

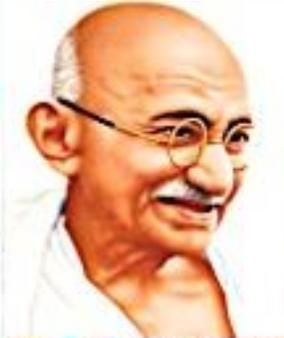


First Presbyterian Church

# REFLECTIONS

Albany, New York

*a photo-essay journal*



Spring 2018  
This issue features reflections on  
the theme "Resistance"





First Presbyterian  
Church  
Albany, NY  
Founded in 1763

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Trevor Kahlbaugh  
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Christy D'Ambrosio  
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## The cover

# Resistance – Uprising - Resurrection

By Richard Gascoyne

Christ on the cross??? Not in the Reformed Tradition! but integral to the “uprising” that follows. We often hear from the pulpit and see in our mind’s eye an empty tomb, an empty cross, the ghost of a Jesus, transformed into the Christ who exhorts his followers and strangers to follow him in rising up.

We have no pictures of Christ actually rising from the dead, but our fellow Christians in the Orthodox tradition picture Christ rising from the grave, holding the hands of those behind him, leading them from death to new life. The Greek for “resurrection” is *ἀνάστασις* (anastasis) [ana – up + stasis – rising or standing]. Resurrection = Uprising!

Who are these people that Christ is pulling up from death to life? In Orthodox iconography they are often identified as Adam and Eve, the “original sinners,” but behind them is a crowd of people, we like to think, of all nations, of all traditions, of all generations, absolved of sin and ready to continue the work of God in a new world, resisting the sin and death of corruption, injustice, inequality, poverty, and establishing a new world order of peace, civility, and justice.



*Anastasis (Resurrection) painting from the Dark Church, carved out of the volcanic rock of Cappadocia, Turkey, c. 1040.*

The cover of the spring edition of *REFLECTIONS, a photo-essay journal*, shows Jesus, the Christ, on a folk art cross, rising from a humble pueblo upward into the light of the sun, arms outstretched beneath olive branches. Around him are some of the “saints” who have risen with him and have had as their mission the creation of a new world order: Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Theresa, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., a mighty crowd in the Women’s March on Washington, the day after the presidential inauguration, two youngsters rising up for human rights, with Alexander Hamilton as their model of **resistance**.

**Resistance** is our theme, and in the pages that follow you will see how it works out in First Presbyterian Church of Albany, NY: Migrants are people in **RESISTANCE**, p. 3; First Pres at war, p. 4-5; A prisoner of war speaks, p. 6; Christian conscientious objection, p. 7; Women resist! p. 7; A year of **Resistance**: youth curriculum and drama, p. 8-9; Mission to Guatemala, p. 10; 1963 MLK March on Washington, p. 11; Disruption and destruction, p. 14; Black history month, p. 15-17; Learning to love like God, p. 18; Love your neighbor, p. 19; Turn the other cheek, p. 19; Responding to the challenges of violence, terror, and war, p. 20. All this, mixed with the message of hope in the resurrection, the ultimate Christian uprising.

## Immigration not the issue

# Migrants are people in RESISTANCE

By Amaury Tañón-Santos

*[Amaury Tañón-Santos, DMin, is the Synod Networker for the Synod of the Northeast (the ecclesial region that serves the New England states, New Jersey and New York). He and his family are neighbors in Guilderland. He is also a minister member-at-large of the Presbytery of Albany.]*



Immigration is part of the story of the individual who migrates and of the dozens of people whose lives will also change because of it. Any one person's story of immigration is a much longer narrative that predates and continues after the moment of migration itself. The decision to migrate is always a complicated one. And no matter the kind of documentation a person may or may not have been able to secure at the moment of migration, to migrate is never an action taken lightly. Immigration is, therefore, not an issue. It is the story of people in resistance.

In November of 2017 and again in January of 2018 I was privileged to be in conversation with the adult education class about immigration. Immigration is, of course, not a new reality for First Presbyterian Church in Albany. It was evident from the get-go that in the current membership of the congregation, as well as in the history of its founding, migrants have played a significant role in the identity, ministry and witness of First Presbyterian. This is also true to the history of Presbyterianism in the United States.

Today First Presbyterian is faced with the challenge of the well-being of migrants in Albany and the United States once again. And people today migrate for the same reasons we have always migrated – for economic, social, political or environmental circumstances. And for many, to begin to fathom the reality of the millions of immigrants in the United States – 11 million of which are said to be undocumented – is a daunting proposition. To focus the stories and numbers within the bounds of our Synod (New England, New Jersey, and New York) is still disheartening:

- There are recipients of asylum status and asylum seekers throughout our region, including members of our own Presbyterian congregations
- Communities we serve and folks that are our fellow Presbyterian siblings are being affected by the federal government's refusal to renew

temporary protected status for close to a dozen countries, including 200,000 Salvadorans, 60,000 Haitians, and 60,000 Hondurans.

- According to the Migration Policy Institute there are 800,000 recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA - representing only 68% of all eligible youth), with another 600,000 potentially becoming eligible in the coming years.
  - Close to 80,000 recipients (about 10% of the total) live within our bounds. Close to 42,000 (more than half) live in New York State
  - We have accounts of youth who are active in the life and leadership of many of our congregations who are DACA recipients, and who are in danger of being disenfranchised again should the DACA not be renewed or made into law.

And yet, many of these stories are neither new nor foreign to the life and ministry of our congregation. And so, what now?

As we continue this conversation I invite you to also begin discerning what kind of witness we are called to give as individual Christians and as a community of faith. In his letter to the church in Rome (12:9-13), Paul makes a list of actions that, being interrelated, will encourage a healthy expression of our hope in Jesus and a relevant witness to grace:

- Let love be genuine; hate what is evil,
- hold fast to what is good;
- love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.
- Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord.
- Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer.
- Contribute to the needs of the saints;
- extend hospitality to strangers.

Curious that phrase, **extend hospitality to strangers**, for in Greek it is not a phrase but one word – φιλοξενία (philoxenia). It is a compound word, *philos* for friend or loved one and *xenia* for stranger or "the other person." Our call to give witness to Jesus in love, zeal, and hope also calls to love those who might seem strange to us. Perhaps the more we grow aware of our own histories – as individuals, as a community of faith, and as Presbyterians – we may come to realize that those "othered" by society, and their histories of resistance are not so strange after all.

## War! - the ultimate resistance

### First Pres at war

By David Wood, Church Historian

One could say that our congregation exists in this place because of the French and Indian War. Men from the north of Ireland and from Scotland were brought to North America to defend British interests here. At the end of the war, many men were discharged with a land grant. The Scots and the Irish married and established families here. But for generations the Dutch had controlled the area, and there was no opportunity for our Scots-Irish predecessors to worship in English and follow the precepts of the Presbyterian Church. So they built a small church of predominantly English speakers, The First Presbyterian Church in Albany.

When the resistance to a government dictated by the British reached the point of rebellion, the rebels (or patriots) needed lead to make lead shot for their muskets. Our congregation donated the lead from our church windows to the war effort. In October of 1776, the New York Committee of Safety wrote to the Albany Committee of Safety asking it to "procure by purchase or loan" the iron stove belonging to the Presbyterian Church in Albany, and to ship it to Kingston. The correspondence promised to pay the moving expenses. After the war our Trustees petitioned the State for reimbursement for the cost of the stove, which had been destroyed when, on Oct. 13, 1777, the British burned Kingston. Our petition was denied, repeatedly.

Although New York State and Albany in particular contributed many men to the Union cause, there appears to have been no impact on the activities of our congregation during the Civil War. Nor during the Spanish-American War.

The effects of World War I (1914-1918) were profound. A plaque at the rear of the Sanctuary lists about 50 men who served during the war, including Pvt. E. Ellis Armour, who was gassed in France in 1917, and died shortly thereafter as a result.

In Jan. 1918 the Session authorized joint Friday night services with State Street Presbyterian Church in order to save coal, and other weekday services were held in private homes for the same reason. Later, the Session authorized a Union Communion Service with all Albany Presbyterian Churches in the State Street Presbyterian Church on the Thursday before Easter, 1918. After the conclusion of the war, the plaque at the rear of the Sanctuary was installed. There were errors in the first casting, so a second casting was authorized.

World War II was on the horizon. After Pearl Harbor day, Dec. 7, 1941, reactions were prompt and significant. On Dec. 14, the church bulletin carried this notice: "The American Red Cross will use some of the space in our church for its production work during the war emergency." Throughout the war the Dorcas Society worked many more hours per month than in the past, and even through the summers, in order to keep up with the requests from the Red Cross. Though making garments for poor children of Albany was the initial impetus for formation of the Dorcas Society, the American entry into World War I added the preparation of surgical dressings for wounded soldiers. Regrettably, that need reappeared during World War II. In subsequent peacetime, bandages were prepared for cancer patients and other needs of social agencies in Albany.

Session recommended to the Trustees that provisions be made for blackouts in case of air raid siren warnings, and an evacuation plan in case of an air raid be put in place. The skylights of the Capitol were painted black in 1942 in fear of air raids by German planes like the Blitzkrieg that had devastated London. The amplified church chimes were played each evening at 6 p.m. calling everyone to prayer for one minute. The Stevens Chapel was open 24 hours a day.

The Pastor asked the Session to prepare a large map showing the homes of the members, so that car pools could be established. Adult education classes were established in homes in different parts of the city, to minimize travel. Since food was rationed during the war, announcements of meetings at which lunch had been served were changed to ask people to bring their own box lunch. In spite of the war, many recreational activities continued, e.g. the Willett Players presented plays, movies were frequently shown in the gymnasium, and the weekly badminton groups continued to meet. Home Time [Youth Fellowship] was still popular, attracting 40 to 60 high school youth each week.

As winter set in, a shortage of oil (which was rationed) developed, and so it was decided to heat only the Fellowship Building, and worship services were held in the Blue Room (now the Rose Room). With a congregation of 1200 people, this was impossibly crowded. In October of 1943, a church bulletin announced that the Trustees had converted the heating system from oil back to coal and "we should be able to worship in the Sanctuary through the winter months."

The Sunday bulletin of Jan. 11, 1942 listed 16 servicemen. The list grew throughout the war, and soon included the names of women serving in the armed forces. On Feb. 1, 1943 it was announced that a service flag with 72 stars had been prepared and would be

dedicated "when we return to the Sanctuary." The first gold star was for Gilbert Van Wely, Jr., who died May 14, 1943. The second was for Lt. Charles H. Wood, Jr., who died June 27, 1944, and the third and last was for Obed Slingerland. The Crucifixion Window in the south wall of the Sanctuary was dedicated on Sept. 23, 1945 "In memory of Obed Finch Slingerland, Lt. (jg) USNR, killed in action May 24, 1945. Through him we honor those who gave of their lives in World War II." The honor roll printed at that time listed 138 members who had served in the armed forces during the war.

Even before the war ended in August of 1945, the suffering of the displaced persons in Europe led to urgent pleas for food, bedding, clothing and shoes for young and old to be shipped to Europe.

During the Korean Conflict at least three families displaced from their homes in Europe were sponsored and supported for a time after their arrival in Albany. Every year the young married couples repaired used toys to be given to the poor in Albany at Christmastime. The Dorcas Society continued its work during the Korean Conflict. There were several

drives to collect clothes, and shoes to be sent to Korea for people who had been displaced from their homes by the war.

Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria. The list goes on.



World War I Plaque in the back of the sanctuary, beneath the Morgan stained glass window - "The war to end all wars!"



### Reflections of the Resurrection / Uprising



## “So few come back . . .” A prisoner of war speaks:

By Bob Jackson



*[Editor's note -- Robert Jackson (1924-2016), long-time member of Frist Pres, was a WWII Prisoner of War from Oct. 22, 1943 - April 29, 1945. These excerpts cover two and a half years of notes, condensed from 130 pages of memoirs, from surrender to liberation. They barely scratch the surface of the deep emotion of the diary.]*

*[About 17 men were holed up in a farm house in northern Italy, surrounded by Jerries (Germans). The artillery fire was intense, several men were shot dead; many were wounded.]*

**[Surrender.]** “We put down our weapons and dropped our cartridge belts, and those who could, helped others, and we went out with our hands in the air. . . . They were shouting at us in German and prodding us with their rifles; after some confusion they got us lined up. . . . We were swiftly searched for weapons and started down from the ridge to the valley. This was our first search of several. The young soldier that frisked me found my five packs of gum, took one pack and with a smile handed back the other four. Subsequent searchers were not as generous. . . .

**[A few days later.]** “We marched to some boxcars . . . they kept forcing at gun point more and more men aboard, . . . no seats, no straw or blankets --- nothing! . . . It was so crowded that it was impossible for everyone to sit down at once. We had to take turns, standing or sitting [no lying down!]. . . . We had no food or water for the first 29 hours. . . . It was getting much colder and snowing some. . . . We were hungry, thirsty, tired, sore, nerves were frayed, and tempers were short. It was getting much colder. . . . *[The train was going over the Alps from Italy to Germany.]*

**[After 3 days and 2 nights.]** “Stalag VII-A . . . we finally arrived in Moosburg, Germany . . . about 32 kilometers north of Munich. . . . As we sit or stand at a table, gulping our soup or chewing on a chunk of bread . . . [we] see a nude figure carefully picking lice from hairy parts of his body like a monkey in the zoo. . . . Diphtheria has broken out in a couple of the compounds. . . . My boils seem to be finally getting better. They have seemed to be better before, only to flare up again . . . I have been very concerned, as I do not want to go to the hospital; so few

come back. . . . The guys on work detail today didn't get fed, and froze to and from Munich. . . .

**[A few weeks later]** “Devastation in the city of Munich is appalling. In sections there are just shells or parts of walls still standing. You see what appear to be jagged cross-sections of rooms or buildings, like an architectural model exposing a structure. There may be curtains, furniture and even a picture still hung on a wall that is still standing. The streets are full of rubble and debris except where it has been pushed back to make a path for traffic. It's hard to imagine unless you have seen it. . . .

**[A few months later.]** “Sometimes when we were on a work detail in Munich we worked near political prisoners. Dachau is not far from Munich. These prisoners could easily be identified by the way they were dressed. The “uniform” looked like a thin pair of pajamas, some striped and some not, and not all the same color. They sometimes had shoes, but often would have rags wrapped around their feet. They were pitifully thin and emaciated. It was very sad to see them being forced to try and work. The guards would not let us give them anything or even let us attempt to talk with them. . . .

One day we were working near a group of women prisoners. Someone said they were speaking Polish. They looked much fitter than the other political prisoners we had seen. They were outworking us, although that would not be too difficult. We could not figure why they were working so vigorously. I have no idea what type of prisoners they were, so it's an unsolved mystery. . . .

**[A few years later.]** “President Roosevelt died today, according to the reports we received. . . .

“Bullets began to crack and zing around the barracks area. We could hear shelling and various kinds of weapons firing. It was a nerve-wracking, scary situation; here we were so close to being free and all the threatening shooting was going on near us. No one wanted to get this close and be killed. My nerves were at high tension. I was not in good shape. . . .

“About 2 o'clock an American tank crashed through the double 10-foot barbed wire fence at the front of the camp and rumbled down the camp main roadway. P.O.W.s were streaming out from all directions and swarming excitedly around the tank. Soldiers riding on the tank assisted a couple of P.O.W.s up with them. One of these P.O.W.s kissed the tank Commander as tears streamed down his face. . . . I thanked God for this day and the people that made it possible.

*[Read the full story in the church library (A Wartime Prison Camp Log, Stalag VII-A, Germany by Bob Jackson). Much of it is Bob's love story for Irene, who became his wife of 67 years. It will bring tears to your eyes.]*

## Christian conscientious objection

By Gaylord Brynolfson

*[Editor's note -- Gaylord Brynolfson, Bruce's brother, is a chaplain at Kenmore Mercy Hospital near Buffalo, NY.]*

Somewhere in my files I have the letter from the psychiatrist stating I was unfit for military service. I came by that letter honestly, if reluctantly.

It was 1968; the war in Vietnam was raging and I had just graduated from college and become vulnerable to the draft.

I applied for CO status with help from an anti-war support group of the national Presbyterian Church. I argued before my draft board in Buffalo that my Presbyterian upbringing had inculcated both the model of Jesus' non-violent life and the Good News that his awful death on the cross had freed us all from our bondage to hate and violence. Consequently, I believed that killing people is wrong, that state organized, and sanctioned violence is wrong, and that the systematic, routine dehumanization of soldiers that enables them to kill a dehumanized enemy is abhorrent.

Naturally, my application was denied after brief, pro-forma consideration: Any Christian claim is fatally contradicted by the long history of Christian participation in war. Hence the psychiatrist's letter stating I was unfit for military service because I fundamentally questioned the unconditional power of authority. Or rather, the unconditional authority of power—a position I still believe clearly is exemplified in Jesus' life.

On Good Friday this year, sitting in church contemplating the cross with this reminiscence fresh in mind, I thought about those Roman soldiers—those familiar figures destined year after year to play their sorry, brutal part in the crucifixion story. Of course, *they* were not answerable for Jesus' death. They were not thinking for themselves or acting on their own. They were only executing *orders*. Just as they had been trained to do. Just as soldiers everywhere have always been.

But Jesus invites and empowers us to take a profoundly different part in human history.



## Women resist!

Perhaps this season's biggest resistance movement was the worldwide protest on January 21, 2017, the day after the president's inauguration, to advocate legislation and policies regarding human rights. Between 3-5 million people participated in the U.S., including some from First Pres. Members of the families of Tara Lindsley and Joanne Gascoyne are pictured here.

"My thought," said Tara, "as I look at these pictures is that my motivation to go to the march ... wasn't political. It was a longing to be present with other women; to hear and be heard resisting injustice together. The trip on the train, in the hotel, in the rally and in the streets -- the chanting, singing, voices of women was profoundly moving and energized me for continuing my advocacy work back home with others at First Pres!"

Joanne participated in the march in NYC with her daughter and two granddaughters. She was interviewed by a CNN reporter who



quoted her as saying, "I feel people are afraid to vote for a woman president ... I'm really here for women and to inspire my granddaughters to carry on."



## A year of Resistance

By Christy D'Ambrosio

Sunday School students in the junior and senior highs combined classes this year to examine the topic of *Resistance*. Many of the group attended the UN leadership seminar in New York City where the theme of the conference was "*Reclaiming the Voice of Resistance*." The future of our community, country, and indeed, our world, will be determined by the next generation. The young people of First Pres have made a vigorous and enthusiastic effort to understand the issues while participating in these activities. They are the leaders for making a positive change. The culmination of the year's study and activity was *Resistance*, a collage of political poetry and music adapted, with new lyrics, from the hit musical, *Hamilton*. Relive the experience in this photo collage.



## No one noticed, no one cared Mission to Guatemala

By Alice Schrade

Guatemala! -- Albany Presbytery was organizing a trip. I knew it would be an adventure, but I had no idea where it was or where the adventure would lead. One August morning in 1992, we left for that beleaguered country, an eager group from First Pres and Westminster, with whom we had joined in study for weeks before departure, with Kevin Wansor as our leader. I remember on arrival sitting on the bus with Rudy Nelson and bursting into tears as I saw a Mayan man who had been killed in traffic, lying in the median on the highway. No one noticed, no one cared. He was a small man, dead in the road as people passed by. I can still picture him. I saw a woman sitting on her steps weeping; it appeared that she had been beaten.

Guatemala was at war: Guatemala, "the land of eternal spring." The US government under President Eisenhower was concerned about the democratically elected President Arbenz, who was in the process of restoring properties to the Guatemalan people that United Fruit Company had stolen in order to grow bananas. Obsessed with the Cold War, our government feared the "communist" policies. We went in with the CIA and bombed Guatemala City, ushering in a military dictatorship and years of violence. Over 200,000 Mayans and others were killed or "disappeared." Our group learned a great deal about violence and resistance, and we learned equally as much about ourselves and our own country. We spent every evening reflecting on the day and on our feelings about what had happened and what we had seen. We visited the embassy, local churches, spiritual sites such as Iximche, a Diaconia project and an orphanage. We stayed overnight at the orphanage where the toilet was turned off at 8 pm.

I wrote, on return home, to the president of Guatemala and to the US embassy staff about the slaughter of whole villages – my own personal resistance! I was warned by one of our mission co-workers not to sign my own name because of the possibility of retribution. We all became emotionally involved in the seriousness of what was happening and had been happening there for 30 years. That was the beginning of twenty or more trips I made to Guatemala, sometimes with the Presbytery but more often on my own, with other groups who were helping in some way. We once visited with the families of the disappeared who much later were able to find where their loved ones had been killed. It was long after the Peace Accord had been signed in 1996.

It seems strange, but I consider myself very fortunate to have been there so many times and to have learned so much about a place and people so different from me and my fellow North Americans.

All that I experienced during that first trip and the ones that followed seriously impacted my concern for Mayan women and connected me to those who had left Guatemala or were in sanctuary here. I learned of the women's weavings, and I met the woman who, with her husband, brought Mayan weavings to Albany to sell. She is an anthropologist and came to Albany with her family to finish her PhD. Three people on her street in Guatemala City had been murdered. She has become a dear friend. The weaving group is called Mayan Hands, and our members here at First Pres have been generously supporting them for many years by buying their handicraft items at Christmas. Our sales help the women not only to continue working but also enable their children to attend school, afford health care, healthy food, clothing, and it tends to reduce the birth rate of young girls who begin to realize that education is the road to success. This is my personal resistance against poverty, injustice, and the exploitation of women.



## Civil Rights Movement

# 1963 MLK March on Washington

By Hugh Nevin

I was on the back steps of the Lincoln Memorial (the speakers' platform was on the front facing the Mall) when an audible thrill went through the crowd. The U.S. Senate was meeting the day of the March but had adjourned so that Senators could attend the afternoon ceremonies. I watched as Minnesota Senator Hubert Humphrey, a champion of all that the March stood for, stepped out of his car and waved to us. Later, when Martin Luther King, Jr. was speaking, I watched from a spot off to the left below him on the fringe of the Memorial's front steps. It was obvious the crowd was responding to what he said, but I had no idea at the time how famous that speech would later become. "I have a dream ..."

Pictures of the March show many of the 250,000 people there gathered around (and some in) the Reflecting Pool in front of the Lincoln Memorial. Everywhere I went, up and down both sides of the Pool, people were lively and welcoming; at times it felt as if I were attending an overgrown Sunday School picnic.

My first sense of how large the march was likely to be came as our bus traveled down the New Jersey Turnpike. When, along with other buses, we made a rest stop, instead of going into the building, we were directed to a section of lawn by the parking lot where, behind a temporary fence, a long trench had been dug for us to use as a latrine. Planners were anticipating a crowd and wanted us to waste no time.



I took part in the March in my role as Campus Minister of the Campus Christian Federation of Suffolk County (an experimental ministry engaging four campuses on the eastern half of Long Island). As a Presbyterian I'd had an interest in this march for some time. Eugene Carson Blake was on the planning committee, representing the Commission on Race Relations of the National Council of Churches. At the time he was the Stated Clerk of our denomination; he had served as pastor of First Pres from 1935 to 1940.

Back home, the experience of the March energized my preaching and fueled my interactions with students and others on our campuses. The most rewarding follow up was a program at SUNY Stony Brook which brought the pastor of the Sweet Pilgrim Baptist Church of Hattiesburg, Mississippi to speak. He represented King's dream in a way we northerners needed to hear.

Eight months later, King was dead. The dream lives, some of it realized; some of it still a dream.

## Reflections on Holy Week and Easter

# Music and Art

By Michael Lister, Director of Music

The Lent and Easter Season has been a special time to reflect on the many aspects of Christ's ministry, death and resurrection. As the Music Director, I continue to be inspired by the talent and commitment of the musicians in the church. Each service of passion week was unique, and the music of Easter was personally inspiring to me, as it reflected on the powerful hope of the resurrection

It was also very exciting to be able to continue in musical reflection and celebration with our presentation of the cantata *Christ Lag in Todesbanden* by J.S. Bach.

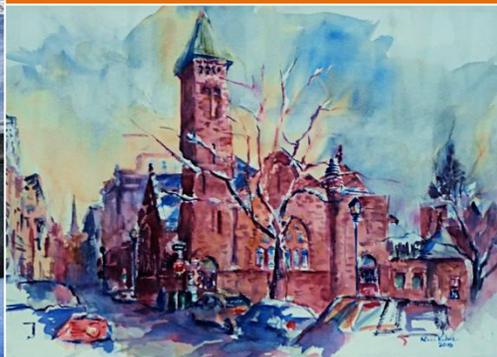
This cantata was written when Bach was a young composer and reflected the powerful themes of the resurrection. As is typical of Bach, each movement provides a different perspective and complements the other movements to provide a musical and theological whole. Because of this, the piece in its compact 20 minutes of performance time highlights the many different performers: the soloists, choir, and orchestra/organ as they interact in the musical narrative.

As always, we are thankful for the support of the church of our First Friday concert series and glad to have been able to present a musical selection that continued the themes of Easter. Turn the page for photographic highlights of the season, culminating in the First Friday programs.

# First Fridays in Music



# First Fridays in Art



## Student Protest in the “Vietnam Era” Disruption and Destruction

By Richard C. Gascoyne

I heard the noise from a distance — louder, louder. I had heard it before: the sound of an approaching rally. S-D-S, S-D-S, S-D-S. Louder and louder. I put my head down on the desk in Butler Library. I had to get this manuscript deciphered before my 10 o'clock class in paleography. I was in the third year of graduate study in Classics, Columbia University. I had taken a two-year leave of absence as Assistant Professor of Classics, State University at Albany, to get the course work finished, the qualifying exams passed, the dissertation topic approved, and the writing, the revising, the rewriting done.

It was 1968. The Vietnam War was ripping campuses apart. The SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) were on the march - occupation, disruption, burning, destruction. It had spread from Berkeley to Columbia. My wife, Joanne, was teaching English in Dobbs Ferry; daughter Julia, age 4, was in nursery school; son David, 2, at home with the baby sitter. Finances were tight. Apartments in Westchester were expensive.

Each morning I listened to NYC radio to hear whether my building had been occupied, pillaged, burned. All three happened in the course of the ordeal. Mark Rudd was in the crowd, and Mario Savio. I knew, as I sat there, head on the desk, that it would be a challenge just to get out of the library and to class in Philosophy Hall, where Rodin's Thinker sits calmly in a courtyard across from (Alexander) Hamilton Hall. They say that Hamilton stood fast against protesters bent on harming the Dean of Columbia, then King's College - King George III. King's College was definitely British territory; it was where Hamilton was going to school at the time. The American Revolution had begun. How could Hamilton cope?

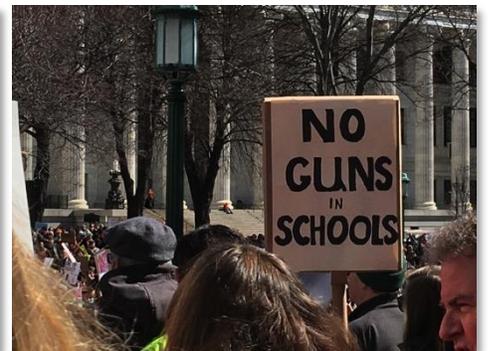


How could I cope? The qualifying exams had to be passed, the dissertation completed, or close to it. By April the entire university was shut down. The campus was barricaded. All final grades were pass/fail, based on the semester's work before the shut-down. School closed for the year!

I returned to my job at SUNY Albany, and by the fall semester the Vietnam revolution had spread to campuses everywhere across the country. I volunteered for bomb duty at night at SUNY and often had the midnight to 3 am shift. The worst incident on my watch was the explosion of a Molotov cocktail in a grand piano! But, during the day they were on the march chanting, yelling, screaming, physically disrupting classes. By the end of the spring semester classes shut down and the university became a “teach-in” for the movement.

Thus began student resistance. It was powerful, it was effective, it was destructive, and it had its collateral damage. Columbia just about went broke; alumni stopped giving; the endowment dwindled; buildings were severely damaged; iron gates, which stand today, were constructed to barricade the campus in case of a similar emergency. That was fifty years ago. It changed my life.

## Albany's demonstration of resistance against gun violence



## New Member

# Suimola Humphry Wirba

By Rachel Smith

Born in a small village in Cameroon, Suimola Humphry Wirba came to Albany in 2016 to continue studies and performance in music and dance. He is second in a Presbyterian family of



six and was inspired by his mother who encouraged him to both sing and compose music. He has already produced two albums of Afro-pop and is working on a gospel album entitled "The Cry of a Sinner." So you'll know how to find his albums, his artistic name is HUMPHRY GOLD.

Humphry completed a master's degree in Counseling in Cameroon and plans to enroll here for another masters in Social Work this summer. Humphry writes "I was so happy when I came to meet my two families here notably the Cameroonian family and the First Presbyterian family which I love so much."



## Black History Month

By Roger Green

My sense of Black History Month at FPC Albany since I got here 19 years ago is that it has evolved, and that's a good thing. In general, I believe the church has come to realize that the celebration is not just FOR people of African heritage, and that may be rarer than I had realized.

A tremendous asset has been the willingness of FPC's white members to talk about white privilege. Black people talking about white privilege, in other settings I've experienced, has engendered extreme discomfort. The black folk have been perceived as pushy, and the white folk get all defensive. That does not appear to have happened here, for the most part.

I do believe there was a feeling at First Pres in 2009, after Barack Obama was inaugurated as President, that perhaps we didn't NEED Black History Month anymore. It was seen by some that, in a "post-racial" America, we HAD overcome.

Of course, nine years later, after Charlottesville, the murders at a Charleston church, and Black Lives Matter, it's clear that we have not yet reached the promised land.

One of my church friends told about an abortive effort to get some sort of BHM celebration at his place of employment. It failed, in part, because people noted, "There aren't many blacks here," which, I suppose, is a good reason to DO it. Likewise, a blogger I know, who is white, wrote that the name gives white people permission to think it's not about them.

Mitch Landrieu, mayor of New Orleans, plugging his new book "In the Shadows of Statues: A White Southerner Confronts History," told Trevor Noah on The Daily Show that, in planning for his city's 300th anniversary, he asked his friend, legendary musician Wynton Marsalis, if he'd help. Marsalis said sure, if Landrieu got rid of those statues of Confederate generals. The monuments had become invisible to the mayor, who is white.

Are the statues a black history story? They were mostly built in in 1890 and after, in part to codify Jim Crow. Surely, it's an American history story, but one not often told, or more correctly, misremembered.

Maybe February should be American History, With An Emphasis on the Diaspora of Sub-Saharan Africa, Month. Nah, that title is longer than the four weeks.

Turn the page for a pictorial reflection on Black History Month.

# Black History Month



# Black History Month



## Learning to Love Like God - Shiphrah and Puah based on Exodus 1:8–21

By The Rev. Dr. Miriam Lawrence Leupold, Co-Pastor

*[Excerpt from a sermon preached on March 4 prior to Resistance musical]*

“But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live.... So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong.”  
Exodus 1:17, 20

What would you do this week if you knew that what you did would change the world? What would you do? ...Our passage opens with a new Pharaoh coming to power in Egypt. He looks around at the Hebrew people living peacefully in his midst but doesn't recognize them as heirs of the great Joseph, whose policies had saved Egypt during the country's terrible famine. This delusional, power hungry Pharaoh sees the growing Hebrew minority as a growing threat to Egypt's security and way of life. The Israelites have been welcomed guests, but they quickly go to feared alien. In the event of war, Pharaoh warns the Egyptians, the Israelites *might* join their enemies and fight against them. We've seen this before. It was the Jews in the 30s. More recently it's been homosexuals, the "undeserving" poor, the Muslims, the immigrants without papers, the Dreamers, and people from particular countries. As Professor Dennis Olson writes, "This tempting political strategy for new leaders, whether an Egyptian pharaoh or a Nazi Hitler [or an American president], involves trying to solidify power by singling out a relatively weak minority or outsider group and calling them an enemy. Fear of others can be a powerful source of unity."

Pharaoh identifies a common enemy and commands the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and

Puah to kill every baby boy that they deliver to Hebrew mothers. Their vocation from God is to preserve and protect life, and Pharaoh demands that they deny their vocation and kill. The midwives refuse to obey Pharaoh, and when he asks why, they lie. This is the Bible's first act of civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance for the sake of justice. Resistance!

Among the many Hebrew boys the midwives saved was Moses who eventually became the leader of the Israelites, confronting Pharaoh and leading the people to freedom. And it all starts here, with two women willing to say "no" to an act of injustice. They weren't out to change the world, they were being faithful followers of their God.

...just like the teenagers who are tired of seeing their friends gunned down, or the women fed up with working for lower wages, or churches willing to protect immigrants from ICE deportation, or young people through a musical asking their congregation to resist.

So, what would you do if I told you that what you do this week could change the world? God calls you to show compassion that may break the rules – for the sake of justice.



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Called by God to reduce the widening gap between rich and poor

## Won't you be my neighbor?

By Keith Barber, Chairman, Peace and Social Justice Committee

The whole law is fulfilled in one word, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Galatians 5-14 RSV



Fifty years ago, Presbyterian Minister Fred Rogers began a blessed ministry on PBS inviting his young viewers, "Won't you be my neighbor?" A neighbor wants others to share in the same blessings, to have the same opportunities, security, and respect

as they do. A neighbor stands in solidarity wherever injustice, bigotry, bullying and simple meanness rear their heads.

The young people of our church recently demonstrated with their musical that spirit of solidarity that shows love to our neighbor as we love ourselves. I am so proud of them and encouraged by their commitment to a future that my generation has not finished cleaning up from its own messes.

To that end, I am committed personally, and our Social Justice Committee is getting involved in the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival. The campaign, organized by Rev. William Barber and Rev. Liz Theoharis, is focused on issues of racism, poverty/economic injustice, militarism, and environmental degradation. Almost daily events are to be held locally and some 40 other state capital cities from Mother's Day and continuing for 40 days. Some will give you an opportunity to be arrested for the sake of justice and there will be plenty of opportunities that will not require your arrest but will still be critical. Details are forthcoming, and your active participation is solicited.

Won't you be a neighbor?



## Turn the other cheek Love your enemy, a different kind of resistance

By Jon Rice

"Do not resist an evil person ... if someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to them the other also." So, said Jesus according to Matthew 5:39. You may remember theologian Walter Wink's visit to First Pres and his demonstration of a less than obvious interpretation of Jesus' mandate. If someone strikes you on the right cheek and he uses his right hand to execute the blow, he will have connected to your face with the back of his right hand – the way one would discipline a slave. According to Wink "the backhand was not a blow to injure, but to insult, humiliate, degrade. It was not administered to an equal, but to an inferior." Offering the left cheek sends the message to the aggressor that if struck again, it must be done with the right fist, and by so doing, it communicates equality and a refusal to be humiliated any longer, "passive" resistance.

When one is insulted and degraded, whether through an actual slap or through less physical means, it hurts - physically and emotionally. Our face, our inner experience, absorbs the blow, and it changes us. It seems natural in such circumstances that we simply react and retaliate as a way of protecting ourselves – this is understandable.

Perhaps Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana's insight can help us respond, rather than react. He defines love as "opening space for the existence of another." I believe it is important to open space for how we have been wounded, degraded, ashamed, whether in that moment or later. To do otherwise, to ignore, deny, or disregard our pain doesn't just make it go away. Ignoring our wounds may have the unintentional effect of disconnection and may set the stage for harming ourselves and/or others.

Opening space for painful feelings can take some work. When it's too much for us to do this on our own, we may need others to open space for us and alongside us. Could it be that opening space is part of the process which enables us, when faced with humiliation and mistreatment to turn the other cheek as an assertion, in Wink's words, that "I am a child of God. I won't take it anymore?"

As often happens in Jesus' stories, more questions are posed than answered.

## An affirmation of PC(USA) Responding to the challenges of violence, terror, and war

By The Rev. Dr. Glenn Leupold, Co-Pastor

The General Assembly of our denomination, the national gathering of our church, pondered the question, 'What would Jesus have us do when it comes to conflict in the world?' This question led to a study that, upon completion, was named "Risking Peace in a Violent World: Affirmations for Presbytery Consideration." It was ordered by the 219th General Assembly (2010) of our denomination to "seek clarity as to God's call to the church to embrace nonviolence as its fundamental response to the challenges of violence, terror, and war." The report calls for Presbyterians at all levels of the church to employ its insights to respond to and prevent violence on the local, national and international levels through prayer, direct action and advocacy. After a six-year discernment process throughout the denomination, the 222nd General Assembly (2016) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) approved it. Here are the five affirmations of the report's conclusion:

"We affirm that peacemaking is essential to our faith in God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ, whose love and justice challenge evil and hatred, and whose call gives our church a mission to present alternatives to violence.

"We confess that we have sinned in participating in acts of violence, both structural and physical, or by our failure to respond to the acts and threats of violence with ministries of justice, healing and reconciliation.

"We follow Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace and Reconciler, and reclaim the power of non-violent love evident in his life and teaching, his healings and reversals of evil, his cross and resurrection.

"Learning from non-violent struggles and counting the costs of war, we draw upon the traditions of Just War, Christian pacifism, and Just Peacemaking to cultivate moral imagination and discern God's redemptive work in history. We commit ourselves to studying and practicing non-violent means of conflict resolution, non-violent methods for social change and non-violent opposition to war. ... We commit ourselves to continuing the long tradition of support by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) for our sisters and brothers who serve in the United States military, veterans, and their families. We promise to support materially and socially veterans of war who suffer injury in body, mind, or spirit, even as we work toward the day when they will need to fight no more

"We place our faith, hope and trust in God alone. We renounce violence as a means to further selfish national interests, to procure wealth, or to dominate others. We will practice boldly the things that make for peace and look for the day when "they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore."




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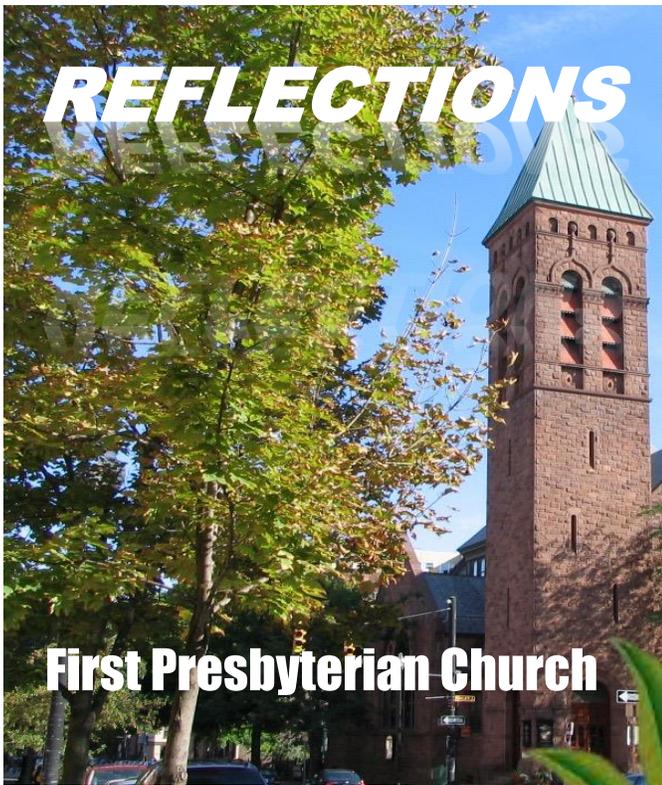
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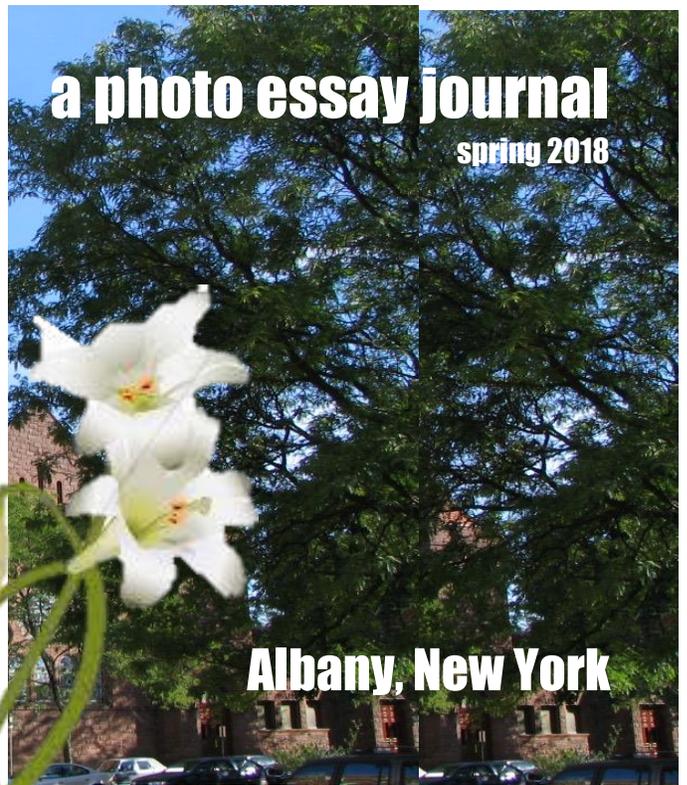
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