

June 3, 2020

Dear Siblings in Christ,

Holding our hands up in blessing, pastors will often speak these words: “May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you forevermore.” We have a colleague who riffed on this tried and true benediction, changing the last line to: “the *conspiracy* of the Holy Spirit be with you forevermore.”

Conspiracy? The word conjures devious plans from sinister masterminds - the stuff of James Bond movies or Sherlock Holmes mysteries. But examine the Latin roots of the word – *con* means “with” and *spire* means “breathe” – a conspiracy is formed from those who breathe together.

This past Sunday we gathered around the Pentecost story where the Spirit breathes together all kinds of different people – Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers of Mesopotamia. The birth of the Church is wonderfully and chaotically diverse – reflecting the full breadth of God’s playful eye for color and character. In spite of all the ways we manage to tear ourselves apart and retreat to our separate and not-equal-at-all camps, God dreamed of this Church in which differences might meet; where we might breathe together.

On the evening of May 25th around 8:30pm George Floyd, a man in a long line of other precious black bodies that have been sold and shot, looted and lynched for hundreds of years, said “I can’t breathe.” And the nation heard. Now, we wonder, can we heed? Heed the call of the One we claim to follow? The One who said “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”

We confess we are on a journey to know what the road of discipleship looks like in these days. But we humbly offer that it begins with breath:

- by breathing through the discomfort we may feel at our own privilege,
- by getting the breath knocked out of us when confronted with the stories of those who have long struggled to breathe freely in this land of the free,
- by breathing together with those whose experiences and efforts for justice may look different than our own,
- and by letting the Spirit breathe the Church back to the life God dreamed for us on that first day of Pentecost.

We, your staff, confess that racism has a grip on our lives. University Presbyterian Church surely has racism to confront within ourselves. Yet, we do believe that black lives matter, and we trust that the *conspiracy* of the Holy Spirit is with us now and forevermore, creating a space where we all might breathe together.

May it be so.

UPC Program Staff:
Jarrett and Meg Peery McLaughlin
Joey Fala
Kate Fiedler
Kathleen Jasinskas
Kim McNeill
Nancy Myer
John Rogers

NEXT STEPS:

*UPC is a part of an informal local interfaith Clergy Group. A number of us will be standing in solidarity with folks at the Chapel Hill Day of Action **today at 1pm** at McCorkle Place.

*In the next few weeks, NEXT CHURCH (<https://nextchurch.net>) will be offering an online Anti-Racism Training through a group called Crossroads. We will be encouraging church staff and officers to participate.

*Take part in Eddie Moore's 21 Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge:
<https://www.eddiemoorejr.com/21daychallenge>

*Listen to a message from our PC(USA) Stated Clerk:
https://vimeo.com/424168164?fbclid=IwAR1iDEp725mgkkBai3KOHXt1zvXs_1yuE2UO4iZHbqx3KbD5F2urOMkdvNA

**Open* the Bible

Starting this Sunday, join us for the study of scripture. We will read the Old Testament Minor Prophets. See what justice they call us to in these summer days. This study will be similar to our Spring study on the Gospel of Mark, with video aids and a zoom gathering.