



Presbytery of Yukon

June 30, 2021

Thoughts from Rev. Curt Karns



In recent weeks, I have been contemplating my transition into retirement from work for the PC(USA). In retirement, I will move toward a more focused work for cross-cultural healing and reconciliation through work with Intergenerational Arctic Ministries (IAM). In recent weeks, I have been moved to more meditative thinking as I step away from a whole career as of pastoring within the PC(USA). Indeed, as I have been contemplating those years, I have been

moved both by the dire and persistent need for healing we are seeing across our society, but also by the depth of God's persistent love that offers the healing we all need. I would therefore like to share one piece of my thinking with you today.

For some strands of Christianity, it is tempting to write-off God's grace and just focus on how much sinners deserve God's punishment. This is a temptation because sin—which does such violence to ourselves, to others, and to nature—is abhorrent to us, and so we understand that it is abhorrent to God. When the Bible speaks of God's wrath, we understand. God is holy, and holiness has no room for sin, which brings death to the world's George Floyd's and the misery of subjugation to people from minority cultures, to women, and to others in so many settings. It is tempting to either forget grace, or to minimize its potential in our thinking and acting.

But other strands of Christianity have been tempted to go to the other extreme and water down the immense cost of grace. Some people have come to the conclusion that our sin because Jesus paid the price for us, we do not need to deal with the consequences of sin in the world. We can forget that our sin does violence, diminishing anything it touches. Forgiven of our sin, we might wish to simply be comfortable Christians, sitting back in our state of forgiveness, forgetting that making amends and the pursuit of reconciliation are also biblical imperatives.

Jesus famously teaches that if our sister or brother has anything against us, it is right to seek God's forgiveness through our prayer and worship. But in Matthew 5:23-26, Jesus also teaches that it is important that before we go to seek God's forgiveness through worship, we should first go to the brother or sister we offended and seek reconciliation. If we water down God's grace, we can so easily forget how much relationships in this world matter, and we can delude ourselves into forgetting that we need to make amends. Making amends, trying to make right what has been wrong, these are what bring both healing and the possibility for a

better, more just world.

This is a brief writing, so I can't give enough time to these weighty themes. I trust that you already know much of this, and also know that your own prayer and contemplation time will insist that you come back to these themes repeatedly. We are never done with them.

What I do want to spend a moment more on, however, is my own sense of wonder at God's amazing faithfulness in bringing the healing we all need. Even when I have done my best with making amends and facing my own sin, there is a residue in my heart and, I believe, in the world, that I can't fix. My sin has consequences that wound those around me, and myself, in ways that my best efforts, and even our united efforts, cannot address.

It is a wonder that the Holy God, who so abhors sin, came for me, and for you, in Jesus Christ. Engaging with such sin is painful and ugly, and so I marvel at how our beautiful and Holy God chose to engage the ugliness of our sin, making possible the healing that we need.

What is more, I marvel at how God is still present, and still engages the ugliness of today for our healing today. God is present whenever God's creatures suffer. Whenever we face the ugliness of prejudice, or of unjust power, or domination, or any other manifestations of sin our own lives or in the world, God is present. God's love is so strong, that God continues to offer love, and healing, and a new start for each of us, and for all of us, both by being present as the Holy Spirit, but also by inspiring us to engage in efforts that embody God's love in this world.

Indeed, after all our efforts, what is it that addresses the enduring residue of sin and its effects in this world? It is love; and God is love.

If you are like me, there are times when you wonder if you are capable of real love. We are all aware of our failings when it comes to embodying the kind of love that matters in the face of real woundedness. Even so, God is love, and God's is at work through us, if we allow it. God is able to bring healing, transforming our efforts, imperfect though they are, into signs of God's all sufficient love. God is persistent in love, and God empowers more love than we can know or expect. What a wonder!

Bingle Summer Camp 2021

Location: Harding Lake, near Fairbanks

Schedule:

(Camps are based on the camper's fall grade-level)

July 4-9 Splash Camp

Grades 3-6 Cost: \$250

July 11-16 H2O Adventure Camp

Grades 6-8 Cost: \$250

July 18-23 Night Owl Camp

Grades 9-12 Cost: \$250

July 25-27 Mini Camp

Grades 1-3 Cost: \$125

July 30-Aug. 1 Just You and Me Camp

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☿ Son Shine! ☿**



**Bingle Camp at
Harding Lake
Summer 2021**

For more information, including where to call for scholarships and to register, visit: binglecamp.org

Rev. Alice Green Memorial Service



The memorial service for Rev. Alice Green will be held in Anchorage at Trinity Presbyterian Church on July 21. The church will be open to visitors at 1 p.m., and the service will be at 2 p.m. with a reception to follow. All are welcome.

Rev. Green died on December 7, but her memorial service was postponed until COVID vaccines allowed the service to be held safely. Rev. Green was the first PC(USA) woman ordained as Minister of Word and Sacrament in Alaska. She served the church in Savoonga twice, first as Lay-Leader (before women were allowed to be ordained), and again after her ordination. Rev. Green also served as chaplain to the Alaska Native Hospital in Anchorage, was clerk of presbytery, and wore a number of other hats for the church over the years. She was 103 years old at the time of her death.

Opening of Presbytery Churches

A variety of efforts are underway for opening Presbytery of Yukon churches. Because of the effectiveness of the COVID vaccine, most churches in the presbytery are now reopening their churches to in-person worship, though the policies for doing so have been mixed.

- Some are now shutting down the online version of worship used during the pandemic, and gatherings are now back to in-person.
- Many churches are offering in-person worship, but also continuing opportunities for on-line participation for those not yet ready to gather in large groups.
- One congregation, Immanuel Presbyterian in Anchorage, is meeting in-person, but outside. Studies have shown that gathering outside greatly reduces the transmission of the disease.



When the COVID outbreak first hit 16 months ago, churches in the Presbytery of Yukon had to close in-person gatherings, including worship, at least for a time. Later, the presbytery asked congregational leaders to develop their own COVID Mitigations Plans based on CDC guidelines, as well as the on-the-ground realities of the pandemic in their own communities. For the most part, this has meant that churches have not been open to in-person worship across the presbytery.

The latest rulings by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), signaling that most churches can safely reopen to in-person events, has brought celebrations to worshiping people of all denominations, including the Presbyterians in Alaska!

Current CDC Guidance for Churches During COVID

- Fully vaccinated people (more than 2 weeks since the last dose of vaccine) can stay unmasked for most public gatherings, especially outdoors.
- If a business or church requires masks, that overrides the CDC guidance. Any entity may require masks, even when CDC/state requirements do not.
- However – fully vaccinated people who are immunocompromised in any way – on cancer or transplant treatment, steroid treatment, have an autoimmune disease or other immunocompromising condition – may be less protected by the vaccine and should still be masked at all times.
- IMPORTANTLY – the CDC guidelines for unvaccinated people have not changed. They are still required to wear masks and stay at least six feet away from others in most circumstances, but they can go outside with members of their household or gather with family and friends who are fully vaccinated outdoors without masks. Within the church, unvaccinated people (including unvaccinated children) should still be asked to wear masks while in indoor worship.

Congratulations, Miranda!

Ruling Elder, Miranda Jae Rexford Brown of Utqiagvik, graduated April 25th from Alaska Christian College in Soldotna. Miranda served as Ruling Elder in Utqiagvik Presbyterian Church for a number of years, and completed Commissioned Pastor training



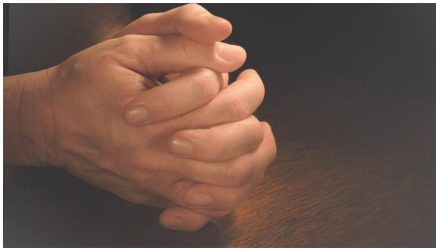
six years ago. At that time, the church was between pastors, and needed leaders for worship and to officiate at sacraments.

Though Miranda says she intends to continue her Christian Education in order to better serve God and God's church, this graduation marks another milestone along that path. Again, congratulations and best wishes, Miranda.

Our Next Presbytery Meeting

Mark Your Calendars! The fall Presbytery Meeting has been scheduled for October 7-9, **** IN-PERSON ****, at the First Presbyterian Church in Wasilla. Look for more information about the meeting in the near future.

Prayer Requests



Please continue to pray for our communities as we recover from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mark Your Calendars

July 4, 2021



Independence Day

The Presbytery office will be closed on Monday, July 5th in honor of the Independence Day holiday.

October 7-9, 2021

The Next Stated Meeting of the Presbytery

Location: First Presbyterian Church in Wasilla

Presbytery of Yukon
616 W. 10th Avenue
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-276-0914



www.pbyukon.org