

The Newsletter of the Santa Barbara Presbytery

September 2020

We, the PC (USA) churches and ministries of Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties, join together to foster vibrant worshipping communities who proclaim and live out the love of Jesus Christ for one another and our neighbors.

Joining Together. Worshipping God. Loving People.

The Race Edition

1. Ted Brandt, Pastor, FPC Oxnard

"Someone saying, 'I'm not a racist,' doesn't help the problem," said fitness influencer Bryce Michael Wood, who started the Zoom series, "*For Your Discomfort*," after the death of George Floyd. "Simply saying I'm not doing that does not save somebody's life. It's like witnessing someone getting jumped and being like, 'Hey, I didn't jump 'em.' But you also just stood there while he or she got jumped. And being an antiracist is like... getting involved and being like, 'Break it up. Stop this.'" - (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/antiracist-not-racist-difference/>)

How do we help the church actively stand against racism rather than just standing by and letting it happen?

Pastors Tracey Stringer and Hannah Sims of New City Church in Los Angeles are leading us in a nine-week anti-racism training project called "Deconstructing Anti-Black Narratives: Moving Beyond Sharing Our Stories."

This past week we reflected on the several stereotypes of black females (sapphire, strong black female, jezebel, mammy) and of black males (mandrake / brute, uncle tom, nat, sambo) that still prevail in our culture.

Captivating presentations and mind-opening discussions happen in both multi-cultural groups (mixed races and ethnicities) and in racial affinity groups, such as Black, White, Asian, LatinX. Contemporary films including *Crash* and *Beauty Shop* are used as part of the

curriculum to provoke discussion on stereotypes and whiteness.

I have been impacted by the stories of those who feel demeaned by others, in daily life, and yes, in the year 2020. As a white Christian male, my eyes are opening to see the world, and my own whiteness, from a variety of perspectives. I can heartily recommend the anti-racism training offered by New City Church.

- Rev. Ted Brandt, First Pres Oxnard / Church at The Collection

2. Marcia Risher, Elder, Emmanuel, Thousand Oaks

Members of Emmanuel Church in Thousand Oaks spent four Thursday evenings in July and August listening and learning about racial injustice in our country and the history that has led us to the current moment. This was done through a series of 4 videos we watched via Zoom. Some of the people featured in the videos included Latasha Morrison, Bryan Stevenson, Tony Evans, John Jenkins, Karol Mason, Richard Rothstein, Bernice King and Miles McPherson. We know that 1 Corinthians 12 says when one part of the body suffers the whole body suffers. There are clearly many of our black brothers and sisters who are hurting and the first step to learning what we can do is to listen to what they have to tell us.

3. Community Church, Grover Beach Gospel and Race Series

Reflections by Associate Pastor Paul Dugan

On three Wednesdays (June 17, 24, and July 1) Coastal Community Church in Grover Beach hosted a class on "Gospel and Race." It was led

by Pastor Andy Rock. Each session began with worship and ended with lament.

Here are some of the main points of our conversation:

Worship first. We need to get our eyes on King Jesus. Only under his reign can we address these issues with grace and truth.

Be aware of what we bring to this conversation. People bring different emotions. Fear of being misunderstood, labeled, of offending, or being rejected for saying what we think. Grief for ongoing inequity and suffering. Anger and outrage that things don't seem to be getting better. Shame, that I have been a part of the problem.

Be prepared to make mistakes. We won't get it right. It will be messy. We need an umbrella of grace over this entire conversation.

Define what kind of conversation we are NOT having

We are not having a left-right, progressive-conservative debate. This debate is futile, ending in shaming and blaming the other. We want to have a kingdom conversation.

We are not having an exercise in white-shaming, cop-bashing, or in demeaning peaceful protestors. We are not just talking. We want to actually do something!

So, why are we having this conversation?

To understand God's heart for our neighbors who have been hurt. Jesus declared that our love for God (Deut 6:4f) cannot be separated from our love for our neighbor (Lev 19:18). The whole biblical Story is about God saving a covenant people who were to display God's righteousness and justice, to become a light to the nations. The prophets constantly confronted idolatry and injustice among the people of God, warning of judgment to come. They also promised the coming of One who would bring a new kingdom of peace, reconciliation and justice. Isaiah spoke of this: See Is 61:1-2

Jesus opened his ministry quoting this passage, and said, "*Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing*" (Luke 4:21). He told of God's healing

work among Israel's ethnic enemies. And the members of Jesus' home town tried to kill him. They did not want a God who loved their enemies.

To apply the gospel to every area of our personal and communal life. The gospel is not about going to heaven after you die. It has implications for every relationship in life, here and now. Responding to racism in the first century church, Paul spoke of the power of the gospel to create a new humanity: See (Ephesians 2:14-18)

To learn to live as citizens of the kingdom of God, following the radical mission of Jesus. Our primary identity as followers of Jesus is not Republican or Democrat, liberal or conservative. These are "empire" labels. Empire seeks power. Jesus preached an upside-down kingdom where power is used to heal, restore, reconcile, and welcome those on the margins. We want to be "kingdom" people.

What are some practical goals going forward?

That we see reconciliation as discipleship.

Increase our cross-cultural intelligence. To learn diverse narratives. Watch Phil Vischer's 18 min video on Race in America <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AGUwcs9qJXY> , discussing our reactions and taking time for lament and repentance.

To begin to engage in long term cross cultural relationships of collaboration. We have begun partnering with a Spanish-speaking congregation in our community, Devino Salvador, together hosting a daytime study center for kids needing supervision with online education.

Paul adds "We are continuing the conversation, with the guidance of David Bailey's excellent series, '*Race and the Kingdom of God*' from Arrabon: <https://arrabon.com/>"

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