and his family’s apartment.

“The unit is working now only three hours a day (producing 3 metric tons of water), because of the 2019 summer holidays for the kindergarten, but the water is available for everyone who is in need of it. There is little demand now because the weather is still good and because this year we had a heavy rain, which has added to public water reserve of sweet water.”

Concerned PCUSA members will be bringing forward an overture to the 224th General Assembly in 2020 with recommendations for how Presbyterians can advocate for better clean-up of heavy-metal contaminants, such as those used in both Gulf Wars. Write to elmarie.parker@pcusa.org if you would like to receive a copy of the proposed overture to learn more about this issue, which is a leading cause of community health challenges, including severe birth defects.

Jazrawi expressed gratitude for the support of U.S. Presbyterians.

“We continue to pray for you and for our Lord to strengthen your missions across the globe,” he said. “We thank you for your trust in us, and for your unceasing love and support; we pray that our Lord continues to bless you in ways you cannot imagine. We ask that you continue to pray for us and walk alongside us as we all work to fulfill the same mission: to spread hope through the Gospel to the least of these.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER

The Rev. Elmarie Parker has served in the Middle East since 2013 working as a regional liaison for Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq.



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

Scotland!

FEBRUARY 3-9, 2020

FORTY-NINTH ANNUAL RELIGIOUS ARTS FESTIVAL

Monday, February 3 • 7:00 p.m. • Highland Hall

Thin Places: An Iona Experience
Lecture by the Rev. Susan Clayton

Tuesday, February 4 • 5:00 p.m. • Highland Hall

Art of Highland Dance
Music and dancing by the Glencoe Scottish School of Dance

Thursday, February 6 • 6:30 p.m. • Great Hall

RAF Banquet: Burns Supper
Celebration of the life and poetry of the Scottish poet Robert Burns with the Scottish folk singer Ed Miller.

There will be bagpipes, singing and perhaps some haggis.
Tickets \$25 per person. RSVP online or by mailing a check to Rosalynn Fairless at 3100 Highland Ave, Birmingham AL 35205

Sunday, February 9 • 11:00 a.m. • Sanctuary

Kirkin' o' the Tartans
Bring an item from your clan for a special blessing.

Sunday, February 9 • 4:00 p.m. • Sanctuary

Orlando Consort & IPC Choir Concert
Soloists: James Martin, baritone and Adrienne Price, mezzo
Scottish music of the 14th century and the choral work "Scattered Rhymes" by Tarik O'Regan with the IPC Camerata.

