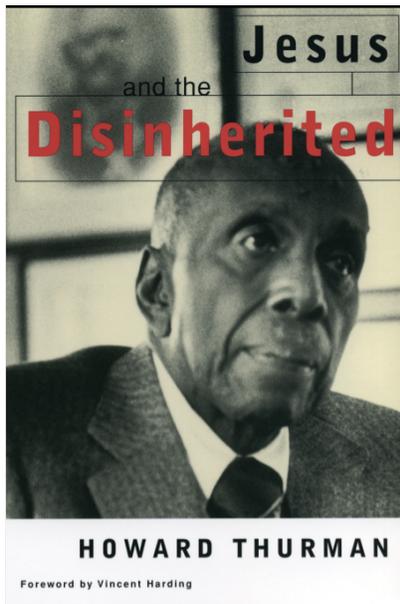




The Heart of Mission
October 20, 2020

This past weekend I attended (by zoom) *The Gathering of Spiritually Integrated Practitioners* (put on by ACPE, Association of Clinical Pastoral Education) in which author and speaker Gregory C. Ellison, II, PhD. led us in heartfelt conversations around race, ministry, and care for self and others. His most recent study on Howard Thurman was at the center of our conversations. Howard Thurman was an African American author, theologian and civil rights activist who taught at Howard University. (<https://www.anchoredinthecurrent.com/discover-howard-thurman>) I was inspired in a whole new way by the person and works of Howard Thurman.



Dr. Ellison is the professor of pastoral care at Candler School of Theology and founder of Fearless Dialogues, a grassroots organization committed to creating unique spaces for unlikely partners to engage in hard heartfelt conversations. He shared material from his new book (to be launched October 24) [Anchored in the Current: Discovering Howard Thurman as Educator, Activist, Guide and Prophet](https://www.anchoredinthecurrent.com/discover-howard-thurman). You can find videos and information on Dr. Ellison's book launch at <https://www.anchoredinthecurrent.com/videos>

This conference was very timely, especially because of the study I have been participating in here at First Presbyterian these last 6 weeks on the book [White Fragility](#) by Robin DiAngelou. Thurman, in his book [Jesus and the Disinherited](#), writes about the disinherited African American

experience that is still systemically present in our society, “There are few things more devastating than to have it burned into you that you do not count and that no provisions are made for the literal protection of your person.” At the conference we looked at his somewhat mystical concept of life as a working paper to guide our own ministry. Jesus is Thurman’s example of a working paper that made a huge impact on the disinherited in our world and one whose life we should follow. “Wherever there appears in human history a personality whose story is available and whose reach extends far, in all directions, the question of his working paper is as crucial as the significance of his life. We want to know what were the lines along which he decided to live his life? How did he relate himself to the central issues of his time? What were the questions which he had to answer? Was he under some necessity to give a universal character to his most private experience?” Building our lives and our own empathy for others around how Jesus lived despite the anger, fear, and hatred he experienced challenges how we approach mission.

There is another quote attributed to Thurman, although possibly just a summary of his ideas about vocation, “*Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.*” Should we commit to grounding ourselves in the working paper Jesus has started for us, the quote by Fredrick Buechner on vocation which I mentioned last week, takes a whole new turn. It is not just any need that we seek to minister to. It is not just any yearning in our heart that we seek to answer. It is that Living Force which makes us come alive that needs to be shared. That Living Force in Jesus Christ includes the kind of justice, mercy and empathy which broke barriers and continues to break barriers even today.

Thinking about mission and ministry this way is energizing. I hope it gives you something to explore as you meet God’s call to you, possibly with one of our mission partners.

Peace,

Rachel Matthews, Temporary Mission Coordinator

Our Mission Agency Announcements:

World Mission – 4:30pm, October 20, zoom

Community Mission Deacons – 4:30pm, October 27, zoom.

Cuba Partner Network: The URL for the CPN 2020 Virtual Gathering which I explored last Wednesday at our evening gathering is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5TnEdpLxCV0>

Opportunity International – OI just recently sent a thank you and published their [2019 annual report](#) as well as a [rapid response report](#) which shows the myriad things they have done since COVID-19. The report is so hopeful. I am so grateful for their ministry as they sought to help microbusinesses at risk of shutting down. I encourage you to read the whole of the reports by clicking the links. They write,

When COVID-19 began to ripple across the world in March, countries quickly responded with lockdowns, travel restrictions and stay-at-home orders to prevent a massive disease outbreak. However, the economic ramifications of these measures hit the poorest families extremely hard. Each day of not being able to open their business put them closer to desperation. Schools unable to open kept children away from their education, and a reliable daily meal.

Though not emergency responders, Opportunity International pivoted quickly. The tenets of our Rapid Response were:

- 1. Financial survival: defer loans and keep savings accessible*
- 2. Safety: equip staff and clients with information, PPE and other tools to stay safe*
- 3. Survival: local partners and even clients responded to community needs with food and encouragement*
- 4. Kids' education: keep schools and teachers engaged to protect children's education*

Thanks to your generosity, we raised and disbursed more than \$2.3 million in just three months. The funds went to Opportunity's Education Finance and AgFinance programs, and to our local operations in Ghana, Uganda, Colombia, Nicaragua and Haiti – focused on the hardest-hit households and communities.

Lifeline Pilots – a regional mission partner which flies dozens of cancer patients a year to various treatment centers has just started a new partnership with Mend Together, a social network platform that helps cancer patients or helpers organize and receive meaningful support from friends, family and colleagues with some new tools: a community web journal, a volunteer online calendar, and a gift/cash registry to send gifts. See <https://www.mendtogether.com/>

Friends of PEB – The Pakistan Group is hosting a zoom tea for sponsors of girls in PEB schools on November 1 to learn more about our school in Sangla Hill. If you are not currently a sponsor but are interested in sponsoring a girl's education in Pakistan, email rachel@firstpres.church and Rachel will get you in touch with someone who can tell you more. Email her before October 27 if you are interested in the zoom tea.

CU at Home: Rick Williams, Ministry Development Assistant, sent a thank you and how much CU at Home has impacted our community and works with other mission partners:

If you visit our [website](#), our [Facebook](#) page, or receive regular donor communications, you know "helping our friends without an address" is an important part of our messaging. Another phrase I've routinely seen (and use!) is just as important: "we couldn't do what we do without YOU!"

This essential reality about the work we do rings true on many levels. I thought this week I'd highlight the importance of the many partnerships we are blessed to have throughout the community that make our work here possible week after week.

*Of course, it really does start with **YOU**, our small army of faithful donors! Your generous monthly and one-time gifts provide for the general operations of the ministry including our drop-in center, transitional housing and more PLUS support the expenses of year-round sheltering for our friends*

*(special shout out to our monthly "Hope Givers," 100+ strong and growing!!). Over the past nine years, hundreds of you have raised funds by participating in our annual **One Winter Night** event. **Year 10 is right around the corner!***

*Speaking of **OWN**, we also benefit yearly from the generous support of dozens of local firms and organizations that serve as **Business Sponsors** (over [90 last year alone](#)). Many are also regular donors, and several local businesses have joined our "**Hope Givers**" campaign in support of year-round emergency sheltering!*

*The local **Faith Community** is, of course, a very important partner in our mission. **Over 40 churches throughout Champaign County** are donors at various levels, and several of them are committed "**Hope Givers!**" Members of local churches also support us in prayer, serve as a source of faithful volunteers, and bless our friends with donations of personal items, special meals, and much-needed fellowship.*

*Finally, we also have partnered with **Austin's Place**, the **United Way of Champaign County**, the **Community Foundation of East Central Illinois**, the **City of Champaign**, and **Cunningham** and **City of Champaign** townships and many others to help sustain year-round emergency sheltering, opportunities for work, and other important services for our friends during this time of great need. My very first weekly update focused on the "fruitful" partnership between our **C-U at Work** program, [Prosperity Gardens](#), and the [Daily Bread Soup Kitchen](#)!*

*So, yes, **we could not do what we do without ALL of YOU!!** Thank you for your generous support of our mission to serve the most vulnerable members of our community. We are blessed to have you come alongside us as we do the work God has called us to here in C-U!*

Let us keep all our mission partners in our prayers, those who are waiting to go back to their place of ministry and those who are able to work where they are. Listen for God's call to you in their ministry.

Our PC(USA) Mission CoWorkers:

Mark Adams and Miriam Maidonado Escobar (Mexico)

Farsijanna Adeney-Risakotta (Indonesia)

Jeff and Christi Boyd (Central Africa)

Jo Ella Holman (Caribbean and Cuba) – And, for the mission coworker you are preparing to take her place upon her retirement this month.

Bob and Kristi Rice (South Sudan)

Our regional and global mission partners:

Kemmerer Village (and Camp Carew)

Lifeline Pilots

Marion Medical Mission

Mission Aviation Fellowship

Opportunity International

Friends of Presbyterian Education Board in Pakistan Presbyterian Cuba Partnership

Special Offerings of the PC(USA)
Theological Education Fund
Young Adult Volunteers

Here in Champaign – Urbana:

CU at Home
CANAN S.A.F.E. HOUSE
CANTEEN RUN
COURAGE CONNECTION
DREAAM
eEMPTY TOMB, INC
FAITH IN ACTION
JESUS IS THE WAY PRISON MINISTRY
THE REFUGEE CENTER
RESTORATION URBAN MINISTRY
SALT & LIGHT

Here at First Presbyterian Church

FPCC Amateur Preachers
FPCC Environmental Committee working with Faith in Place
FPCC Presbyterian Women
FPCC ESL
FPCC Children, Youth and Families
FPCC Mission Possible/Go and Serve



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