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Presbytery of the Cascades

In too many ways, we Christians ‘look more like the world today than the world looks like us’



Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner speaks an unvarnished word to those working to advocate ecumenically

by Mike Ferguson | *Presbyterian News Service*

LOUISVILLE — Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner regularly prays for and with congressional leaders from both political parties and sends daily Scripture passages to many lawmakers. The co-founder and CEO of the Skinner Leadership Institute delivered the first plenary during Ecumenical Advocacy Days, an online event that was held April 26-28 and included attendees and leaders from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Williams-Skinner is coordinating a 10-state nonpartisan, multi-racial, interfaith, and multi-generation effort called Faiths United To Save Democracy voter justice campaign.

Jesus makes it “very clear” that “our neighbor is everyone, especially those who are left beaten and battered by the sides of life’s Jericho road, and those who are different from us,” Williams-Skinner said during her plenary address. “In fact, we get no brownie points at all from God by identifying ourselves as Christian, engaging in religious activities or undertaking any amount of what we call Christian service.”

Not only does God call us to be unified, “we have the numerical power to advance God’s agenda in the world,” she said. According to the Pew Research Center, at least 100 million U.S. residents identify themselves as Christians, as do about 2 billion of the world’s 7.9 billion inhabitants. “We have both the calling and the numerical power to impact God’s world and God’s agenda for justice and equality.”

“If we’re not operating in that power,” Williams-Skinner said, “we are operating in our human strength that can’t even compete with the systems we’re trying to address.”

In the Great Commission, Jesus “makes it clear we have the same power that got Jesus out of the grave,” Williams-Skinner said. We are to go “in that same power” to “share the gospel and be that good news as advocates of God’s redeeming love in an unloving world.”

“In other words,” Williams-Skinner said, “you can’t advocate as an activity. You advocate out of who you are.”

It’s that same advocacy power used this spring “by a super-qualified African American judge, Ketanji Brown Jackson, who stared down with divinely inspired patience the insults, taunts and disrespect of lesser-qualified white Senate interrogators,” Williams-Skinner said.

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Day of Pentecost

Acts 2:4

*All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit
and began to speak in other languages,
as the Spirit gave them ability.*

Omnibus

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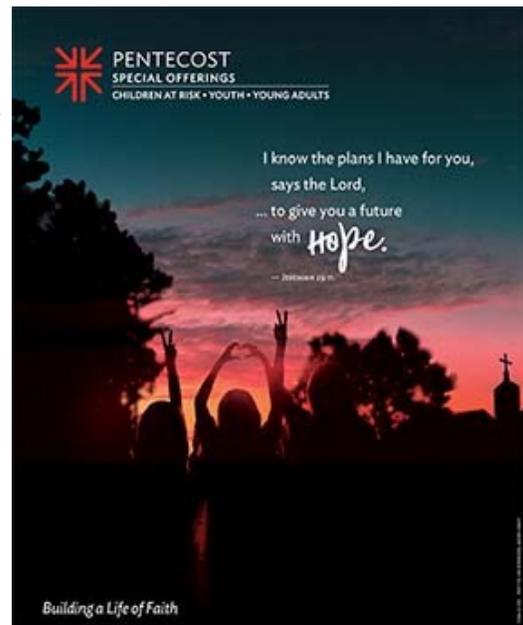
Pentecost Offering

The Pentecost Offering unites us in a church-wide effort to support young people and inspire them to share their faith, ideas, and unique gifts with the church and the world.

Psalm 71 testifies that a foundation of faith established during childhood helps ensure lifelong faith and service. The patterns and lessons established during these formative years continue to bear fruit throughout a person's life. By receiving the Pentecost Offering, you are nurturing the faith of those who are the church to come - children, youth, and young adults.

A gift to the Pentecost Offering helps the church encourage, develop, and support its young people, and also to address the needs of at-risk children. Forty percent of the Pentecost Offering can be retained by individual congregations wanting to make an impact in the lives of young people within their own community. The remaining sixty percent is used to support children-at-risk, youth, and young adults through ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

For more information click [Presbyterian Special Offerings - Pentecost \(pcusa.org\)](http://pcusa.org).



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NOTES FROM THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

*By Rev. Brian Heron,
Presbyter for Vision and Mission*

I don't usually wrestle too much with finding words to put to paper. Usually my issue is trying to pick from a variety of timely topics, all of which seem equally important. But I struggled this time. I came up with a number of themes and none of them felt just right.

Finally, unable to land on any one particular topic I took off on a hike hoping that the fresh air and having my body in motion would provide some clarity. But, all the hike did was to confirm that none of my topics felt right. Nothing was getting traction.

It wasn't until I realized that there really wasn't anything to say that the right words began to flow. Over the last two years, there has been stuff that had to be said, urgent stuff. We have been in the middle of a pandemic and on the heels of social unrest, political upheaval and wildfire destruction. Over the past fifteen months, our Strategic Planning Team had been working diligently and feverishly. It seemed that every month I had something that had to be reported to keep the process moving.

But the Omnibus deadline hit me this month with nothing to say. I didn't want to write an article that continued to push us. We have felt pushed enough as it is. I didn't have anything new to say since we are in a between time—after the adoption of new mission and vision statements but before infrastructure recommendations.

It was then I remembered a comment from many years ago when a guitar instructor was trying to get me to slow down my playing. He said, "Brian, music isn't made by the number of notes you play. It is made by the pauses between the notes." That was it. I knew that what I needed and what I think all of us need is permission to just pause.

I do have a message for us this month. It is the message that is coming from the apparent absence of a message. The message is that we can cram as much work into our day, our week, our year or our life. But it is the pause between assignments that makes our life into a thing of beauty. It is the pause that makes our work sacred.

"Be still, and know that I am God." Psalm 46:10
Breathe, trust, rest, be...

Brian



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Building on EAD’s “fierce urgency” theme, Williams-Skinner said the fierce urgency to advance civil and human rights “will not happen until we face the truth that will set us all free — that white Christians, whether advancing, supporting or simply tolerating systems upholding white supremacy and sustaining white minority rulership in an increasingly multicultural America is a form of idolatry, and idolatry is anything that is advanced above God. This form of idolatry is not only offensive to God but a total rejection of the teaching of Jesus and over 2,000 verses of Scripture of God’s concern for the poor and for those treated unjustly.”

Beyond the numerous commands of God advancing unity are “the many other sacred texts” calling us to repentance, restitution and reconciliation, Williams-Skinner said.

“It is America’s struggle and unaddressed civil and human rights history that has so distorted our Christian identity [and] makes us look more like the world today than the world looks like us,” Williams-Skinner said.

We must face up “by putting God back on the throne of our lives and by asking God to help us make our revolutionary risen Savior our primary focus,” Williams-Skinner said. Next, we must repent for “the ways in which we have betrayed Jesus and his teaching and failed to embrace Christian unity as a radical agenda” in order to “defeat every barrier in our nation and world.”

Third, we must make use of “this post-pandemic reality we are now in ... What will be normal again if we don’t envision what civil and human rights might be — God’s way?” How, for example, do we “make our repentance and our focus on racial equity and restitution for past harms part of that new reality? Because that’s what Jesus would be doing.”

“But none of this will happen until we who have so much — and I count myself in that, because this is not a message for white people, it’s a message for people who have so much — because to whom much is given, much more is required,” Williams-Skinner said before invoking the prophet Micah.

The current crisis will be met with “a restored radical faith and by walking in courage to do what God has called us to do with people who look like the kingdom,” Williams-Skinner said. “That is my prayer for the body of Christ today.”

“Make prayer the center of your life,” Williams-Skinner urged listeners. “I promise you can’t do this in your own strength. I pray that we would as a body make prayer the center of all we do for the strength we need to advance civil and human rights in America and across the world. Thank you so much and God bless you.”

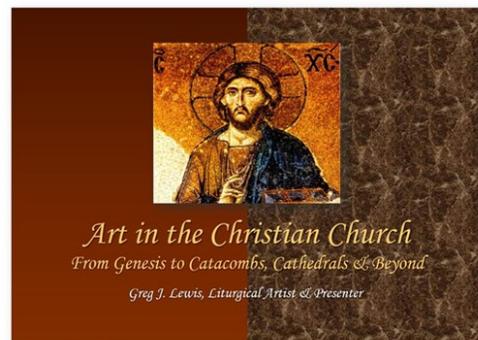


*Dr. Barbara Williams-Skinner
(Contributed photo)*



Calling All Art Enthusiasts

Do you or anyone you know have a deep appreciation for art? **First, Portland** is hosting a series of lectures you and your friends might find interesting. “Art in the Christian Church: From Genesis to Catacombs, Cathedrals & Beyond” by liturgist, artist, and presenter, Greg J. Lewis will take place over 5 Sundays from **12-1 pm**. Though the class started **on April 24**, the remaining lectures can be experienced **May 1, 15, 22, June 12**. Enjoy a richly visual journey through 2000 years of Art in the Christian Church while tracing the great periods of art and architecture that have influenced our Christian worship spaces of today. Park for free in the church parking lot. Questions? Contact [Rev. Brenna Dykman](#).



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Sabbatical Journeys to Help Explore God's Work Around the World

By Pat Berger, Northeast Region Reporter

As Pastor Jeremy Sanderson, began to work in his seventh year at **Oak Hills, Milwaukie**, and to think about his upcoming sabbatical, he sensed a need to think about how he envisioned what ministry is. Might he be able to grasp a broader picture, to reframe how he sees who he is in ministry?

Due to a generous grant from the Lilly Foundation, he will be able to take a more extensive look at all of this during this coming summer. He and his family (yes, the family gets to be included!) will be traveling first to Yaoundé, Cameroon. Oak Hills is already connected in mission with a church there. It will be a gift to see in person their part of what happens in Yaounde and meet those with whom they are in mission. They also will meet with some Wycliffe translators and instructors who make pastoral training available to local people. One of the experiences they know they will be having is meeting and working with people whose resources are so very much less than ours, even though we too spend a fair amount of time being concerned about exactly that.

The second part of his sabbatical (yes, there is more!) will be spent in Scotland at the University of Aberdeen's divinity school. Dr. John Swinton, theologian, teaches a theology of the disabled. His congregation is comprised of variously abled folk, and Pastor Jeremy will learn how best to lead people with all sorts of abilities in ministry.

Most of July will be spent locally, as they all rest up from the first two adventures. Then comes the third part of the sabbatical: the family will head for Porcupine, South Dakota, where Pastor Jeremy has family history with the Lakota people. His (many-times) great-grandfather was a pastor there. He hopes to connect with partners in ministry there, and to find ways that they might do ministry together. They will be taking school supplies and other necessary things with them for those they will meet. Pastor Jeremy relates an "atmosphere of hopelessness" there, and hopes they can be helpful.

His hope for all of these stops in all of the different locations is that he can get away from what he sees as "pandemic navel-gazing" to find what God is doing in the **world**. While he and his family are away, Associate Pastor for Family Life, Christy Polk will serve as Head of Staff. She will share worship leadership time with guest speakers, many of whom will focus on mission and other current projects of this congregation.

Pastor Jeremy is sensing in his congregation a return to pre-pandemic life. They are now back to in-person worship, with two services every Sunday. Members are returning, and some new people have found their way to the church. They have purchased HEPA filters for the sanctuary. Their online service is also continuing, for which their "snowbird" members are grateful -- as well as are Pastor Jeremy's parents in up-state New York! There are also members who cannot get to the church for worship, and others who prefer to stay home, who very much appreciate the ability to continue to worship from their homes.

Their mission work is coming back to life, too. When they spent the gift of mission funds from the presbytery last year, they just kept putting money back into that fund and making gifts to those who needed them. We will all want to hear how Pastor Jeremy's sabbatical enhanced how God is working through this congregation. Blessings for your ministry!



*Oak Hills, Milwaukie back to
in-person worship!*

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ViewPoints

*By Sarah Sanderson-Doughty, Presbytery Conflict Team Leader
Pastor of St. Andrew's, Portland*

Greetings from Seaside, Oregon! I am an hour and a half away from home as I write this (likely back home when you're reading it) on day-one of a week of study leave. If you're a pastor, I hope you're taking advantage of your study leave and vacation. If you're a church member, I hope you're encouraging your pastor to do so. It is so helpful to step away for a bit and reflect and gain tools for ministry and insight into one's ministry.

This week I am participating in the third of three sessions of the Advanced Clergy Clinic in Family Emotional Process offered by the [Lombard Mennonite Peace Center](#) (LMPC). In 2018-2019, I participated in the basic Clergy Clinic and I highly recommend this continuing education forum. In 2018-2019 I flew to Chicago three times in order to participate, but the pandemic has changed things and now I have the option to participate via Zoom (or in-person) and I opted for Zoom for all three sessions. It has been lovely to get away in our glorious region, with beloved colleagues, and learn. It was also lovely three years ago to really get some distance and meet new colleagues in person.

At these clergy clinics, you receive education about Bowen's Family Systems Theory, and you have the opportunity to examine your own family of origin in light of the theory in small family of origin groups and to apply the theory to congregational case studies in slightly larger small groups. The Advanced clinics allow continued and deepened study and awareness. Ideally, this learning helps you to become a healthier, more differentiated leader, something the church always needs, but especially needs in anxious times. And goodness knows, we're living in anxious times!

LMPC offers other helpful workshops on mediation skills training, healthy congregations, conflict transformation for congregations, etc. I have participated in many of their offerings and learned something valuable at each one. Congregations can also contract with the LMPC for congregational mediation in the midst of intense conflict.

It has become clear to me that part of God's call to me is to help churches learn to manage conflict in healthier ways. I have pursued studies with Lombard to help me to respond to this call faithfully. I applied to serve as the new Conflict Team Leader for the Presbytery of the Cascades in response to this call.

I am delighted that the search team selected me for this role and I am looking forward to recruiting a team to work with me, and arranging quality training for the team. We will build our capacity to assist the Commission on Ministry with conflicts that arise in our congregations. I am hoping to recruit up to four people from each region in the presbytery and to offer training with the assistance of a professional mediator. If you would be interested in joining us in this important and faithful work, [please don't hesitate to reach out to me.](#)

I welcome your prayers for all three new staff members and the teams we will be recruiting, training, and building, and on our presbytery as we live into our new collaborative mission and vision.



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Hammers and Saws at Work

Bruce Smith, Central Region Reporter



While April has been creeping into spring between snow and showers, some churches have been busily remodeling their facilities. This is an effort to bring you up to date on what is happening in the Central Region.

First, Corvallis began its building restoration project, phase 1, April 18. This is a major effort for the restoration of the Eighth Street façade of Educational Hall. This will require the renewal of the brick and the stone, and casting decorative elements including the coping stones on top of the parapet. There will also be seismic strengthening of the roof and the floor members of the front wall with the brick, and cast stone will be anchored securely to the front wall. The windows and the louver will be completely restored as well. Along with this procedure there was a manse painting party for volunteers in April and May.

The **Central, Eugene** Remodeling Committee met with Essex Construction to discuss the elimination of an elevator, remodeling the community room, first area bathrooms, and the North entry/office to the narthex. The North covering entry will extend to the sidewalk. A hot water heater is to be placed in the community room for the kitchenette and bathroom with a changing table. The plans will be submitted to City Planning for review and approval. Once completed new bids will be selected and construction is expected in May.

Turning to more cerebral matters in the Central Region, the Mission Committee at **First, Corvallis** gave \$1000 to support Ukraine and their struggles. There was a hint that individual members prayerfully consider what they could do also.

Westminster, Eugene began a preschool in the church which has continued to grow and blossom. The school has offered a variety of programs continuing to learn the alphabet where each letter is highlighted with a particular activity. For the letter “O” part of their education was to learn all about owls. For the letter “P” everyone wore pajamas to school and ate pancakes at snack time. In March for Dr. Seuss’s birthday, the focus was on a tasting adventure with green eggs and ham.

Community, Waldport newsletter apprised the congregation of their support for the Bhalukaha International in Bangladesh through their gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing. This organization is a hostel for girls which provides them with a safe home, training in life skills, basic literacy, and health and hygiene.

Also sent by Bruce Smith...

Looking at the broader scene the PC(USA) Mission Agency formulated their 2023–24 budgets to continue reaching to the broader community. With the income expected of \$54.7 million in 2023 and \$55.7 million in 2024 the 270 or so employees will focus on several areas. A portion of their ministries will be in building congregational mentality while others will work at eradicating systematic poverty. There also will be an effort in addressing gender justice, the climate crisis, heteropatriarchy (a sociopolitical system defining male and female roles), and militarism.

This is a gentle reminder that our churches individually and as a whole continue to spread the message of the gospel in a variety of ways locally as well as around the world.



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~ *Transitions* ~

Installations

- The Rev. Scott Dalgarno was installed at Southminster PC, Beaverton, OR on Sunday, April 3.

Pastoral Changes:

- The Rev. Chris Dela Cruz has been converted from a Designated Associate to an Installed Associate Pastor.
- The covenant relationship between the Rev. Kelsey Ingalls and First PC, Newport was dissolved on March 6, 2022

Memoria:

- The Rev. Robert (Bob) Dodson went to be with the Lord on March 13, 2022. A memorial will be held Saturday, June 11, 2:00 pm at St. John's Presbyterian Church in Camas, WA. Contact the church for more details.

Church Anniversaries

- Community, Walport chartered April 6, 1901
- Siuslaw, Florence chartered April 15, 1984
- First, Vancouver, chartered April 18, 1882
- Hope Korean, Portland, chartered April 21, 2002
- Northminster, Portland, chartered April 23, 1911
- First, Lakeview, chartered May 2, 1911
- Central, Eugene, chartered May 5, 1855
- Lake Grove, Lake Oswego, chartered May 6, 1925
- Hillsboro, chartered May 14, 1967
- Clatskanie, chartered May 15, 1904
- First, Salem, chartered May 15, 1869
- First, Lakeview chartered May 21, 1869
- First, Astoria, chartered May 24, 1877

Presbyterian Response to Ukraine

**To support PCUSA Disaster Assistance Response,
designate gifts to [DROOO156](#) or text PDAUKR to 41444**

We are grateful for the outpouring of prayers and calls from congregations and individuals asking how they can help. In the midst of the chaos, there are sibling churches and ecumenical partners who are already providing assistance with basic items for survival. Our first priority as PDA is to provide funding to these partners on the ground. We are hearing that the reformed churches in Ukraine and the region are also feeling called to join in the humanitarian response. PDA, therefore, anticipates that our response will include both financial and technical assistance as the network of faith communities providing humanitarian assistance grows in the months ahead. Funds are being used for emergency humanitarian aid such as food items, shelter, medicines, diapers, hygiene items, etc.

Tell Me Your Story

Our presbytery is made up of countless passionate and gifted people. The nominating committee is always anticipating and seeking to integrate **new leaders** into our many committees and teams. Before we begin the work of identifying and nominating new leaders, we would love to hear from our **current** (or past) committee members. What compelled you to serve on a committee? **How were you blessed, surprised by joy, or changed by your experience on your team?** It is the stories that change us. Tell us yours.



[Tell Me Your Story](#)



There's a Place for You!

The nominating committee encourages your participation on presbytery committees. Please take this opportunity to suggest yourself or someone you would recommend for service on a committee or taskforce in the presbytery. We will use this information to update our committee and nomination database. Interested? Click [here](#) for the form.

Fire Recovery Grants Still Available

While the wildfires of 2020 have long gone out, our commitment to support those devastated by them has not. The **Wildfire Relief Team** continues to provide funding for churches in their recovery efforts throughout our area.

Nearly \$100,000 was donated by churches, individuals and friends of the presbytery-- some which is **still available to support the mission work of churches and their mission partners related to fire recovery**. Additional funding through PDA is also available and applying through our Wildfire Relief application will qualify people for both sets of funds. PDA is able to support larger scale projects and community initiatives.

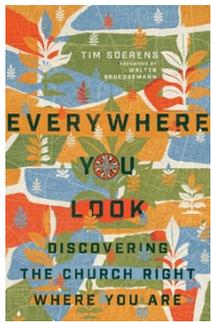


The Alameda Drive Fire in Talent and Phoenix Oregon. Copyright Bill Gabbert/Wildfire Today.

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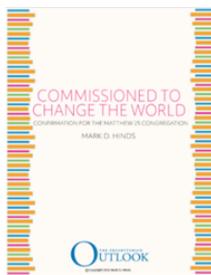
Resources help Ministry and Mission



Everywhere you Look: Discovering the Church Right Where you Are

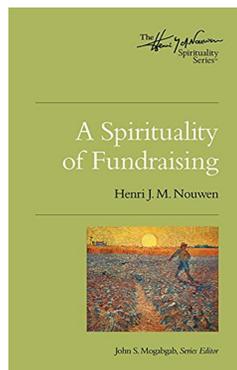
Kelly Dickson notes... "I have recently been reading this book and have really enjoyed it. I feel it has some great points."

In *Everywhere You Look*, Tom Soerens lays out practical, actionable steps for building collaborative communities in any neighborhood. Here is a vision of the church grounded in a grassroots movement of ordinary people living out what it means to be the church in their everyday lives. Read this book—and join the movement. For more information click [here](#).



Commissioned to Change the World: Confirmation for the Matthew 25 Congregation, written by Mark D. Hinds.

This course marries adolescent confirmation with the theological focus of "serving the least of these." The curriculum affirms teenagers as God's beloved children, anointed for ministry in the context of a covenant community of mutual encouragement and accountability.



A Spirituality of Fundraising
By Henri J.M. Nouwen

A pastor friend of Randa Blanding, Omnibus Proof Reader, recommended this as one of the best on the subject...

Do you serve on your church's stewardship committee or need to raise money for a mission trip or some other faith-based cause? Perhaps the thought of asking people for

money intimidates you. It's time to change the way you think about fundraising.

"Fundraising is, first and foremost, a ministry," best-selling author and renowned spiritual teacher Henri Nouwen writes. "It's a way of announcing our vision and inviting other people into our mission."

Nouwen encourages us to see fundraising as spiritual work and approach it confidently. "Fundraising is precisely the opposite of begging," he points out. Unlike most business/leadership books, *A Spirituality of Fundraising* is brief and can easily be read in one sitting.



"#Trust Black Women" - a special edition of *Outlook* magazine.

I recommend this special edition of the *Outlook* magazine. It offers a wide variety of material sharing the wisdom of Black women. At one point they offered to sell this issue on its own, but must admit to not being able to find that offer now. If you can I would encourage you to get it.

Per *Outlook* magazine: This issue has been turned over to Black women to highlight and center the voices of these trustworthy leaders, scholars, theologians, writers and artists. Framed by the barrier-breaking leadership of Katie Geneva Cannon, contributors highlight issues of representation, call for rest as a form of resistance and advocate for the needs of Black women and girls. The call of this issue is the call of the faithful: trust Black women. Listen to them. Learn from them. Honor them.

I particularly found the many book recommendations throughout the issue helpful including the ones for young adult and picture book genres. *The Year We Learned to Fly* by Jacqueline Woodson sounds particularly wonderful — all about using our wonderful imaginations to take over a "boring, rainy day."

Do you have a book, a Bible Study, a resource that has helped you in your ministry? Please share. Send to editor, Kathleen Waugh at omnibus@cascadespresbytery.org

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