



Good News from Brown Memorial Park Avenue  
Presbyterian Church

# Tidings

AUG/SEPT 2020

## Upcoming Annual All Church Retreat Sept. 25-27

Instead of giving up and canceling this year's retreat, we're *Digging In!* Join us for a weekend full of retreat activities—some outdoors in small groups, others virtual—designed to spark those feel-good retreat experiences of previous years. We're still working out the details but rumor has it movie night and game night might make an appearance. Save the date and watch for more details to follow shortly.



## Summer Fun Bags: Children's Ministry Stays Connected

by Rachel Cunningham

Over the summer we delivered Summer Fun Bags filled with craft activities to all our families. Check out the picture page to see some of the children enjoying them. Additionally, we held three parent gatherings over Zoom to listen to the needs of families during these pandemic times. These were rich discussions with lots of ideas for ways to keep children and families connected in what can be isolating days.

One thing that also became clear is the need to allow families time to adjust to a "Back to School" season that will most likely look very different than anything they've experienced in the past. While families are adjusting, we will be preparing for a Children's Ministry launch in early October. Stay tuned for more details. ♦

See pictures on page 9 ➞

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# Pastor's Reflection

by Andrew Foster Connors, Senior Pastor

bram Kendi's monumental book, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*, has had me thinking a lot about power.

That, and binge watching *Game of Thrones*, HBO's bloody dystopian world of royals battling each other to take their place on the iron throne. Kendi's book (which the church's summer book group will discuss after I write this but before it is published) argues that racist *ideas* are the *outcome* of oppressive policies and not the other way around. Yet the story we tell (what he calls the folklore) is that ignorance/hate -> racist ideas -> discrimination. He says when we look at history, the truth is racial discrimination -> racist ideas -> ignorance/hate. "Racially discriminatory policies," he writes, "have usually sprung from economic, political, and cultural self-interest, self-interests that are constantly changing..." (9-10). The issue is the self-interests of the powerful few that leads to the oppression of the many.

*Game of Thrones* is so successful, in part, because it dramatically makes the argument that principled, good-hearted people do not often win in the games of power that define the direction of the world. In one particular scene in season two (or was it three?), Lord Baelish attempts to subtly threaten Queen Cersei with the familiar expression, "knowledge is power." In response, the Queen instructs her guards to spin around, take a few paces away and back in, then kill Lord Baelish, a command which she immediately suspends just as the knife arrives close to his throat. "Power," she tells Baelish with devilish intent, "is power."

As someone who has trained more than a few church folk in the disciplines of community organizing, power is something I've thought a lot about. Yet I find most people in the church have a negative connotation in relationship to the word. Clergy are notorious for this. Some of the

same clergy I've heard say we are called to "speak truth to power," refuse to acknowledge that they also wield power too. They'd rather see themselves as refusing to exercise power, as if power itself was a negative thing. The result, I'm afraid, is that many Christians would prefer to be seen as *not exercising power altogether*, which leads many to sit on the sidelines instead of leaping into the fray where public change occurs.

Yet Jesus promised power to the church. It was given to the church for a specific purpose—to be Jesus' witnesses on earth, carrying on the table-turning, bread-blessing, community-building ministries that he taught them. This particular sort of power would be governed by relationships. Power that was wielded in public was accountable to those relationships. You can see this in many stories in the Book of Acts. Peter unilaterally baptizes a Gentile (because the Holy Spirit told him to), but he knows he has to go back to the church and argue for why his action was a good one. Believers agree to share things in common and those who try to cheat the system have to pony up. Power is ordered but shared. In fact, *the more it's shared, the more power is generated for more healing*.

I've been mulling through all this more than usual because we are at a moment in history where sideline sitting is perhaps more dangerous to God's people—that is dangerous to *all people*—than any errors that good people might commit in their quest for setting things right. As Dr. King said in 1966, "It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, 'Wait on time.'"

In other words, the antidote to oppressive, unilateral forms of power is not silence on the part of people who oppose the abuse of power. *It is a different form of power,*

*exercised in and through relationships.* We need more of that power now. Of course, shared power is hard because it means that no one gets to have their way 100 percent of the time. But the outcome of that kind of shared power would surely bring justice and well-being to a much larger percentage of people.

I saw a beautiful show of this kind of shared power at the ordination of a Roman Catholic bishop recently. I know—I was as shocked as you are. Certainly the liturgy told the hierarchical story that I expected at a Roman Catholic ordination of a bishop. But then Bishop Bruce Lewandowski, newly ordained, stood at the lectern. “This is really old clothing,” he said. “Not in years but in centuries. They’ve been worn by saints. And they’ve been worn by scoundrels. And I know some look to these vestments with pride just as some others do with pain or disdain.” After outlining his servant understanding of what it means to be a bishop, he said to a now silent cathedral congregation, “Underneath all this, it’s just Bruce; I’m just Bruce, standing here, now a bishop in centuries-old clothes and who we have yet to discover what these clothes on me will mean and do.”

Switching to Spanish, Bishop Bruce told the people of Sacred Heart of Jesus Church that for him, this ordination is about them. “The joy of my life is you. When I wake up in the morning I think about what we will do together. When I lie down at night it is the same. *“This,”* he said, gesturing to the grandeur of the moment, “is for you. All of it. It is not for me. You teach me love, faith and hope. For you I give millions of thanks, trillions of thanks—for being a part of your lives. I am for you. I am with you. Dressed like this, we are going to see what we

can do together. Tomorrow we are going to see what we will do together.” It was a marvelous example of someone who, having just been given power, understands that *the most transformative, long lasting power is the kind fully shared with people.*

The new church year is almost upon us and I know it feels very different this year. There are so many disappointments and some significant losses that we are holding together. The state of the world feels more chaotic than in any time since I can remember. We are on the eve of an election and perhaps the most significant transitional time ever in American democracy.

Yet, I can’t help but feel a different kind of excitement. The excitement of knowing the church has a critical role to play. It is not a partisan role, but a moral one—to articulate a vision of power that is wielded by all in the service of the common good. To vote for that vision and to throw ourselves into the struggle for that vision. To listen and learn from others—to their hopes and dreams—just as we share our own. That vision is all through this newsletter because it’s all through the life of our church. For that, I offer you a trillion thanks. The kin-dom of God has come near—that table-turning, bread-blessing, community-building power that grows more fully when it is shared. Together with God, let’s see what we will do together this year. ♦



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## Sunday Sermons Online

In addition to joining us live every Sunday on Zoom, you can read, watch or listen to past sermons at [browndowntown.org/sermons](https://browndowntown.org/sermons), or visit and subscribe to our YouTube channel to view recent worship services.

# COVID Relief Fund Helps Many

by Laura Urban

**N**early \$25,000 has been contributed to Brown Memorial's Covid Relief Fund (as of Aug. 12). The funds have been regranted to nine organizations to support people in need.

Session established the fund in May in response to the tremendous need evident across Baltimore and beyond during the pandemic and to meet the requests of the congregation who wanted an active and immediate way to help. The fund is held within Brown's general operating fund and managed by Sharon Lucas, financial administrator. Michele Ward (representing staff) and I (representing Session) have allocated the funds to organizations that have been in relationship with the congregation previously.

In addition to contributions from the congregation, the fund has received money from the Baltimore Presbytery (Hunger Grant), and Memorial Episcopal and Lutheran University Ministry for joint projects with Brown.

The following organizations have received disbursements from the fund:

■ **Sacred Heart of Jesus Financial Assistance Fund**—to give direct aid to families, including many Hispanic immigrants, in East Baltimore.

■ **Samaritan Community Financial Assistance Fund**—to give direct aid to people served by the Samaritan Community (housed in Memorial Episcopal Church across the street from Brown).

■ **Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary/Middle School (Baltimore City Public School)**—for food for families, activity bags, books and other supplies. Additional general operating funds (previously budgeted for the Soaring Eagles camp) was also used for teacher appreciation gifts and food gift cards for families.

■ **Turnaround Tuesday**—to support technology purchases to help attendees get work.

■ **Meals on Wheels**—to support meal distribution to the homebound.

■ **Cuban Partners Network, Camajuani Presbyterian Church**—to aid Brown's partner church in Cuba during the pandemic and to make up for lost income due to the cancelled spring trip of Brown Memorial parishioners

■ **Baltimore Farm to Stoop Project**—for food distribution, including fresh produce, in central Baltimore.

■ **Sew Labs / Flatten the Curve**—for masks for residents in Linden Park Apartments, near Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School.

■ **Our Daily Bread**—in lieu of monthly casserole contributions from the congregation.

We'll continue to disburse funds as long as we receive them. The goal is to have an easy and coordinated way to get more resources to our community. If you'd like to contribute to the fund, please send a check to BMPA marked "Covid Relief Fund," use Brown's CCB Giving Portal, or the link in the chat during worship.


 **For more information, contact Rev. Michele Ward ([michele@browndowntown.org](mailto:michele@browndowntown.org)) or Laura Urban ([urbanlaura@icloud.com](mailto:urbanlaura@icloud.com)).**



Photo from Maryland Presbyterian Church Facebook page.





## Loving Your Neighbor During COVID-19

Brown Memorial is actively engaged in a number of volunteer efforts, including direct food relief, drives for personal protective equipment and organizing actions supporting emergency equipment supplies. These efforts continue to multiply each day. For a list of efforts and details about how to participate, visit [browndowntown.org](http://browndowntown.org). The following are examples of current volunteer opportunities:

### **Farm to Stoop Project through Interfaith COVID19 Task Force**

Volunteers are needed to pack produce boxes and deliver them from Three Part Harmony Farm on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 2-5 p.m.

### **Meals On Wheels**

The central facility located at 515 S. Haven Street is open and accepting volunteers who package the food. To volunteer, go to their website and register your information.

### **BUILD / Turnaround Tuesday**

Community Health Workers in Baltimore City are in need of "civilian masks" (sewed masks) to share with clients who are unable to get to medical appointments due to lack of basic supplies. Anyone with masks, latex gloves and/or hand sanitizer can donate.

### **The Samaritan Community**

Samaritan Community continues to deliver groceries to families and in-

dividuals in need. The most needed items are shelf stable vegetables, rice, beans, cooking oil, cereal, sugar and bar soap.

### **Brown Memorial Ministry of Welcome: Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church**

Food donations and money for food are needed.

### **Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School**

Donations for the purchase of new books are needed, as are donations to help pay for the October meals.

### **Baltimoreans for All**

A volunteer team is needed to make individual food deliveries to vulnerable homebound individuals.

### **North Ave Mission and Red Shed Village (Station North)**

Volunteers needed to serve as Village Stewards. Shifts are three to four hours and consist of sitting

in the beautiful garden, providing friendship and welcome to Villagers.

### **Our Daily Bread**

Accepting casserole donations and doing "no contact" drop off. Food donations can be dropped off at Our Daily Bread Employment Center (725 Fallsview, Baltimore, MD 21202) every day before 4 p.m.

### **The Amigos of Baltimore County**

Volunteers are needed for a Sunday food distribution program at the Timonium Fairgrounds.

### **Rock Rose City Farm Harvesting**

Volunteers are needed to harvest for neighbors on Mondays, 9-11 a.m.

### **Letters for Nursing Home Residents**

Requesting cards and letters for the residents of Pleasant View Nursing Home.

## CALENDAR UPDATES

### Midtown Youth Collective

More programming for youth will begin in October to give parents and youth more time to adjust to hybrid learning during the pandemic. For now, please save the dates and join us for these September events!



Photo from Bmore Licks Facebook page.

Sunday, September 6, 5:30-7 p.m.

Labor Day Reunion

Location: Patterson Park

Drop off and pick up at Bmore Licks (2437 Eastern Avenue). Bring \$5 for ice cream. Masks required. Limited to 12 youth—email Michele to sign up ([michele@browndowntown.org](mailto:michele@browndowntown.org)).

Sunday, September 20, 5:30-7 p.m.

Sunday Night Live!

Location: Zoom

Theme: Home

What does God say about home? In these days of being stuck at home, school delays and online classes, how do we find connection to God and each other?

### The Green Team Invites You to Save the Date for

### “Powered from Above: A Home Energy Workshop for Baltimore Faith Communities” September 16, 6-7:30 p.m.

The Green Team was so inspired by Interfaith Power & Light and Civic Works’s solar energy workshop in July that they are hosting their own for Brown Memorial and surrounding communities.

Nothing connects us as directly to the global climate crisis than the energy we use at home. As we spend more time close to home these days, let’s work together to shift the way our home energy use impacts our neighbors and the natural world.

Join Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Church, Civic Works, Interfaith Power & Light, and congregations across the Baltimore area for a participatory online workshop about practical ways to power our homes with cleaner energy.

- Learn how our energy is made, and its impact on our air and water.
- Reflect on our shared call to shift to cleaner power.

■ Connect with Civic Works’ training programs which are employing Baltimore neighbors in good clean energy jobs.

■ Take practical action to save energy at home and to shift to cleaner power, through home energy work, supporting wind and community solar through your energy bills, and going solar at home.

■ Join a growing movement that’s speaking out faithfully for strong climate policy in Maryland.

We’re grateful to do this work in cooperation with Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake’s One Water Partnership, through which congregations surrounding the Jones Falls and Gwynns Falls are coming together to care for our shared watersheds.

Visit [browndowntown.org/calendar](https://browndowntown.org/calendar) to register.

## MINISTRY AND SMALL GROUP UPDATES

### GREEN TEAM UPDATE

The Brown Memorial Green Team has been busy this summer! So far, we have been involved in the following projects as we build relationships across the city and in our community:

- Two Green Team members joined the Anti-Racism Task Force to advocate for issues of environmental racism.
- Farming at Rockrose City Farm in the Woodberry neighborhood to grow produce for Moveable Feast, a nonprofit that provides men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS, cancer and other serious illnesses nutritious meals, groceries, nutritional counseling and other services.
- Planting 2,000 urban trees on the property of Still Meadow Community Fellowship, fellow BUILD member congregation.
- Attended the virtual solar energy workshop by Interfaith Power & Light and Civic Works in July.
- Packing and delivering fresh produce to 150 households a week with the Farm to Stoop Project in Central Baltimore.
- Applied for the Chesapeake Bay Trust Outreach and Restoration Grant for the renovation of the interior courtyard, installation of native plantings, widening of tree wells and a series of environmental workshops.

### SMALL GROUPS

Many of our small groups have continued to meet virtually during the pandemic and plan to continue throughout the fall. New members are always welcome.

**Literature & Faith:** A group for individuals interested in exploring how literature intersects with their faith. The group generally meets on the third Friday of the month from 7-9 p.m. The next gathering is Sept. 18. Contact Julie Hanks (jmhanks@verizon.net) or Shirley Parry (shirlzepearl@gmail.com) for more information.

**Male Spirituality:** A group for men interested in exploring spirituality and faith in community. They alternate between meeting on the second Sunday (following worship) and second Tuesday (7 p.m.) of the month. Their first gathering of the program year is Sept. 8, 7 p.m. Contact David Lascu (dmlascu@aol.com) or Fred Cogswell (cogswelf@gmail.com) for more information.

**Prayer Shawl Ministry:** A group of individuals who come together to knit and crochet prayer shawls in community for those in need. All skill levels are welcome. They meet every other Friday from 1-3 p.m. Their next gathering is Sept. 18. Contact Dianne Ross (rossinbalt@verizon.net) for more information.

**Theology on Tap:** Ever wonder what happens when you take theology or “God-Talk” out of the church? This group has gathered for several years now on the third Tuesday of the month. Prior to COVID, folks met in a local bar to discuss a new conversation topic. Now they are gathering virtually at home with their beverage of choice. The next Theology on Tap gathering is Sept. 15, 7-9 p.m. Contact Chip

Morgan Riegel (cmorganriegel@gmail.com) or Kelsie Riegel Morgan (kelsie.riegelmorgan@gmail.com) for more information.

### Wednesday Bible Study:

Perhaps our original small group, the Wednesday Bible Study gathers each week at 10:30 a.m. with one of our pastors to delve deeper into the meaning of scripture. Their most recent study explored the noncanonical gospel of Mary Magdalene using Meggan Watterson’s book, *Mary Magdalene Revealed: The First Apostle, Her Feminist Gospel & the Christianity We Haven’t Tried Yet*. Contact Andrew Foster Connors (andrew@browndowntown.org) or Michele Ward (michele@browndowntown.org) for more information.

**Thursday Prayer Circle:** On Thursday evenings at 5:30 p.m., a small but dedicated group of individuals comes together to hold the Brown Memorial community and the world at large in prayer. They take turns giving voice to the previous Sunday’s prayer chats, as well as to the ongoing needs and prayers of the community—a time of stillness and quiet in these turbulent times. They are always looking for others to join with them in this ministry. Contact June Fletcher-Hill (fletcherhill@msn.com) for more information.

*Learn about the Adult Education Hour resuming in September on page 7 ➡*



# Session News & Notes

submitted by Laura Urban, Clerk of Session

## The Session took the following actions or received these reports since the previous Tidings issue:

■ Received a report from the Green Team, presented by members McKay Jenkins, Jayne Mauric, Lynn Heller and Lori and David Rawle. The vision of the Green team is: “to promote environmental healing and justice through Brown Memorial’s choices, practices, and actions. We seek to have a space which not only honors God and the earth, but engages with and inspires others—our members and our broader community—to do the same. We hope to achieve this through renovations to the physical spaces, especially the gardens, our energy choices, reductions in waste, increases in education, and instilling a love of nature and a desire to protect it.” On recommendation from the team, Session adopted the statement that “Session declares that environmental justice and racial justice are central priorities for this congregation.”

■ Received a report from the Anti-Racism Steering Committee, including recommendations and a timeline for three stages of anti-racism work: Learning and Development, Discernment and Action. A motion passed to ask the committee to issue a Request for Proposal for a consultant who can design an anti-racism training curriculum for our church.

■ Considered the church’s response following the killing of George Floyd. The group recommended that our most significant response in this particular season of Brown Memorial’s life is to continue pushing deeper into our own racial justice work, particularly through BUILD, seeking greater understanding for the ways in which our congregation has benefitted from structures of racism and oppression.

■ Michele Ward is working with the Personnel Committee to plan for and to apply for a DMin degree at either Pittsburgh Theological Seminary or McCormick Seminary. The Personnel Committee would like the congregation’s

approval to adjust Michele’s current Terms of Call to provide additional continuing education time beyond the current two weeks that she receives. The new Continuing Education allotment would be either:

- three weeks each in 2021 and 2022, and four weeks in 2024, for the McCormick Seminary program, or
- four weeks each in 2022 and 2023 for the Pittsburgh Seminary program.

Once Michele completes her degree, her continuing education allotment would revert back to the original two weeks. Session voted to recommend the congregation vote (at the October Congregational Meeting) to accept this change. Session is excited to be co-learners with Michele in this process and be part of her journey.

■ Staff reported they are unanimous in remaining online for worship this fall, and are looking to create other opportunities for engagement. The building is in some use now (as of the July Session meeting), and Henry is back cleaning the building. Staff have set up rides for him by a church member so he does not need to take the bus.

■ Received the Financial Report prepared by Sharon Lucas. To date, general fund income is a bit less than budgeted, but not significantly. Last year we were at \$306,378 as of July; this year we were at \$300,659. Some expenses are down as program is reduced, but the Trustees continue to take care of capital projects for repairs and improvements. Contributions to the capital appeal continue to come in. As of July, the principal on the line of credit was \$792,000. ♦



# PICTURE PAGE

Summer Fun Bags brought church home for the children in our congregation this summer.



## ADULT EDUCATION HOUR RESUMES SEPT. 13, 10 AM, OVER ZOOM

This year, we will spend time in different topical series, sometimes incorporating the lectionary text, always exploring the connection of the topics with our faith in the world around us. The class will be facilitated by Tom and Taylor Stewart, along with guests throughout the year. We will kickoff with an exploration of Islam, then explore our money story, consider the connection of our faith with the political system, and so much more. All are welcome to join the class and learn together, whether it is just for a week or regular attendance.

### **September Series: Islam in History and Contemporary Reconsideration (3-part series)**

- Rethinking the Origins of Islam
- Crucial Contexts for Understanding Contemporary Islam
- What Do We Mean by “Radical Islam” and Where Is It Going?

*Facilitated by Matthew Taylor the Protestant Scholar at the Institute for Islamic, Christian, and Jewish Studies and member of our church.*

## *Anniversary Celebration News*

### **Brown Downtown Turns 150: Stories of Faith & Hope**

by Gayle Barney

**S**ince April, as part of our 150th Anniversary Celebration, a team of six has been working to bring history alive at Brown Memorial. This group has been interviewing long-standing members of our faith community and pastors and writing their stories. We call our project Brown Downtown Turns 150—Stories of Hope and Faith. So far, at least a dozen people have been interviewed; but there's more work to do. It takes time to develop the story and make sure it is reflective of the storyteller's intention. Each story has become a very special message about faith, caring, action and hope.

I have had the honor and pleasure of reading all of these stories as they are finished. The stories take us back in history but also help us look forward to our shared future and goals.

Our stories tell who we are. Talking about his Baltimore Presbytery examination in 2013, Tim Hughes Williams shared the following—"I had no idea that Brown Memorial had packed the house for this meeting, although in retrospect it was a very 'Brown' thing to do. I continue to be so moved by that moment—a clear sign of solidarity from people who did not know me yet. They were there because it was the right thing to do."

Our stories are informative. According to Peggy Obrecht, speaking of the early 1950s, "We had communion only four times a year; and it was served to us in our pews by the elders—all of whom were men. Since the church had seats in the transepts, that was a huge area to cover."

Colleen Bowers' story about auditioning for Gene Belt made me laugh. "I played the flute all during my public-school years, but didn't know anything about vocal music. So, when Gene asked me to sing on the alto line during the audition I had to ask, 'Where is the alto line?'" Colleen concluded, "Now, 40 years later, I'm still singing with the choir."

Talking about mission for youth, Chrystie Adams expressed her honest assessment on making time for



**Stories build bridges.  
When the story ends  
and the teller's voice  
is silenced, the bridge  
between the teller  
and listener remains.**

- Rev. Elaine Blandchard,  
professional storyteller



commitment. “The kids who go out with us to Minnesota and to Soaring Eagles learning camps see things in a different light—a changed viewpoint. I am glad for those opportunities, but I wish I could get more of Brown Memorial involved in the actual activity. It’s difficult for people to make that commitment.”

Our stories are motivational. Roger Gench, speaking on race, acknowledged that, “We need to get inside of black rage so that it is palpable to us and put our bodies in places where we are not comfortable...We need to understand that racial trauma, both past and present, for both blacks and whites, is central to the American experience.”

Julie Hanks reminds us about our witness to faith and justice. After Brown Memorial and Woodbrook went their separate ways, “even though the Brown congregation faced financial stress, the congregation continued to be engaged in the community—both locally and globally. The Session authorized that an additional family from Cambodia would occupy one of the two existing apartments on the third floor of the Church House. In 1982, a family from Kenya occupied one of the apartments.”

As I have listened to these voices tell their stories, I am reminded of a quote by Rev. Elaine Blanchard, a professional storyteller—“Stories build bridges. When the story ends and the teller’s voice is silenced, the bridge between the teller and listener remains.” These personal narratives have certainly made me feel closer to all these Brown storytellers and the messages they convey. I know the interviewers and writers feel the same way just by their comments to me along the way. And those who have shared their stories have expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to do so.

### So, Here’s the Good News:

We are going to begin releasing a few stories this fall and into 2021. Look for them in the church e-newsletter “This Week @ Brown” each month. Later in 2021, you will receive your own personal copy of the story collection. We look forward to celebrating all these powerful, rich stories with all of you, whether you have been around or are relatively new in our community. Plan to read and listen to the voices of Brown. Let the stories tell you the history. More importantly, let the stories be your bridge to others as we continue looking forward, building our community of hope and faith. ♦



## MUSIC NOTES

### The Music of David Haas: Sing or Not Sing?

by Michael Britt, Minister of Music & Organist

The composer David Haas is a name that is not overly familiar in Presbyterian circles. For the past 40 years his corpus of work has been written mainly for the Roman Catholic Church, which include settings of the mass and other ritual music. Some of his hymns, composed in the “contemporary” idiom, have been incorporated into other denominational hymnals such as the GLORY TO GOD hymnal. “We are Called” and “You are Mine” are two of his compositions that are included in our repertoire at Brown Memorial Church.

This past June, allegations of sexual misconduct and harassment by Mr. Haas began to surface within the Roman Catholic Community. The alleged victims, adult women, revealed a number of “forced” encounters by Mr. Haas that occurred at “Music Ministry Alive” (an organization that Mr. Haas founded) and other events and conferences related to Roman Catholic music. Mr. Haas was often a musician and presenter at these events.

Early on, Mr. Haas denied any wrongdoing, calling these accusations “false,” “reckless” and “offensive.” At the writing of this article, nearly 38 women have come forth with similar allegations. No civil or criminal charges have been filed. On July 9, 2020, Mr. Haas issued an apology on his website saying, “I have come to realize that I have caused great harm to a variety of people. I make no excuses for any harm that I may have caused. I take responsibility for my behavior and I am truly sorry.”

A dialogue has now begun about “what to do with the music of David Haas and should it be used at worship?” A number of dioceses have already made the decision to not include his repertoire at mass and other services until further notice. Music publishers such as GIA and Oregon Catholic Press have severed ties with Mr. Haas and the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis have terminated his employment as a diocesan musician and clinician. Most recently, his compositions have

been pulled from the new Mennonite hymnal, “Voices Together.”

During the past several months, I have shared this information with the ministry staff at Brown Memorial along with the Worship Committee in order that we make a sound decision about the future use of his music at our worship services. Some of the questions discussed were: Are we able to separate the musical and artistic contributions from the person who created them? What is our response to those women and men that have been victims of sexual abuse when we sing his music to the text: “We are called to act with justice...?” What screen should we develop to discern propriety of all music to be used in worship?

I welcome your thoughts and suggestions regarding this sensitive issue. In the meantime, we have made the decision to not use his music in worship. We also continue to pray for the physical, spiritual and emotional healing for all who have been victims of abuse. ♦

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## Silent Film Screening

You can view one of Michael Britt's silent film and organ concerts from the comfort of home. On Brown Memorial's YouTube channel, view a screening of “Seven Chances” (1925), starring Buster Keaton, accompanied by Michael Britt with a live original organ score.





# Our Work Toward Anti-Racism

by Taylor Stewart

The beauty of anti-racism is that you don't have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it's the only way forward. - Ijeoma Oluo

**A**nti-racism has been a term that many in our country are encountering and exploring more as our country reckons with its history in light of the continuation of police brutality and the inequitable impacts of COVID-19 on communities of color due to systemic racism. Before this moment, our church began considering our own history and culture, wanting to understand how our commitment to justice has shaped who we are over the last 150 years and how an explicit lens toward anti-racism in our justice work might direct our path forward.

At our retreat back in February, the Session determined that it was important to consider and more deeply develop our commitment to anti-racism as we continue our active mission in the city and the world. We formed a steering committee that includes Gayle Barney, Katherine and McKay Jenkins, Mike Reed, Joseph Reichelt, Taylor and Tom Stewart, Tom Waldron, and Andrew to determine a path forward for learning and acting together.

The committee proposed and the Session approved a plan to engage in learning and development with a consultant. We contracted with Dr. Durryle Brooks, an early career interdisciplinary researcher and a social justice practitioner from Baltimore. He is the Founder and CEO of Love and Justice Consulting, LLC. He is also one of 80 racial healing fellows with the Kellogg Foundation. Currently, Dr. Brooks is a Research Associate in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in the Department of Epidemiology where his research agenda explores the impact of systemic oppression on the holistic health of Black communities with a focus on exploring how racism, sexism and heterosexism impact Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) people's mental, physical, spiritual, emotional and sexual health.




Dr. Durryle Brooks

Durryle will design a program to work first with the Session and the steering committee and then the whole church on examining our individual identities, exploring systems of power and our collective identity, and acting in love and allyship. We are hoping to build a shared language and understanding of anti-racism as a church to then move toward discerning what that calls us to do in the broader community. We will send more information on specific dates and learning opportunities. We hope you will attend. ♦



## August Birthdays

08/01	Deb Milcarek
08/01	Malinda Peeples
08/02	Rachael Edgin
08/02	Beverly Hensley
08/04	William McConnell
08/04	Neal Naff
08/05	Chuck Holland
08/09	Donald McPherson
08/10	Osaro Grayson
08/11	Mehran Armand
08/12	Gilly Babb
08/13	Edward McCarthy
08/13	David Todd
08/14	George Brown
08/14	Mike Reed
08/15	Cecelia Reichelt
08/15	Sallie Robinson
08/17	Lee Williams
08/20	Jack McManus
08/20	Betsey Todd
08/21	JoAnn Copes
08/21	James Egan
08/21	Timothy Hughes
08/21	Anna Lazarus
08/24	Wolfe Glaser
08/24	Carol Graves
08/24	Terry Lorch
08/24	Laura McConnell
08/25	Samuel Edgin
08/26	Evan Cunningham
08/26	Xóchitl Mota-Back
08/26	Theresa Veatch
08/27	W. Courtland Robinson
08/28	Susan Flanigan
08/28	Andy Imparato
08/29	Anna Hughes
08/29	Oliver Schmickel
08/30	Sharon Lucas
08/31	Gareth Imparato
08/31	Henry Waldron

 To have your birthday listed in the *Tidings*, contact Sharon Holley, church secretary, 410-523-1542, or [sharon@brown-downtown.org](mailto:sharon@brown-downtown.org).

## Brown Memorial Tutoring Program Zooming to the Task

by Lisa Hoffberger

"I graduated to fourth grade!" Faye said with delight as she joined our weekly Brown Tutoring tutor-by-Zoom call from a home computer in mid-June. Her big news came one month after Baltimore City Public Schools closed her classroom in favor of an early spring break, followed by virtual schooling from students' homes.

For children and their families, as for everyone, the pandemic rocked their world and altered whatever normalcy meant to them pre-COVID-19. Everyone loves a snow day, right? But staying home for safety day after day and having to do school work by Zoom—a new and unpracticed approach—was a lot! I asked how she was feeling about the pandemic, zooming and not seeing her pals. In true Faye-form she exclaimed, "This has got to stop!"

Well, it hasn't stopped, and neither has the tutoring program. Although in-house, end-of-year activities were suspended, our directors promptly dedicated themselves to building new connection pathways designed to keep our students engaged and learning. Tutors have written cards to their students, and an enriched summer book program went into full swing. To increase their reading exposure, the program increased the number of books mailed to each student. Almost a third of our students, a number that is dependent upon parental permission and support, are regularly connecting this summer with their tutors by phone or through the Zoom app.

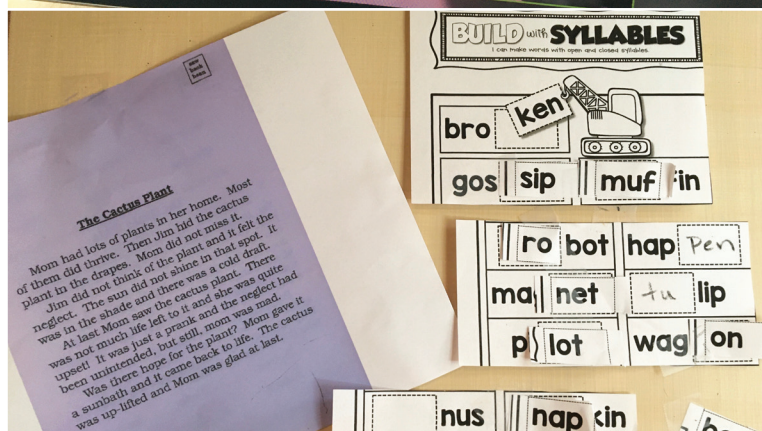
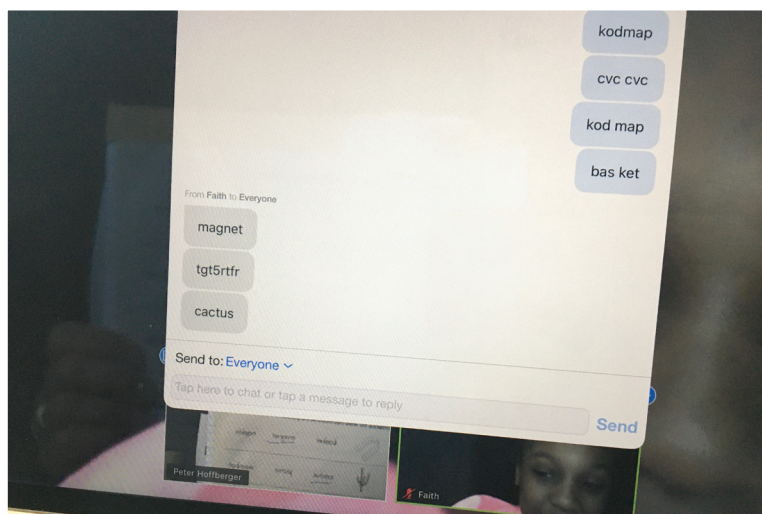
Faye loves it. Granted, it's hard to be as hands-on as in the tutoring classroom, and there's been quite a learning curve on both ends of the line, but her interest is robust and her focus is strong. "A syllable is a word or part of a word that has



one talking vowel,” she will ardently repeat. So far, we’ve practiced words and sentences with closed syllables (those that end in a consonant, making the vowel sound short, as in “fan” or “bug”), open syllables (those that end in a vowel, making the vowel sound long such as “go,” “hi” or “he”) and magic-e words (where a vowel-consonant-e combination creates a long vowel sound, as in “cake” or “mule”).

On a chat page together, Faye types words or sentences that I can see, and in turn she can read my instruction or hints that correction may be needed. A typical reminder: Starting sentences with a capital letter is a must, as is ending them with punctuation! She once offered, “I like that you help me correct, so it’s fun to read and spell.”

Exciting new plans for fall tutoring are being developed. They are still evolving and are fully dependent on both the teaching plan to be adopted by the Baltimore City school system, and on Brown Tutoring budgetary considerations for new tools and resources that likely will be required to deliver the standards for literacy tutoring that Brown has sustained for 56 years. When students like Faye tell us that they “...feel confident the tutoring sessions help,” we are eager to rise to the challenge and, for now at least, that means by zooming to the task. ♦



## September Birthdays

09/01	Catherine Sewell
09/02	Monica Rakowski
09/02	Gregory Trimble
09/03	Hilda Imhoff
09/04	James E. Cox
09/04	Ang Robinson
09/08	Amy Dahl
09/09	Nicole Mitchell
09/11	Kathy Arnold
09/10	Azra Sara Bartell
09/10	Jacqueline L. Cole
09/10	Micheline McManus
09/12	Alex Norton
09/12	Susan Stroupe
09/13	Emma Fesperman
09/14	John Burton
09/14	Youngmi Organ
09/16	Nannette Mitchell
09/16	Karen Nelson
09/16	Jody Shaw
09/16	Linell Smith
09/18	Amy Munds
09/20	Trevor Bishai
09/21	Kirk Fulton
09/22	Lynn Clippinger
09/22	Dylan Smith
09/24	Luke Clippinger
09/24	Barbara Hull Francis
09/24	Ed Richardson
09/25	Jack Burton
09/25	Mia Davis
09/25	Sabine Davis
09/25	Grace Peng
09/26	Salvatore Pappalardo
09/28	Keiffer Mitchell, Jr.
09/28	Donna Senft
09/28	Jim Veatch
09/29	Elizabeth Garcia-Bunuel
09/29	Lisa Hoffberger





# BMPA Calendar

*Alive in the City  
and the World*

## Worship Moves to 11 AM, Sunday, Aug. 30

Worship moves to 11 a.m., two weeks early this summer, to accommodate our joint worship service with Light Street Church and guest preacher Rev. Tim Hughes Williams. Meditation Circle and the Adult Education Class will begin meeting Sept. 13 at 10 a.m. using separate Zoom links.

## VIRTUAL WORSHIP & GATHERINGS

The Church, in its most basic, original incarnation, is the web of relationships that God brings together across time and distance. Please join us as we bridge this distance virtually, each week, and continue to gather for worship, prayer, study, and fellowship.

**SUNDAY WORSHIP:** Join us live on Zoom via your computer or phone. Visit [browndowntown.org](http://browndowntown.org) to access the Zoom links, passwords, and dial-in phone numbers. Links are also provided for the hymns and bulletins.

**PAST SERMONS:** View past worship services on our YouTube channel or at [browndowntown.org](http://browndowntown.org).

**OTHER GATHERINGS:** On the website homepage, sign up for our weekly email, "This Week @ Brown," for the latest news and Zoom links for small group and committee gatherings.

**YOUTH ACTIVITIES:** A Labor Day Reunion is planned for Sept. 6, and Sunday Night Live! takes place via Zoom on Sept. 20. See details on page 6.

**ALL-CHURCH RETREAT:** Save the date for a weekend of activities, Sept. 25-27, with more information to come.



## TOUR THE SANCTUARY ANYTIME, FROM ANYWHERE

Even if you can't be with us in person, you can still visit Brown Memorial and learn more about the windows, organ, and wood carvings in the sanctuary using our audio tour— **410-630-4298**.

View photos for each audio tour stop at [browndowntown.org/tour-the-church](http://browndowntown.org/tour-the-church).

## Tidings

*Good News from Brown  
Memorial Park Avenue  
Presbyterian Church*

1316 Park Avenue,  
Baltimore, MD, 21217.  
410.523.1542.

[browndowntown.org](http://browndowntown.org)

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Week @ Brown, on the home page  
at [browndowntown.org](http://browndowntown.org).*



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Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)