

The News of National City

September 2017 Issue XVII Vol. 9

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Gentle Reminder *Letting Our Light Shine!*

Thank you for the wonderful and thoughtful gift for Miriam and I to enjoy a week at Chautauqua Institution. As I write this article, we are on the final days of our time here and it has been glorious. From the daily morning worship services, morning and afternoon lectures, to the evening entertainment of exquisite music, Miriam and I are thrilled to be here. Thank you for the congregation gift of this time away and the very generous love offering celebrating our ministry together at National City Christian Church.

As chaplains for the Disciples of Christ, Miriam and I were able to lead two communion services, participate in a denominational talk, and share an hour-long presentation on "National City Christian Church: Your Church in Washington, D.C." We look forward to sharing with you in the weeks ahead about our experiences and lessons learned.

Looking ahead, the next few months at National City Christian Church are going to be exciting. As indicated by this extra large National City News, there is a lot going on. Here are a few highlights:

- **Sept 10** - Spirit Sunday, and the celebration of the new National City Christian Church website
- **Sept 17** - Rev. Lori Tapia, National Hispanic Pastor, is preaching at 8:30 and 11 a.m. worship services, and we all are invited to celebrate the service into Christian Ordination of Chaim Abramowitz Rodriguez at 3 p.m. I hope you are planning on joining us for this exciting Sunday.
- **Sept 24** - We give thanks to God for the extraordinary and blessed ministry of the Reverend Noemi Mena as she concludes her ministry as National City Christian Church's Hispanic Pastor. We will honor our dear Pastora at 10 a.m. on the 24th of September. This special newsletter has a wonderful article regarding Rev. Mena's important ministry.
- **Oct 1** - The newly ordained Reverend Dr. CJ Rodriguez begins as the new Hispanic Pastor at National City Christian Church.

- **Oct 8** - The 15th Anniversary of the NCCC Gospel Choir will be celebrated with a special choir concert held in the Sanctuary at 3 p.m., with present and former choir members, led under the direction of the amazing Gospel Choir Director, Pastor Valeria Foster. Plan to come to the concert, along with friends and family, as we rejoice and give thanks for the blessings received through the early service worship, congregation, and music ministry.
- **Oct 14** - In partnership with the Capital Area Christian Church, National City will host the Salt and Light leadership training event, all day Saturday. This excellent event is open to all. Watch for registration information.
- **Nov 4** - Disciples of Christ Historical Society will host their prestigious Kirkpatrick Lecture at National City with the Reverend Dr. Delores Carpenter speaking.
- **Nov 5** - Disciples of Christ Historical Society will participate in the dedication of the Oscar Haynes Exhibit at National City Christian Church. This unique exhibit in the Mezzanine of the Beasley Building will draw visitors from all across the U.S., interested in learning more about the African American history of the Disciples of Christ. On that same Sunday, we will hear the preaching from the newly elected General Minister and President, Rev. Teresa Hord Owens.

In addition, October is our stewardship emphasis where we will be challenged to grow in our financial giving in 2018 and "Let Our Light Shine!"

There is so much more that is going on at National City Christian Church, so read this newsletter cover-to-cover and plan on participating in our fall activities. One of the Chautauqua mottos is "education only ends with life." Let us continue to grow together, learn together, worship together...and together make a difference for the glory of God. See you Sunday!

- Stephen Gentle

September Birthdays

- 1 Willie Alexander
- 2 Ben Moore
- 4 Noemi Mena
Peggy Washington
- 5 Marcella Hill
- 6 Cyril Jones
- 8 Megan Dickerson
- 10 Sterling Washington
- 11 Katie Campbell-
Morrison
- 13 Sadye Sanders
- 14 Moe Jackson
- 16 Marge Bennett
Deloris Ruddock
- 17 Betty Crudup
- 18 Beth Kelley
Mark Reber
- 19 Woodie Rea
- 21 Ellen Crowder
Polly He
- 22 Roy Hatton
John Sparkman
- 23 Ron Moser
- 27 Rick Bahr
Hal Dungan
- 29 Noah Craig*
- 30 Mike Dula

*Indicates a student

For additions or changes,
contact Kathleen Swihart at
kswihart61@gmail.com

Join Prayer Call on Mondays at 6 a.m.

All are invited to join the
weekly conference prayer
line for National City.
Simply dial 712-775-7031,
enter access code 371015.
For more information,
contact Loretta Tate at 202-
489-2020.

Leadership Academy

The pastoral leadership of
National City Christian
Church will be attending a
training and planning
session in Indianapolis
during the week of
September 18.

Disciples Women To Meet September 12

"Promise and Struggle in the Garden," based on Genesis 2:15 - 3:19, will be the topic when Disciples Women meet at 11 a.m. in the Music Suite. Rev. Dr. Gentle will be the speaker.

All are welcome and encouraged to bring a sandwich and stay for lunch and fellowship following the meeting.

LGBTQ Ecumenical Bible Study on September 13

Come and join us for our Bible Study series on LGBTQ persons and the Bible on Wednesday, September 13, at 7 p.m. We will continue our study of some passages that are frequently interpreted as having an anti-LGBTQ meaning. Come to explore what the Bible *really* says as we learn and discuss together.

All are welcome on the second Wednesday of each month to these sessions that explore faith and scripture from the perspective of LGBTQ persons who are also followers of Jesus.

LGBTQ Happy Hour on September 14 to Benefit Mary's House for Older Adults

LGBTQ persons and friends are invited to gather on the third Thursday of the month for a benefit happy hour. This month's gathering, on Thursday, September 14, from 6 to 8 p.m. will take place at Uproar Lounge and Restaurant, located at 639 Florida Avenue, N.W., just two blocks from the Shaw/Howard University Metro station (Green/Yellow Lines).

A minimum donation of \$10 per person is requested to support the work of Mary's House for Older Adults to create independent, communal housing for older adults that eliminates the intense isolation experienced due to aging, subtle and not so subtle discrimination and intolerance based on one's sexual/gender identity or orientation. Mary's House will be a model and set the standard for future housing of its kind; that is, to create a living environment that celebrates and honors the "whole person" as they age, no matter who they are.

Friday Music at Midday Begins a New Season

Come and enjoy a new season of music to delight and inspire. Beginning on September 8, Music at Midday concerts will be held each Friday at 12:15 p.m., each one lasting 30 to 45 minutes. Most of the performances will feature organists from around the country and around the world on National City's world-renowned pipe organ. Some of our concerts this year will also feature piano and other instruments.

These wonderful concert performances are offered to the community for free, so please help us spread the word!

September 8: Local concert organist and choral conductor David Lang will perform grand and dazzling works for organ by Maurice Duruflé, Johann Walther, David German, Max Reger, and Henri Mulet.

September 15: Organist Mary Mozelle (Sarasota, Florida) will delight the audience with works of J. S. Bach, W. A. Mozart, Felix Mendelssohn, and Leo Sowerby.

September 22: Hans Uwe Hielscher (Wiesbaden, Germany) will present a concert of organ music by Henry Coleman and Frank Bridge along with his own "Rhapsody on Scottish Folk tunes."

September 29: Patrick Pope (Charlotte, North Carolina) will perform a program of music to uplift the spirit, including works of Mendelssohn, Sowerby, and Whitlock.

Book Discussion on *Money Guide for Changing Times To Be* on September 28

All are welcome to the church book club discussion on Thursday, September 28, at 7 p.m.

The book chosen for the meeting is Ric Edelman's "The Truth About Your Future: The Money Guide You Need Now, Later, and Much Later." Discussion will be led by Rick Bahr.

The book discusses that due to exponential changes in society, technology, medical care, etc., our futures will be quite unlike our past. Reviewers have used words like "essential," "timely," "eye-opening," "brilliant," and "fun to read."

Men's Ministry Event To Be Held September 29-October 1 at Bethany Beach

The first men's ministry event offered by EcuMENTors will be September 29 - October 1 at the Christian Church Conference Center at Bethany Beach, Delaware.

The topic is "Spiritual Health & Well-Being Through Mentoring." The ecumenical retreat is to identify and learn healthy spiritual practices and the role as Christian mentors within families and communities. Rev. Jack Sullivan, Jr., senior pastor of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Findlay, Ohio, will be the keynote speaker.

Registration forms are available from the CCA Regional Office or by e-mailing ecumentors@gmail.com.

A New Year of Music Ministry

Worship without music is like food without flavor. Singing and music touch our spirits with the presence of God, and provide us with a language beyond words to express our praise and our longing.

Do you have a musical gift to share with the community of National City Christian Church? We welcome singers of all ages and vocal ranges to participate in both our Gospel Choir and Sanctuary Choir.

The Gospel Choir sings each Sunday at the 8:30 a.m. service with rehearsals on most Tuesdays at 7 p.m. The choir's primary purpose is to minister to people through Gospel and African American spiritual music, accompanied by piano, drums, and tambourines, in a style that is more informal than the 11 a.m. traditional service. For more information, please contact Valeria Foster at (301) 585-5454 or valeriefoster@msn.com.

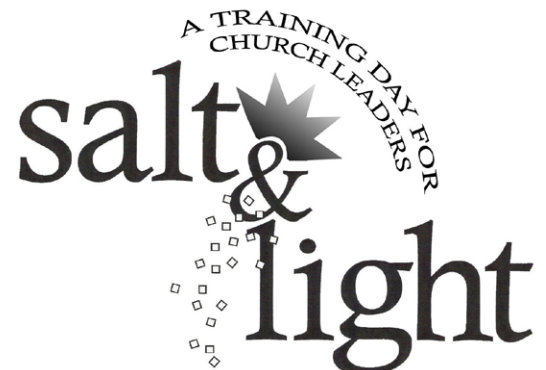
The Sanctuary Choir sings for worship at 11 a.m., with rehearsal each Sunday before the service, beginning at 9 a.m., along with occasional extra rehearsals in preparation for special musical events. During the coming year, we are planning special programs in celebration of the African American heritage of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the dedication of the Oscar Haynes collection (November 5), the annual Service of Lessons and Carols (December 17), Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services (December 24 and 25), Good Friday (March 30), and the festival Easter Sunday worship service (April 1). For more information, contact Dr. Michael McMahon at mmcmahon@nationalcitycc.org or (202) 797-0103.

Do you play an instrument or might you be able to help with handbells on an occasional basis? Contact Dr. Michael McMahon (see above).

Salt and Light Leadership Training To Be Held October 14 at National City

"Listen, Learn, Lead" is the theme for this year's regional Salt and Light church leadership training, the signature leadership training event for the Christian Church Capital Area. All are welcome to attend.

The event begins at 9 a.m., with registration and brunch, followed by the program from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Costs are \$40 (\$35 if received before September 15); \$25 for ages 30 and younger.





Mike Dula was honored on July 30 at a celebration after the 11 a.m. worship service, where he was joined by family members. Dr. Gentle and Wes Strotman paid tribute to Mike, who received a wealth of cards and good wishes, recognizing his years of faithful service as a maintenance assistant.

Welcome to Jackson Thomas Wiser born July 28

We welcome the birth of **Jackson Thomas Wiser** on July 28. His parents are **Kelsey Stewart** and **Justin Wiser** and his grandparents are long-time members **Debbie and Bill Stewart**. He is the nephew of **Erin Stewart** and **Woody and Christina Stewart**.

Bill and Debbie are settling into their new home in Morgantown, West Virginia. Their daughter **Erin** is going to Fairmont State and plans to start nursing school in the spring.

In Appreciation

Sue Frost is in her new residence at Greenspring Village Retirement Community and offers her gratitude for the lovely cards and calls that she received during her recent hospitalization.



Chautauqua Bound
In August, Moderator Jane Campbell presented Dr. Gentle with best wishes from the congregation as Dr. Stephen and Rev. Miriam head to Chautauqua as chaplains at Disciple House for a week.



Dr. Rodriguez on “What does Ordination Mean to Me?”

On September 17, Dr. Chaim (CJ) Rodriguez will be ordained at 3 p.m. at National City. All are invited, and following, there will be a reception at the church at 5 p.m. to celebrate. In October, Dr. Rodriguez will become the pastor for our Hispanic Ministry. On the eve of his ordination, we asked Dr. Rodriguez what ordination means to him. Below is his reply.

Three and a half years ago, I took a leap of faith and enrolled in seminary. I didn't exactly know where the journey would lead, but I knew it was time to finally answer the call that had been placed on my heart so many years ago.

Now, as I prepare for ordination, I find myself asking, "Is this really happening?" For me, ordination means having overcome the many obstacles of what it means to be a Queer Latinx person pursuing a call to ordained ministry in the Church. It means not having allowed the many closed doors to dissuade me from saying, "Here I am Lord, send me," and it means having an opportunity to embark on a lifetime of service to God through God's people, ALL of God's people.

My faith journey has taken many twists and turns, and has allowed me to explore many places. It's made me think, question, and sometimes even doubt. However, through it all, it has been the incomparable faithfulness of both God and people who simply believed in me (and as Rev. Allen Harris reminds me, my own hard work), that has brought me to where I am today.

For me, this is not the end of a journey, but rather just the beginning. Where it will go from here, only the Universe knows. For now, I enter into this new stage of my life committed to the prophetic witness and pastoral ministry for which I have been entrusted, and doing so heeding to the words of the prophet Micah, to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8)

And so may it be, Ashe!*

- Chaim (CJ) Abramowitz Rodriguez

**Ashe (or (ase) is an African philosophical concept through which the Yoruba of Nigeria conceive the power to make things happen and produce change.*

Our Thoughts and Prayers are with Bill Knight and Nick Bullock

Bill Knight, facility and operations administrator, is presently in ICU at GWU Hospital for a very serious condition. Please remember Bill and his partner Nicholas Bullock in your prayers and words of encouragement.

In Sympathy

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family of long-time member **Ann Cappiello**, who passed away on August 19 in Laurel, Mississippi, where she had moved to be near her daughter Catherine Nowicki, son-in-law Steven Nowicki, and granddaughter Samantha Nowicki. Choir member Tristan Nowicki is her grandson. Ann will be remembered for her dedication to Christian service and to making National City a welcoming congregation for all. A memorial service at National City will be on Sunday, September 10, at 1 p.m., in the Sanctuary.

Please surround **Kathleen Swihart** and her family with your prayerful support and encouragement upon the death of her brother Glen Davis on August 15 in Kansas City. He was 86. He had been a member of National City when he was in high school.

Pastor Noemi says Adios!



Wow...I am actually saying farewell to my beloved National City Christian Church and my very dear Hispanic Ministry. What an honor it has been to be in ministry with you for almost 15 years. I have been here longer than in any other ministry in my pastoral journey.

I confess that as I sit to write a few words to express my gratitude and say farewell...my basket seems so empty. I feel that after so many years I don't have much to show for; nothing to brag about. I had to go back and read some of my congregational reports to remember some of the nuances of my ministry here. I was surprised by my congregational report for the year 2005. I wrote six pages reporting as the acting Senior Associate Pastor, as the overseer for the Transition into Ministry Residency Program, and as the Pastor for Hispanic Ministry. Following I share some remembrances that might capture some of the intricacies of my ministry in this portion of the Kingdom of God.

I came to the greater D.C. area in the summer of 2001 after cutting short my ministry as a United States Navy Chaplain. I came to marry a wonderful man and live happily ever after in the Nation's Capital. I was in the process of getting home insurance for a fixer upper we were purchasing, when I began watching the consequences of the 911 attacks via the TV. So my life and ministry in this greater D.C. area is marked by 911 in its beginning and ends with a challenging new presidential era.

Just when I had said yes! to a job in the Home Depot garden department, I received a call from Dr. Jackson to come help out with Transition into Ministry, a residency for newly ordained pastors funded by a grant from the Eli Lilly Foundation. Shortly after that the Rev. Idia Rodriguez, pastor for Hispanic Ministry, left us, taking the congregation with her. They nested at Mount Rainier Christian Church, a sister church just up the road. Dr. Jackson asked me to step in and sustain the few persons that remained. That's how I came to be the pastor for Hispanic Ministry. Dr. Jackson left and Dr. Gentle graciously kept me on.

I have worked at NCCC full time, two-thirds of the time, and one-third of the time. Working full time at NCCC enabled me to be much more involved in the community, working together with interfaith groups on social justice issues. I worked at advocating for day laborers who were victims of wage theft, holding companies accountable for deplorable working conditions, and helping security guards to get organized.

In our church I helped with the food pantry and clothes closet. I collaborated with the Gethsemane Mission Program. In the community I was recognized for being an advocate for the neighbors in the building behind the church who were able to buy the building and make it into a co-op. I remember a time when some of these neighbors used Scott Hall to make beautiful huge colorful "carpet" made with colored sawdust, an ancient indigenous craft of Guatemalans. I remember bringing "La Clinica del Pueblo" for a health clinic to test children for lead.

I remember bringing the Neighborhood Assistance Corporation of America, a nonprofit organization, to offer seminars to help victims of predatory lending. A time of great celebration was when, after submitting a request for a house to Habitat for Humanity, we got it! One of our beloved families is enjoying a lovely Habitat home.

In solidarity with our neighbors we collected an offering to give it to a neighbor whose brother was murdered a few blocks from the church and to a community that was affected by a fire. In my relationship with the charter school that was in

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our education building, I was able to make way for the children (some of whom were part of the Hispanic congregation) to be a part of the CarpeDiem choir community choir that performed at NCCC.

The Hispanic congregation at National City is mostly a church of immigrants and their children, a hardworking people of faith who believe that God will see us through the struggles. They believe that it is God who calls us and empowers them to be all who God created them to be. Congregational members hold each other up; they love and encourage each other and their children and passionately celebrate every great and minute success. We celebrate the receiving permission to work, for asylum granted, and the joy of owning a green card. Many green card holders now have citizenship. We've celebrated the re-unification of families. We make a big deal about our children entering college and graduating.

We've helped folk resettle as they came to us as asylees or where reunited with family after 14 years of separation. We've helped many to dress properly in cold weather. We have helped to gather furniture and all manner of things needed for a new beginning in this country. I remember joining forces with the high school social worker trying to help three siblings in dealing with the cultural shock of U.S. high schools. One of the kids got their bus card stolen. I remember comforting a member who was mugged outside her home on 14th Street.

Being a part of a church of immigrants keeps us connected to the community family back home. When I say that as a church of immigrants we are kept global I am referring to the fact that people go back to their country to visit all the time. Through their prayer requests we are made aware of the hardship their families are going through as well as their celebrations. And we also remain connected to the extended family of our church. We dedicate their children, visit them in the hospital.

Just in the recent months I delivered a wheelchair to a member of our extended family, met at church on a Saturday for counseling, officiated at a wedding, and provided a welcoming ear to a young father in crisis. None of these were active members of the church.

We also stay connected to the large community by joining manifestations, prayer vigils, and marches.

Something I don't really know how to categorize but that was very uplifting was my involvement in helping to bring to the college of preachers the first seminar for Hispanic and Spanish speaking preachers and our very own Dr. Pablo Jimenez, former National Hispanic Pastor, was the teacher.

Our church has been the home church away from home to students who come to the area to attend graduate school.

I have always been intentional in serving our denomination and have done so by:

- Being a member of the Regional Commission on Ministry and a Board Member of the Disciples Center for Public Witness
- Collaborating with Disciples Advocacy Network
- Serving on the Anti Racism, Pro reconciliation Team
- Serving on a Christian Theological Association Alumni Board
- Serving on one of the organizing teams for our Salt and Light seminars.
- Serving as a consultant for Hispanic Ministry for the region.
- Helping a church in New Jersey until they were received in the Disciples of Christ fellowship in the Northeast

I don't know where to put this but we have hosted three Hispanic National Pastors. Dr. Pablo Jimenez and Rev. Huberto Pimentel offered leadership training for Hispanic Pastors and lay leaders. And now the interim Hispanic National Pastor Rev. Lori Tapia will be here for Dr. Rodriguez's ordination.

I have experienced many changes in my personal life and in my ministry during this season of my life. My only son married a wonderful woman and they have given me the joy of being a grandmother. God willing, they will be coming to this area for their next duty station. I lost my precious Dad to cancer in the spring of 2013.

I have witnessed National City Church and the Hispanic ministry go through so many, many changes. I have seen so many wonderful

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pastors come through here for internships, to serve as student pastors, or to be ordained into ministry. I am so very grateful for the many gifts I have received by the awesome pastors and lay leaders past and present I have been in ministry with. Thanks for enriching my life.

I will continue in chaplaincy ministry, so I am not retiring yet. I am just making way for our exceptionally talented commissioned pastor Dr. Chaim Abramowitz Rodriguez. He came to us over a year ago. He began working with us and collaborating at the Gospel Service with Dr. Gentle and Dr. Goines. He fell in love with our denomination, confirmed his passion for congregational ministry, and on Sunday the 17th of September at 3 p.m., Dr. Chaim Abramowitz Rodriguez will be ordained into Christian ministry. It was a perfect time to pass the baton.

My last day at National City Christian Church will be Sunday September the 24th. On October 1 the Rev. Dr. Abramowitz will become the pastor of the Hispanic ministry.

I will end with the words from “Caliz de Bendiciones,” our Hispanic Disciples hymnbook, of a prayer dedicated to the Hispanic Ministry in the United States. The first few lines read (my translation): “Lord of our efforts and of the church, we give you thanks for your company and your guidance throughout the years. You have always been in our triumphs and you have accompanied us in our frustrations. Neither your blessing nor your company has ever faltered.” To this prayer I respond: Amen! Although it is wonderful to see the progress of the ministries we are invested in, perhaps more important is sensing that God is with us in the journey.

- Noemi Mena

Editor’s Note: As Noemi leaves us, there are so many conversations we didn’t finish or have the time to ask. I asked Noemi if she could share some of those thoughts with us. Here are some highlights:

Family: My ancestors on both my parents’ sides were from the Iberian Peninsula. At some point they moved to the Canary Islands, a group of islands off the coast of West Africa inhabited by the nomadic Berbers from North Africa. (I was not surprised when my DNA showed that I am 6 percent African.) They later came to Puerto Rico in the 18th century.

My great-grandparents were young parents and my grandparents were adolescents when the United States invaded Puerto Rico. Through the Jones Act of 1917 Puerto Ricans became American citizens. So even though I am often asked where am I really from...I can say truthfully that I am a fourth generation American.

My parents came to New York City separately, each with their nuclear family. My dad was 19 and my mom 17. They met in church and got married. Fruit of their love came five children. I am the middle kid. Having been born in Spanish Harlem, New York City, from Puerto Rican parents makes me a Newyorican. I grew up in a Pentecostal church called “La Sinagoga,” which was located in Black Harlem. My parents returned to Puerto Rico when I was an adolescent. Initially my siblings and me were called “gringos” but very soon we assimilated and earned being called Puerto Ricans. In Puerto Rico I studied from middle school all the way to the University of Puerto Rico where I received a BA in Sociology. I was in my twenties when I became a Disciple of Christ member and was in my 30s when I was ordained.

Continuing education while at NCCC. I had taken a unit of Clinical Pastoral education (400 hours of practice) and always wanted to go back to get more training. While pastoring at NCCC I pursued that goal, little by little, until I had the required competencies. I eventually went before a board of my peers and received certification, thus becoming a Board Certified Chaplain. I am currently working also at a continuing care retirement facility.

Joining the Navy. While at seminary, chaplain recruiters came by the seminary and Noemi filled a form expressing interest. “A chaplain/recruiter told me I really did not need the Navy but the Navy needed me, and I made the decision to join. It was an exciting time in my life.” Her first duty station was in Mare Island Naval Ship Yard in California, where she helped in closing down the base. She then went to Naval Air Station Kingsville in Texas where she was a chaplain to jet pilot students. Her last duty station was at Marine Corps Base Quantico in Virginia where she was the chaplain for security and for the brig.



Church World Service field officers work and live in the remote villages where they help in projects such as Zero Hunger Project and Disaster Risk Management.



A selfie is understood in any language.

Week of Compassion in Indonesia with Miriam Gentle

I had diligently prepared for my two-week trip to Indonesia with Week of Compassion. I had checked the suggested packing list. Packed and repacked. Read all the suggested material on Indonesia and its history. Read through the required book, “Restoring Dignity, Nourishing Hope: Developing Mutuality in Mission,” (a Global Ministries resource edited by Jonathan Barnes and Peter Makari).

What I could not possibly prepare for was how remote some of the villages that we visited were, and in contrast to their lack of resources, how great was their welcome and their hospitality toward us.

Our group of ten clergy and seminarians were greeted at each village with curiosity, but mostly with a graciousness that made us feel very welcome.

We saw how Week of Compassion, our Disciples’ domestic and international relief, refugee, and development mission fund, partnered with Church World Service to empower these remote villages in the capital, Jakarta, and the islands of Toraja and West Timor, in the areas of refugees, hunger relief, disaster risk management, hygiene, and accessible clean water.

At Noemuke village, we met with the women who worked in the communal garden, learning how to grow nutritious, quick-growing crops.

In Soe village, we were greeted by children singing “Amazing Grace” in Indonesian, and we received beautiful handwoven ceremonial scarves, given to each one to celebrate our visit.

It was truly humbling to see up close how climate change is impacting the lives of people in the islands of Indonesia. This made me reflect on how we are all connected and what we do in the U.S. impacts people in remote villages half a world away. After witnessing how difficult it was to access water in these villages, water that later needed to be boiled, I became aware of my own easy consumption of our endless supply of running water, and started reducing how much water I let run while I brush my teeth.

I am grateful for this opportunity to experience a different culture and to see firsthand the way our Week of Compassion offering is being used to benefit people in need.

I hope to share this amazing journey with all of you soon!

Tarema kasi! (Thank you!)

- Miriam Gentle



Clockwise: Rice is a main staple eaten at every meal. This water tank provided by Church World Service with funds from Week of Compassion provides water for this school. A typical village dwelling still used in West Timor.

Pastoral Prayer Given by Rev. Dr. Beverly Goines

Editor's note: This prayer, given by Rev. Dr. Beverly Goines on Sunday morning, August 13, in the wake of Charlottesville the day before, brought requests from the congregation that it be reprinted in the church newsletter. Here it is in its entirety.

Thank you for blessing us to get up and make it to your house of worship one more time to approach the throne of grace and to thank you for the new mercies, the abundance of mercy, that we experience all day every day. Thank you, God, for carrying us when we couldn't walk, keeping us when we don't want to be kept, and putting a hedge of protection around us to preserve us from our enemies.

We have so much to be thankful for, Lord. We thank you for the precious privilege of prayer whereby we can lay before you the cares of this world and the burdens of our hearts.

We lift our health, homes, jobs, our livelihoods, and families to you. And, we ask that you would bless them and us, and give us wisdom and stamina as we navigate this world. We give you our minds, our intellect, our gifts and talents, Lord, that we, your creation, might be used as you see fit to make this world a better place.

We ask your blessing on National City Christian Church and the many ministries that emanate from this place. Bless us to be a beacon of hope and light in the world.

God, as we watched the scene in Charlottesville, Virginia, this weekend, we were appalled and saddened that we are still fighting the same fight against racist bigotry and hatred. We plead the blood of Jesus against these white nationalists, the alt-right, the Ku Klux Klan, and neo-Nazis and their ideologies of white supremacy that would seek to destroy the lives, minds, and bodies of people who are different from them. We lift up to you the families of those who were killed: the state troopers, H. Jay Cullen and Berke M. M. Bates, and Heather Heyer, the woman who was hit by the car. We lift up to you those who were injured and hurt. God, we thank you for your word that enlivens the spirits of those who are the objects or victims of such displays of evil.

May we always be reminded that racism is dead. It is dead because the resurrection has occurred. It is just waiting to be buried. As Christians, we have to work to bury racism and work to bury poverty and sicknesses of mind and spirit that turn into negative action and all manner of human injustice. Give us the power and the wisdom to stand against and bury once and for all these evils in our country. May true knowledge of you and your sovereignty—your perfect desire for us—be carried out in the earth as it is in heaven.

Lord, as our children prepare to go back to school, we ask that you would bless them and keep from all hurt, harm, and danger. Protect their bodies and their minds. Give them teachers who love teaching and have their best interests at heart. Help parents and give them strength to be good role models and leaders in their

households. Undergird struggling school systems and overworked employees who are doing their best to provide quality public education. For we know that our youth face many obstacles, but most of all we pray that you instill in them hope for a better future and positive, purposeful, prosperous lives.

We pray for the 17-year-old young lady, who was shot while driving her car in the Brentwood section of the city. And, we remember the many unnamed victims of gun violence in this country. We remember the 11-year-old girl who had boiling water poured on her as she slept during a slumber party. But, we also remember her 12-year-old assailant and ask that you would bless them both with the physical, emotional, and spiritual support that they need.

We remember children all over the world who live in poverty, who are without families, who are forced to be children soldiers, who are forced into slave labor or human trafficking, who live in refugee and immigrant settlement camps and prisons, who are without food, protection, education, and guidance. We ask that you would extend your gracious grasp to change and rearrange their lives and to change their situations and to change institutions and political systems that lead to these injustices. Use us as you see fit that these things will be no more.

We remember those in New Orleans who have endured yet another round of flooding. Just as some were just beginning to get their lives together all these years after Katrina, and it seems that, once again, they are starting over. God, we speak resilience and restoration into their situations.

We ask that diplomatic efforts prevail with our interactions with North Korea and Venezuela and in all places all over the globe where there are wars and rumors of wars. We lift up to you Nigeria, Sudan, and Libya as representative of the various places that need to know your peace and mercy right now in the name of Jesus.

God, there are just so many things going on in the world that bring us to our knees because the solutions seem beyond our human finite minds. Sweet Holy Spirit, come close, for without you we are impotent. Move on our behalf in marvelous and miraculous ways to bless, and lead and direct us, and help this world that you so love.

Bless Dr. Gentle as he delivers your word. Endow him now with the grace of preaching that we might receive direction on how to live this life.

O God, help us to be delivered by the power of the gospel that you have given to us. And, deliver us from the evil of indifference. Make us faithful to you and to your word. May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer.

Amen.